



WEEK OF PRAYER AND SELF-DENIAL MEDITATION BOOKLET

10 to 16 September 2023



Contributions by TRAC WSCS



Scripture verses by GC WSCS

WEEK OF PRAYER AND SELF-DENIAL

The Week of Prayer and Self-Denial (PSD) was started in 1887 and is observed during the second week of September. This observance calls WSCS women to spiritual growth, awareness and action. Through it, women are challenged to engage in prayer and to reflect upon stewardship as they respond to the needs in the home, church, community and the world at large to fulfil God's mission. PSD Meditations, prayer and giving have been its central focus. WSCS women are encouraged to increase their self-denial through sacrificial acts to bless others. The offerings collected from the 3 Conferences are placed in the PSD Fund for the above-mentioned needs.

Extracted from <https://wscs.methodist.org.sg>

1 Peter 4:1-2

¹ Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.

The apostle Peter wrote to early believers scattered throughout certain provinces in modern-day Turkey. They were suffering injustice and persecutions. Peter encouraged them to follow the attitude of Jesus and live for the will of God. Struggles and sufferings continue to be present in our personal lives and in the world around us. How are we handling our life's stressors? Some of us react with grumblings, frustrations, anxieties and anger. Some of us ignore our feelings by keeping ourselves busy or being distracted by many things to suppress our pain within. We may tend to react with our self-driven mechanisms instead of turning to God. Stubbornness, self-sufficiency, self-seeking, self-indulgence and self-preservation are some indicators of self-directed behaviour. The apostle Peter reminds us that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins. Therefore, we are no longer to live anyway we like. We belong to God. The apostle Peter urges us to surrender our will to live for the will of God.

In his book, 'Will and Spirit', Gerald G. May shared his dilemma, "...Now I no longer see my desire for self-surrender as a problem... But there are still many questions. To whom or to what does one surrender? And how? Even if it is God to whom I surrender, how can I trust this God is true and good and will not abandon me?"

"To whom does one surrender?" We know it is to God we surrender. At some point in our life, we accepted Jesus as our Saviour and LORD. We promised to take up our cross to follow Jesus, into a life that does not erase suffering. *"How can I trust this God is true and good and will not abandon me?"* My response is that God is faithful. In the trials through the stages of my life, I see God unfailingly by my side. *What is yours?* Reflect on the presence of God in your life. In the event nothing comes to mind, will you trust God's Word? Meet God in His Word. God's Holy Spirit is guiding us. In silence and contemplative prayer, listen for His still small voice. No matter how we have lived our days before, God's grace will grant us a fresh start - to live for the rest of our time on earth, sensitive and submissive to His Will.

Prayer:

Our Heavenly Father, I have not truly lived with the same attitude of Jesus, my Saviour and LORD. Grant me the grace to be like Jesus. Keep my heart soft, willing to listen and to yield to the Holy Spirit's promptings. May my journey companions and I encourage one another to live to Your glory till we see Your face. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Genesis 7:5-7

⁵ *And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.*

About Noah, we learnt from the Bible that he found favour in the eyes of the Lord (Genesis 6:5). He was a righteous man, blameless in his generation and he walked with God (Genesis 6:9). “Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him” means that Noah was in communication with God, thus knowing what the command was. What the Lord has commanded Noah to do was such a humongous responsibility - to build the ark! Undoubtedly, Noah had great faith in God. I believe that Noah had to deny self-wisdom to accede to such an enormous task which is something beyond any human understanding.

Reflecting on today's verse and bringing it to reality in this day and age, we learn that we need to keep an open communication with God in order to do what He commands us to do. How else do we know? We may not be asked to do such a huge assignment as Noah's but it made me recollect an incident some time back. I was tasked to do a sharing with a group of church members who were going on a trip to Malaysia. Among us were a few non-believers. Before the trip, I attended a prayer meeting in church and the thumb drive of the worship leader had problems, so I offered mine as I also had a collection of worship songs in it. When my thumb drive was inserted into the computer, all my files were wiped out! This included my completed powerpoint presentation which I had prepared to share during the trip! That was when I sensed the Lord giving me a different topic to share. So, from scratch, I started to prepare the slides which included a short testimony of my tormented year working under a Christian boss. I was to share how the Lord showed me confirmation after confirmation to resign but I was not confident as I did not have a job at hand. I was to share how I was robbed of my joy, so after a year, I was ready to submit my resignation. And how, within a few weeks, even at the mature age of 47, someone recommended me a job. During the trip and after my sharing, three ladies affirmed to me that the message was meant for their husbands who were not believers. If I had insisted on my own wisdom, I would have tried to recollect what I had originally prepared and I am sure, my sharing would not be as effective.

Another incident was when I sensed the Lord telling me to visit my colleague's father-in-law who was hospitalised. He was given a few months to live. I did not feel the need to visit him because my colleague was not close to him and I may not be able to communicate with him as he is a Chinese speaking man, involved with gangs and loan sharks. Sensing that the Lord was telling me to visit him, I agreed to make a trip to the hospital. I waited around his bedside for over 20 minutes, waiting for the Lord to prompt me on what to say, then I felt the Lord saying, “Tell him I love him.” In my weak Hokkien, I said, “Uncle, Jesus loves you.” To my surprise, he started to sob uncontrollably and I knew then that it was the Lord ministering to him. I felt the need to present the gospel to him, so I asked my friend to interpret it in Hokkien. In the end, he accepted Jesus into his life. I was told by my friend that she had never spoken in Hokkien so fluently before. I believe the Holy Spirit had helped her interpret without fumbling. Weeks passed and her father-in-law left this world with a smile on his face to be with Jesus.

Thanks be to God that we are able to hear Him and learn to deny self-wisdom so that we can pursue the work that He has prepared for each and every one of us. Hallelujah!

Prayer:

O Lord God our Father, we thank you for Your Holy Spirit who resides in us, teaching us the things of Your heart and guiding us to fulfil what You purpose us to do. May we all learn to deny self-wisdom and commit ourselves to You each step of the way. May we recognise the difference between the wisdom of men and the wisdom from above. In the Name of Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen.

Luke 16:15

¹⁵ And He (Jesus) said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

Self-Righteousness does not mean being right about something, like doing your sums rightly. Self-Righteousness does not mean righteous as God imputes righteousness to us. Self-Righteousness means having an ungodly certainty that I am morally more superior than another, with a negative tinge, accompanied by much self-interest/self-justification and a silent heart's desire for public recognition of myself as being morally superior and justified.

This verse is in the context of Jesus talking about money.

He is teaching and commanding His hearers to live lives using money in right and in wise ways; not to live serving money, because "you cannot serve both God and money".

We are here told that we can serve only one Master – God Himself or money. It is our choice to make.

He teaches us in this passage that money is to be used wisely to have an impact on eternity (Luke16:9); money is not to be served but to serve.

The Pharisees are amongst the hearers, and they sneer at Jesus, because Pharisees love money, and it is only natural that one serves what one loves; no matter how hard we try to deny it.

People around Pharisees admire and esteem them because they have money, they have power and they have status. We do oftentimes highly value money, power and status, don't we? But Jesus says He does not; He detests sins that exalt the sinful nature. He values humility, service, love, compassion, and a heart that seeks and serves Him and Him alone.

Do you desire to be born with a platinum spoon?

Do you desire to have a good class bungalow?

Do you desire to be the daughter or wife of one of the world's richest?

Do you desire to have a million dollar pay package?

Do you desire to have made it, to have riches, to have power, or to have status?

If I do, I would need to search my motives behind those desires.

Like the Pharisees, my façade may look perfect in all ways – spiritually, physically, intellectually, socially, economically...

Like the Pharisees, everything about me may look righteously good. That puffs me up, I justify myself in the eyes of others, and silently I enjoy this righteous feel about myself, and I silently disdain or be indifferent to others not of the same type like me, although I can look friendly to all... STOP! 'Pharisee', STOP!

This is today's point – to deny self-righteousness, to nail it to death!

How similar am I to the Pharisees?
How far are my desires from God's?

God looks into our hearts. He knows our hearts through and through. Only upon His declaration that I am righteous, made righteous by Him, then am I righteous before Him in all humility. Not what I possess, but just who I am in Him – a sinner yet forgiven righteous beloved child of God.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, forgive me for all my shortcomings. Help me, oftentimes a 'Pharisee', to deny self-righteousness, not trusting in my own righteousness. Fill my heart with your desires; that I desire You and that which You value; that I desire to point others to Jesus; that I desire to use the money, power or status you have entrusted to me, in a wise manner to have an impact on Eternity, that Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' Name. Amen!

Philippians 2:3-5

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Philippians 2:3-5 are familiar verses that instruct us to deny self-interest which often involves acts of going the extra mile to sacrifice one's time or resources; to selflessly help others without expecting personal gain or compassionately care for others to improve their wellbeing. It is in short to honour others above ourselves just as Jesus did to care for the Samaritan woman, or when He offered reconciliation to Peter who denied him three times, or when He washed the feet of Judas knowing he would betray Him. Most importantly He died a painful death at the cross for sinners such as us. This is level one understanding of the verse. Can we do that? I am put to the test many a time.

Recently I transitioned some activities to a younger colleague while supporting him behind the scenes. When he was publicly praised for the good execution, I was strangely feeling bitter and unappreciated. God revealed that denying self-interest is to relinquish the limelight. This is true for one nearing retirement, learning to honour younger colleagues and helping them succeed. I should be happy that he is doing an excellent job. Yes God, help me to let go of my ego.

A few weeks ago, as I exited Serangoon MRT station to walk towards church, I was stopped by a middle-aged man. I smelled strong cigarette smoke emitting from his body and I immediately distanced myself while vaguely hearing his plea for help with his mobile phone. I brushed him off and walked quickly away. I justified that I could not help him as I am not that tech savvy myself. Who can't use the mobile phone in post covid era? And he even looked younger than me! Yet my footsteps were heavy as I was concerned if it was a legitimate call for help. I turned back to the MRT station to look for him and find out his problem. He was struggling to find the pickup call button and seemed anxious to wait for a call from someone. I was glad I could help him, and he seemed relieved and less anxious. My footsteps were lighter as I walked towards church. Yes God, help me put acts of mercy above prejudice.

A constant struggle with this verse is in my relationships with my family. Don't we always must have the last word or be right? In fact, I observed my friend's interactions with her spouse and clinically diagnosed to her that it is important to honour her spouse and that it is not necessary to be right all the time. Yet I failed and many a conflict at home is due to wanting to win the conversation, thinking my values are better and imposing them onto my spouse, my mother and my children. Simple decisions on food are trigger points for heated discussions. Yes God, help me put relationships as priority over self-righteousness.

One of the most frustrating lessons I had with this verse was during a poverty sensitization workshop where we, as volunteers, role played as parents trying to make ends meet while making tough money decisions on daily livelihood. My mind went into mental unbelief as to how one could make such "unwise choices" and how they ended up in such a "financial mess".

Yet who am I to judge and jump to conclusions as those were real life scenarios of the poor and needy in Singapore. Yes God, help me to have more empathy and be less judgemental. Yet not I but through Christ in me that I do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than myself. As we trust in God to act on His truths, His truths will come alive to transform us.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father God, make me more like Jesus. You love me just as I am. Continue to nudge and correct me when I am full of myself. Show me daily how to deny my self-interest and put others ahead of myself. Show me how to honour all those who come my way, so that they see your love. In the Name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Proverbs 16:5, 18

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Today's text from God's wisdom literature calls believers to look at life through God's eyes. It teaches us how to gain wisdom from God's reproofs so that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can obey God's commands.

Jesus' call to true discipleship is clear when he told his disciples in Matthew 16:24-26, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."

The original sin of man is pride, the root of everything evil. God hates pride. Proverbs 16:5 says "The Lord detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this. They will not go unpunished." The heart of the matter is the heart. Only our Creator God knows the hearts of all men. Jeremiah 17:9-10 says "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve."

The world seeks to promote self that leads us to believe we are capable of becoming who we want to be. One can feel puffed up by one's own sufficiency and accomplishments. Pride is so subtle; even believers are not spared from this mindset. Pride creeps into the way we think and relate to others. Pride is self-reliance - it resists God and His Holy Spirit's prompting to live by God's commands. It is the need to be at the centre of attention publicly and inwardly harbouring the need to be affirmed of our accomplishments, looks, always thinking that we are better than others. It runs contrary to Jesus' call to true discipleship and submission to Him. We can easily lose sight of Jesus, who we are in Him and our call to humility following the example of Christ Himself. Philippians 2:3-5 says "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interest of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

Sin blinds us of our pride and self-righteous attitude. We see the wrongs of others but rationalise our own sins. God knows this on-going battle and provides believers the grace to overcome. Martin Luther's hymn captures this well: "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing. Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. For still our ancient foe does seek to work us woe; his craft & power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal. Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing, were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing. You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he; Lord Sabaoth his name, from age to age the same and he must win the battle." Apart from God we are not okay. We must stop pretending we can overcome in our

own strength. But thanks be to God for “the Spirit and the gifts are ours, through Him who with us sideth.” God is with us and for us. He gives us clear directions to “follow Him”, and to “fix our eyes on Jesus”. Hebrew 4:15 says “For we do not have a high priest who’s is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and grace to help in time of need.”

When we humbly recognize the grace of God towards us, there will be no room for self and pride in our life. Proverbs 11:2 says “when pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.” God is our redeemer and restorer. Psalms 51:17 says “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” God offers forgiveness and the grace of uninterrupted relationship to all those who humbly confess and repent of their sins.

The battle against sin is daily. God’s grace of forgiveness is available daily. 1 Corinthians 15:57 says “But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” God is worthy for us to “take up our cross” and follow Him. God’s grace is available to all those who choose to remain in Him - a grace that overflows into our lives on a daily basis. Lord, teach us to accept your grace and to live in its power.

PRAYER:

Dear Father, You know our hearts; You know our selfish inclinations. Take away our pride and fill us with more of You. Help us to be grateful for Your all-sufficient grace, a grace that is greater than all our sins. Lord, do Your work in our hearts as we look to You and surrender to obey You. In Jesus’ mighty Name we ask and pray. Amen.

Genesis 13:8-9

⁸ Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen."

In the story of Abram and Lot, we know that Abram exercised denial of self-rights.

The Miriam-Webster Dictionary defines denial as a restraint or limitation of one's own desires or interests. When you "deny self-rights", you are choosing to hold back (restrain) or curb your wants or interests.

The Apostle Paul explained what it meant to *deny self* or *deny self-rights*. It is at the heart of his teaching on submission to God: We have died with Christ and must sacrifice our lives for Him. In Titus 2:12, Paul writes of the grace of God training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, which is to deny what we desire.

Denying self-rights, curbing your wants or interests, holding back what you want to do. This is not something that is natural. To do this would require training the mind to consider others first before ourselves. Will this bring honour to God? Will it encourage family unity?

In the example of Abram, he held back his own interest when he heard God's call to go to Canaan. He did not hesitate to obey and took with him Sarai his wife and Lot, his brother's son and all their substance (people, possessions) and went to Canaan. When he arrived in Shechem (a city in Canaan), God appeared to him and repeated His promise to Abram. From this we know that Abram had a close relationship with God.

Abram also chose to curb his own interest in his relationship with Lot. After Abram left Egypt, he acquired additional livestock. The land where Abram and Lot settled became very crowded with the additional livestock and was not able to sustain both groups of people and their possessions.

Genesis 13:9-11

Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."

And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.

Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

Abram applied denial of self-interest/self-right when he considered what to do in this situation. He graciously gave his nephew Lot the chance to make the first choice.

How do we train ourselves to be true disciples of Christ, who *deny self-rights*?

Some of these steps have been extracted from *BibleStudyTools***

- Saturate your mind with God's Word
- Speak to God about it
- Seek His guidance and perspective
- Step out in faith, after you hear from God

By training our minds to *deny self-rights*, we re-commit to living differently from the world and forgo living only for self.

Prayer:

Dear Father, forgive me for the times I have chosen my own way, motivated by my self-interests and passions, often distracted by what appears on social media.

Help me, dear Father, to choose instead the higher plane, in my journey of faith, in order to grow as a true disciple of Christ, by

Choosing to saturate my mind with the Word,
Choosing to speak often to You,
Choosing to seek Your counsel, and after hearing it,
Choosing to step out in faith.

Praying in Jesus' name. Amen.

** BibleStudyTools "How to make right decisions" by Pastor Chris Russell.

Genesis 14:22-23

²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'

"She's a self-made woman", headlined the news article. She has risen to prominence and wealth by overcoming poverty and dire circumstances in her childhood, the article goes on to say. Such stories garner respect and admiration from readers. But what does the person herself think of this praise heaped on her? Does she really feel that she is "self-made"? Does she sing "I did it my way"?

In Genesis 14:21, the king of Sodom offered Abram (before he was known as Abraham) all the spoils of the battle. Abram's reply sought to clear himself of any obligation to this king. Only God alone would be his provider and source of help. Abram had committed himself to God (Genesis 14:22), acknowledging that God alone was the Creator of all things. Abram would not attribute his success, both now and in future, to any other!

Our society lays much premium on achievements, particularly those obtained through so-called sheer hard work and perseverance. We tell our children and younger generations not to give up but to keep at it. We celebrate success – in school, at work, even in church ministries. There is nothing wrong with this. However, to whom do we attribute these accomplishments? May we be like David, who at the height of his earthly power, declared to God: "Both riches and honour come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all ... for all things come from you" (1 Chronicles 29:12,14). We may not be so audacious to claim that we achieved success through our own means. However, how do we respond when people flatter us? "You make the best mee siam in Singapore" or "Your son is so brilliant" or "You must be the youngest CEO in Singapore!" Whether trivial or significant, such statements do tempt us to "self-claim". During such situations, let us pray for the Holy Spirit to remind us of who really is behind our success.

"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."
(Romans 11:36)


Prayer:

*Heavenly Father,
I acknowledge that all things come from You. I pray for forgiveness when I lay claim to "self" instead of to You as the giver of all things. Help me to look to You alone for all that I need. And in all things, Lord, help me to give You the glory. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.*

Attention: All Ladies

Please join us. Click below link to register:

<https://tinyurl.com/dpmw3tun>




WEEK OF PRAYER & SELF-DENIAL CLOSING SERVICE
Organised by TRAC WSCS

“FOLLOWING JESUS CHRIST IN A DISTRACTING WORLD”
How to be a resilient disciple in an age of hyper-connectivity

Speaker : Carol Loi
Date : Saturday, 16 September 2023
Time : 2.00 – 4.30 pm
Venue : Sophia Blackmore Hall,
Methodist Centre (Level 6)

Open to all ladies



Carol Loi is the International Director of Generations of Virtue, and the Cohort Director (Singapore) of the Colson Fellows programme, under the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. Carol Loi is a certified digital wellness educator and a Fellow of the Center for Media Literacy. She is also a certified mental wellness coach and a Maxwell Leadership certified youth and family coach. She has served in the Singapore public service for over two decades, including the Economic Development Board, Ministry of Education and Info-communications Media Development Authority.



2023 PRAYER & SELF-DENIAL FUNDS DISTRIBUTION

- 1) Radion International (Thailand) \$6,060
-Funding of 3 VillageCare women @ \$2,700
- Funding of 2 StreetKids @ \$3,360
- 2) Love In Action Mission – LIAM (Kenya) \$5,305
-26 bags of maize @ \$1,650
-135 bags of rice @\$3,655
- 3) CBN (Myanmar) \$1,200
-Superbook for 5 churches
(Sunday School Discipleship Programme)

TOTAL: \$12,565
Balance in PSD fund c/f \$ 971.94

2022 Funds for distribution \$13,536.94

PSD Offertory

(Wholly to support poor and needy)

Method 1: PayNow



UEN No.

S90CC0754D

Reference: **T31**

Method 2: Internet Bank Transfer

To: Trinity Annual Conference-Women's
Society of Christian Service

DBS Bank Account **072-524519-2**

Reference: **T31**

'Truly I tell you, whatever you
did for one of the least of
these brothers and sisters of
mine, you did for me.'

Matthew 25:40