

40 Days of Prayer

*By the faculty, staff and Board of Trustees
of Abilene Christian University*



This summer, ACU's faculty, staff and Board of Trustees embarked on a contemplative journey marked by 40 days of seeking God's blessings and guidance as we enter a new academic year.

The devotional messages and prayers you will read here are reminders that we're all on the same journey. Few things define ACU's mission – educating students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world – more clearly than our shared commitment to seek God's will first in all we do.

I hope you will find inspiration in these messages and will join us as we continue to pray for our university, our students and the people God has assembled to do his work here.

Phil Schubert, Ed.D.
President

Day 1

DR. PHIL SCHUBERT | THANKSGIVING

Today we offer a prayer of gratitude for the parents who have entrusted their students to ACU.

"You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me. You know when I am resting and when I am working, and from heaven you discover my thoughts. You notice everything I do and everywhere I go. Before I even speak a word, you know what I will say, and with your powerful arm you protect me from every side." – Psalm 139:1-5

I love this description of how God walks with us, especially for my children. It gives me the peace and confidence to put all of my questions and worry aside and trust that God will guide and protect my kids. As we prepare to welcome back our students and meet new ones, I hope we can celebrate the promise of their lives in God and the trust their parents have placed in us to love and nurture them.

Devotional Thought

Parents experience a range of emotion when they send their students off to college – excitement, fear, sadness, anxiety, pride, love, hope. I remember that roller coaster all too well when Sydnie and then Mason left for college. They were opening a big new door through which we saw life's enormous horizon shining brightly in front of them.

But I found myself asking, "Were they ready?" "Had we done enough to prepare them?" "Do they know just how much we love them?" "What's going to happen if ...?" As my mind raced through so many unanswerable questions, I quickly realized it was an infinite list. The more I thought about the "what if's," the more I came to understand only a couple of questions really mattered.

Out of my worry emerged the realization that I could never anticipate all of the life moments my kids were about to experience and how they would respond. So I left that exercise in futility behind and began to focus on the only questions that mattered.

In this new phase of life's journey will Sydnie and Mason learn to rely on God, in both the good times and the bad?

Will they be blessed with people in their lives who will walk with them when I can't, lead them closer to God, and love them like I do?

Today's Prayer

Dear God, we trust in you and in you alone. Remove the worry and the "what if's" from the minds of parents sending their sons and daughters to join our ACU community. May they find peace in knowing you are charting the path for their children every day. And may they find comfort in knowing that we will walk with them also, loving and nurturing them in a way that leads them to love and trust you more deeply. Amen.

Dr. Phil Schubert is president of ACU.

Day 2

DR. BEN RIES | THANKSGIVING

Today we offer thanks for faculty and staff who openly profess their Christian faith.

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house." – Matthew 5:14-16

Devotional Thought

St. Francis of Assisi once said, "It is no use walking anywhere to preach unless our walking is our preaching." Followers of Jesus are invited to profess their faith openly, honestly and with vulnerability. However, this proclamation is not done with words alone. We profess our faith as we make ourselves available to our students and colleagues. We profess our faith by making room for those with whom we disagree and struggle to understand. We profess our faith in trusting that we do not have all the answers, but trust in the one who does. We profess our faith as we speak words of forgiveness, hope, love and reconciliation. This is the light we have to offer. This is the light the world aches to see. This is the light we cannot afford to hide under a bushel.

Today's Prayer

Gracious Lord, we are grateful for those among us who profess their faith in word and action. Give us the courage today to be your light in this world. Pour out your Spirit that we may love all, forgive indiscriminately and pursue justice. Through Christ our Lord who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Dr. Ben Ries is associate dean for vocational formation at ACU Dallas.

Day 3

DR. JENNIFER SHEWMAKER | THANKSGIVING

Today we offer thanks for our wonderfully diverse student body.

"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous – how well I know it." – Psalm 139:13-14

Devotional Thought

As I think back over the many students I have known in my 16 years at ACU, I am overwhelmed by the beauty of the diversity of God's creation. Our students come from many different backgrounds, cultures and lived experiences. They bring a variety of strengths and perspectives, each enriching our community in ways that no other can. When we are willing to share our perspectives and experiences, to open our hearts and lives to one another, the breathtaking beauty of community is revealed in all its glory. The willingness to be vulnerable and share oneself, especially if one's own life may be very different from those of classmates or faculty members, takes great courage. It takes courage for all of us to really share ourselves, in all of our complexity, with one another, and to seek connection even while acknowledging our differences. God has called us to that kind of brave, authentic engagement with one another. He asks us to open our hearts and our lives to one another and, in a world that is increasingly fractured, to be willing to authentically connect with one another in His community.

Today's Prayer

Creator God, you made each of our students in all of their beautiful complexity. We thank you for the diversity of their strengths, experiences and perspectives. We ask for courage to engage fully and lovingly with one another, even in our differences. May we approach one another in love and humility, ready to learn and grow, ready to listen, ready to share, ready to see you and your beauty in the other.

Dr. Jennifer Shewmaker is professor of psychology and dean of the College of Education and Human Services.

Day 4

ELISE MITCHELL | THANKSGIVING

Today we are thankful for our alumni who are making a difference around the globe.

"You have looked deep into my heart, Lord, and you know all about me. You know when I am resting and when I am working, and from heaven you discover my thoughts. You notice everything I do and everywhere I go. Before I even speak a word, you know what I will say, and with your powerful arm you protect me from every side." – Psalm 139:1-5

I love this description of how God walks with us, especially for my children. It gives me the peace and confidence to put all of my questions and worry aside and trust that God will guide and protect my kids. As we prepare to welcome back our students and meet new ones, I hope we can celebrate the promise of their lives in God and the trust their parents have placed in us to love and nurture them.

Devotional Thought

The smell of fresh-cut grass in the summer and homemade sugar cookies at Christmas are scents that seem to spread joy as they fill the air and conjure up happy memories. Our sense of smell is an amazing gift that can elicit powerful thoughts and feelings.

The apostle Paul used the metaphor of a pleasing aroma to illustrate how the godly lives of believers can impact those around them. This is especially true of Christians living in other countries, who are spreading the aroma of Christ in places where the Bible is not as well known. Through their words and actions, they attract others to him.

Many of our alumni serve as missionaries or are pursuing their careers and lives abroad. I am thankful for their willingness to spread the sweet fragrance of our Lord regardless of where they find themselves or who they meet. Let us draw inspiration from them and remind ourselves that God can use us no matter where we are.

Today's Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the way you have chosen to work through us. May we live in such a way that our actions and words spread joy and draw others to you. Bless the daily walk of fellow believers living in faraway places. Keep our hearts and minds open to the opportunities you give us to be the aroma of Christ and to impact others for good. In Jesus' name, amen.

Elise Mitchell serves on the ACU Board of Trustees.

Day 5

DR. KENNETH PYBUS | THANKSGIVING

Today we offer thanks for religious freedom on our campus and in our nation.

"You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven."

– Matthew 5:14-16

Devotional Thought

Our spiritual ancestors would marvel at the world we live in – our rapid technological advancement, our widespread luxury and our sweeping freedoms, which are unparalleled in history. The first Christians huddled in secret to worship God while we gather openly and without fear to declare our allegiance to the maker of the universe and to the Son who redeems us. The early church was oppressed, rejected and dispersed by those in power while our right to worship and to put our religious convictions into practice is the first freedom recognized in our own governing documents. While kings and governors throughout history have sought to stamp out the free exercise of religion, our governmental leaders describe freedom of religion as a cornerstone to the success of modern democracy. Abilene Christian has long been "a city on a hill" – literally and figuratively. We have incredible freedom to teach the Word of God to one another, even when it counters the secular orthodoxy of the day. We can boldly declare the redeeming power of the blood of Jesus in a world darkened by the fall and the power of evil. We enjoy incredible liberty to think, teach and live according to the words of our Savior, and we should not take that privilege for granted but instead use it fully to advance his everlasting kingdom.

Today's Prayer

Our Father and Creator, we thank you for the freedom we have to openly and boldly declare our devotion to you and your kingdom. Grant us the conviction and the fortitude to not squander that freedom, but to be a shining light, to spread your good news to our students, to our community and throughout the world, and to draw people in need of your grace to turn to you and praise your name. Through your Son, amen.

Dr. Kenneth Pybus is associate professor and chair of journalism and mass communication.

Day 6

DR. STEPHEN BALDRIDGE | STUDENTS

Today we pray that our students will have a clear sense of God's purpose and calling on their lives.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." – Jeremiah 29:11

Devotional Thought

You've probably seen this verse framed somewhere. It seems like a pretty easy one when you're helping students understand their calling in life. But like a lot of Scripture, if we actually look at the context of the verse it takes on a different meaning. This verse is to the people of Judah being held captive in Babylon. They were scared and suffering. God made them this promise. And he followed through on that promise – 150 years later. Are we to think in that 150 years there was not death, sickness, catastrophe or pain? Of course not. God made them this promise, but it didn't mean that for every person things were going to work out perfectly. Sometimes things won't just "be OK," even for believers.

Today's Prayer

Holy God, this is a broken world. A world that is full of suffering. As we work with our students to help them discover their purpose, help us to prepare them to make a lasting impact in a world that might not "be OK." Whatever career or vocation they choose, help us to mold students into servants who guide others to your promise of hope and healing. Give us and our students the wisdom and strength to be content in our discomfort. Help our students to find purpose in healing those impacted by the brokenness of this world, all while pointing them to your eternal promise of restoration and redemption.

Dr. Stephen Baldrige is associate professor of social work and assistant dean of the College of Education and Human Services.

Day 7

MARK LEWIS | STUDENTS

Today we pray that our students will find a place of belonging at ACU.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." – Matthew 19:14

Devotional Thought

Some students arrive at ACU with a strong sense of belonging already built in to them. It's as if they were genetically engineered to be here. They've been raised knowing ACU. They've been on campus for Homecoming, Sing Song and summer camps. They always have and always will feel a sense of belonging here. In contrast, some students arrive and ACU is a foreign place for them, but one that holds such promise they have dared to make the journey. Feeling a sense of belonging here may not be immediate for them, but hopefully it will develop over time. Students who have a sense of belonging are much more likely to remain, succeed and stay connected long after they leave. The amazing thing is all of us who work at ACU have the power to help students feel like they belong. When we celebrate a success with a student, or offer a listening ear, or offer academic and career counsel, we are actively reminding students they matter, they are valued, they belong. As we prepare for this new academic year, may each of us realize the potential we have to be God's instruments to express a sense of care, concern and community.

Today's Prayer

Father, help us to be a people who actively love and invest in each student, helping them to feel they are a part of the ACU community during this amazing season of their lives. Amen.

Mark Lewis is dean of students at ACU.

Day 8

DR. STEPHEN JOHNSON | STUDENTS

Today our prayer is that students who come to us from many places with different life experiences might be formed in the way of the servant Jesus.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.” – John 14:1

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” – John 14:27

“Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” – John 20:21-22

Devotional Thought

She introduced herself to the class in her first online graduate course by sharing her name and these words, “I work in human resources for Baylor University approximately 40 to 45 hours a week. My husband passed away a little more than a year ago leaving me to care for our three small children (8, 6 and 4 years). Faith and family are my priorities, and I want this degree to show myself and my children that it can be done with determination.” We walk alongside students who come to us from many places and through many of life’s transitions. Sometimes these transitions come because students are leaving home to join our community. Sometime these transitions come unexpectedly, as life, work and family are well under way, and become the reason students join us. Today we pray that as we journey together, our students might come to know the God of all peace who leaves with us the Holy Spirit that we might live in the way of the servant Jesus.

Today's Prayer

God of all peace, who desires that we all live deeply in the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray that you speak peace over our students. We pray that when troubled, you settle their hearts that they might find rest in you. We pray for the gracious gift of the breath of your Holy Spirit to fill them and send them into the world as Jesus was sent into the world. In the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, we pray, amen.

Dr. Stephen Johnson is vice president and chief administrative officer at ACU Dallas.

Day 9

DR. HEIDI MORRIS | STUDENTS

Today we pray that our students will feel God's presence as they face life's transitions.

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." – 2 Timothy 1:7

Devotional Thought

Change and transition run through the rhythms of life. Sometimes change can be welcomed, and sometimes it can be met with fear and uncertainty. One thing, however, runs constant through life's various transitions: God is in our yesterday, today and tomorrow. His love and faithfulness abide with us always. With this assurance, we can face any transition with the confidence that God does not desire us to live in fear of the unknown, but to walk in confidence and strength because he is in control. For in trusting in him we find peace and resolve to go through life's transitions unafraid.

Today's Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your unending faithfulness that is demonstrated in Scripture and in the lives of your people. Today we pray specifically for our ACU students. We ask that you bless them and reveal to them your faithfulness and abiding presence in their lives. Whether they face transitions with relationships, career planning, health, finances or any other life-altering change, may they seek you to guide them and sustain them. Help them to trust when they feel afraid. Help them to have faith even when they doubt. Help them to seek godly counsel and support. Remind them that nothing can separate them from the love you have for them in Christ Jesus. Fortified with this confidence, may they journey through life's transitions with hope and perseverance because of your mighty power at work in them. In the precious name of Jesus, amen.

Dr. Heidi Morris is assistant professor of marriage and family studies.

Day 10

KAREN HEFLIN | STUDENTS

Today we pray that students who are struggling will find encouragement and support.

“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” – Psalm 46:10

Devotional Thought

This is life-giving information. God is calling us to be still. In the midst of our to-do lists, papers, deadlines and personal challenges, God is reminding us of a simple truth: There is a special type of knowing God that can be discovered in our stillness. Perhaps this is what Jesus meant when he spoke these words, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:30).

The Lord continues by saying, “I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” As students face challenges in life, an essential strategy is to learn how to be still. In this stillness, our ability to listen is heightened. We are made more aware of “The Great I Am.” And the end result is that God is exalted in our lives, in our struggles, in the nations and in all the earth.

Today's Prayer

Lord of all the earth, we thank you for giving us the freedom to be still. Each year, you bring to our campus students from many nations. They come from diverse backgrounds, experiences and cultures. Remind us that productivity can often look like stopping, being still and listening. In our time spent with students, may you be exalted. Help us to teach students the value of being still so they may truly know that you are God. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, amen.

Karen Heflin is Springboard program coordinator at the Griggs Center for Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy.

Day 11

DR. JERRY TAYLOR | HONORING GOD AS A UNIVERSITY

Today we pray that we may honor God through a spirit of unity.

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had." – Acts 4:32

Devotional Thought

Luke says believers in the early church were one in mind and heart. Because of their "inward oneness," they mentally and emotionally detached from physical possessions. Their "inward oneness" prevented them from disenfranchising and excluding one another. Unity, inclusion and caring existed "among" the believers because the spirit of unity, inclusion and caring existed "within" them. Their "inward oneness" eradicated the toxic tendency to withhold goods and goodness from their neighbors.

It is as a result of this "inward spiritual orientation" that as Christians we realize that our gifts belong to God. Therefore we refuse to privatize God's gifts and we dare not use them in a spirit of biased favoritism. Luke's account says Christians did not view any of their possessions as their own. They freely shared their possessions without restrictions. Believers could only be this open-handed as a result of their minds and hearts having become "spiritually integrated" with one another.

Social integration or external unity is only genuinely possible when there is a "unitive spiritual integration" of the minds and hearts of diverse groups. However, the first place to begin the spiritual integration of mind and heart is within the individual. A heartless mind becomes weaponized with competition, dominance, exclusion and exploitation. A heartless mind may be extremely intelligent, but it has no capacity to feel empathy or sympathy for other human beings. A heartless mind lacks the connective tissue necessary to unify one with other people.

When a mind, no matter how brilliant, is separated from a heart of love it becomes a destructive force. On the other hand, a mind driven by a heart of love seeks to authentically include and incorporate everyone it can into the life of the institution in order to create a harmonious climate within the institution.

Today's Prayer

Great giver of life, we honor you with our collective mind and heart. Empower us to use your entrusted intellectual gifts as selfless stewards. Create in us a collective "spiritual integration" that will be reflected throughout ACU's social spaces as an institution.

Jerry Taylor is associate professor in the Department of Bible, Missions and Ministry, and director of the Carl Spain Center on Race Studies and Spiritual Action.

Day 12

APRIL ANTHONY | HONORING GOD AS A UNIVERSITY

Today we pray that we may honor God through our daily work.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain." – Psalm 127:1

Devotional Thought

In this modern age of technology it is easy for our work lives to become overwhelmingly busy. It seems there is a never-ending stream of emails, tasks and appointments. As a result, sometimes we forget what we are really working for. We forget our true purpose, our mission, our calling. Educating students for Christian service and leadership around the world is a high calling, a mission that truly matters. It is a mission that allows us to honor God in our work, but we must always remember to keep him at the center of all we do if we want to do so under his protection.

Today's Prayer

Dear God, thank you for giving us a purpose, a mission, a calling. Never let us forget to keep you at the center of our individual work and of our collective mission as Abilene Christian University. It is for you that we serve and from you that we pray for protection and guidance. Equip us for the calling before us. Keep us always focused on you and help us seek to honor you in all that we do. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

April Anthony is chair of the ACU Board of Trustees.

Day 13

ROBIN SAYLOR | HONORING GOD AS A UNIVERSITY

Today we pray that we may honor God through our interactions with others.

“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” – Colossians 3:14

Devotional Thought

I went for a run along our quiet country road this morning. I enjoy the cool morning air before it gives way to the scorching heat of a West Texas summer day. The rhythmic pace of my body frees my mind, and these early mornings have become my most treasured time alone with God.

Occasionally, I cross paths with Fred. Fred is retired and in his second career at a local hospital. He’s a Christian who lives his faith. And he’s an avid runner. Though he takes his running seriously, Fred always has time for a smile and a quick hello. This morning I watched as Fred left the road, crossed the bar ditch and paused before a scattering of cattle grazing in a field of wildflowers. He took out his iPhone and snapped a photo through the barbed wire fence. Moments later, he detoured up a drive and again paused, this time to photograph the antics of a neighbor’s horses.

I was curious about his frequent stops this day. It turns out he is a member of “I Run 4,” an all-volunteer organization that pairs athletes with people who can’t run. Fred’s online buddy is Mikey T, who suffers from a neuromuscular disorder called dystonia and is confined to a wheelchair. Mikey is 22 and lives in St. Louis, Missouri. Fred has visited him a couple of times, but their four-year friendship is mostly carried out through Facebook posts. Fred says God gave him the gift of mobility and Mikey T the gift of encouragement, and they freely share their gifts with one another.

It seems to me Fred is doubly blessed – by bringing joy to another in the course of his daily life and by viewing the world through someone else’s eyes, which when you think about it, is a rather profound way to see the world through the eyes of God.

Today's Prayer

Gracious Heavenly Father, may you give us eyes to see others as you see them and hearts quick to respond with compassion. May we look for simple ways to show kindness throughout each day and to everyone we meet. In your son’s precious name, amen.

Robin Saylor is director of content strategy in University Marketing and assistant editor of ACU Today magazine.

Day 14

CINDY GRAVITT | HONORING GOD AS A UNIVERSITY

Today we pray that we may honor God through the decisions we make.

“Real wisdom, God’s wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.” – James 3:17-18

Devotional Thought

We must not forget we have been entrusted by God to do his work at ACU, both internally and globally. Every decision we make has the power to transform individual lives and the larger culture in which we live.

It is a sacred journey to walk alongside students during a season that will greatly impact their future in so many arenas. It is evident they are watching us as leaders, mentors and educators to see how we “adult” as Christians. They are hungry to be led and have no shortage of opinions shouted at them from the screens in their hands. They are not alone. The “ACU bubble” burst long ago – we as a university are on a world stage. We exist in an offended culture that seeks to accuse and find blame for the woes of this fallen world, and Christianity is the target of choice. We are uniquely situated to make collective decisions that honor God and demonstrate the heart of true Christianity. James graciously shows us that wise, God-honoring decisions are rooted in the hard work of consistently sowing love and peace.

Today's Prayer

Gracious Father, thank you for the gift of wisdom from heaven. May we honor you by using it to inform every decision we make, collectively and as individuals, to create a peace-loving community that reflects your consistency, mercy and grace. Amen.

Cindy Gravitt is practice manager of the Weber Medical and Counseling Care Center.

Day 15

RYAN BOWMAN | HONORING GOD AS A UNIVERSITY

Today we pray that we may honor God in times of uncertainty and stress.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” – James 1:2-4

Devotional Thought

I believe the Holy Spirit is challenging believers to re-evaluate the purpose of life's challenges. When we are being challenged in life, it causes us to think harder and to look harder at what's really happening. God is challenging us to think and learn instead of just reacting. I have learned that trials will help us in three areas: Trials confirm our faith, trials purify our faith, and trials grow our trust in God. Finally, James says rejoice. We rejoice because we know our trials will have a beneficial outcome. In other words, there's a purpose for my trials, and in the end God will receive the glory.

Today's Prayer

Lord, I thank you for this experience. May your testing be a confirmation that you believe in me to execute the task that is ahead of me. I pray that I will grow into a better servant, to serve your kingdom. I also pray that my trials will be a testimony to bring others into thy presence. Amen.

Ryan Bowman is Title IX case manager.

Day 16

DR. ODIES WRIGHT | LEADERSHIP

Today we pray that ACU's leaders will lead with wisdom.

"The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." – Proverbs 14:1

Devotional Thought

After a worship service, I was talking with a renowned leader in our community about his thoughts when an incensed man bee-lined to the leader, red-faced, and blasted forth an arsenal of angry claims about the leader's beliefs. I felt shocked by the disrespectful interruption, the close-in posturing and the tone. The internationally celebrated leader, who had both position and accomplishment far outranking the accuser, looked into the angry man's eyes. The leader's face was sincere and gentle. His words were calm and humble. Though he was firm, he showed understanding of the other's view, and he invited the accuser to meet later to talk further. I often relive this event in my mind, thinking of this humble leader's example. Regardless of position at ACU, we all lead as we impact each other and our students. Wisdom leads us to responsibly create an atmosphere of love and peace, not one of turmoil. We have a tremendous opportunity to bless this place by building up a community that invites conversation about difference, in humility and strength.

Today's Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for the love, mercy and strength that are ours in being yours. Thank you for grace and peace. We humbly lift up all at ACU, asking for hearts that will lead like Jesus, being focused on building each other up, honoring one another above ourselves, and being servant-leaders. Thank you for the strength we gain in reading your Word, and in prayer, through which we can accomplish the tasks you have for us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Dr. Odies Wright is associate professor of kinesiology and nutrition.

Day 17

DENNIS MARQUARDT | LEADERSHIP

Today we pray for a God-inspired vision to guide the leaders of ACU.

"The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them ..." – Joshua 9:14-15

Devotional Thought

An organizational vision generally refers to a stated ideal that reflects the shared values to which the organization aspires. Sometimes, however, in our focus on an aspirational vision we are less vigilant about the more simplistic concept of vision: Can we accurately see what is happening around us? In Joshua 9, we find the Gibeonite people successfully deceiving the Israelite leaders into making an ungodly treaty. Everything looked good on the outside, but Joshua and the other Israelite leaders failed to truly see what was taking place. The fatal flaw is revealed in verse 14 where we find the leaders "did not inquire of the Lord." The strength of godly leadership often lies not in our unique abilities, but rather in our level of relationship to God. Oswald Chambers once wrote, "God does not tell you what he is going to do. He reveals to you who he is." God-inspired vision may more likely come from relationship than from revelation. The more we intentionally encounter him the more our impaired vision receives the divine correction it needs.

Today's Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for your ways are higher and your thoughts are greater. Thank you for calling us to be your instruments on this earth. We pray today for the leaders of ACU, that their vision will come from you, that you may grant them eyes to see and ears to hear as you see and hear. Please lead and guide them and each of us so that we may become a community that points others to the hope and joy found in your son Jesus Christ. It is in his name we pray, amen.

Dennis Marquardt is director of the Lytle Center for Faith and Leadership, and assistant professor of management sciences.

Day 18

DR. TRACY SHILCUTT | LEADERSHIP

Today we pray that ACU's Board of Trustees will lead with tenacity and courage.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." – Matthew 5:3-10

Devotional Thought

Jesus' words remind us that to follow his lead requires adopting a worldview centered on life in an upside-down kingdom where priority and value have different meaning – emphasizing mercy and love over piety. This ethical reality cannot be attained by human willpower alone; it demands trust in the influence of the Holy Spirit, constant prayer, and a recognition that the call of the now does not stand apart from the call of eternity. May Jesus' example of tenacity and courage in the face of pressure stand as an exemplar and transform us as a community. May the ACU Board of Trustees look to Jesus and trust the Spirit as they lead the community forward.

Today's Prayer

The prayer today is from theologian Reinhold Niebuhr:

God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that you will make all things right, if I surrender to your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with you forever in the next.

Through Jesus, amen.

Dr. Tracy Shilcutt is professor of history and global studies, and associate dean of the Honors College.

Day 19

MARK PHILLIPS | LEADERSHIP

Today we pray for Dr. Phil Schubert to lead the university with courage and resolve.

“Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others.” – Mark 10:45

Devotional Thought

Americans love the concept of leadership. We encourage our kids to “be leaders, not followers,” and successful leaders receive bigger offices, larger salaries and even more power than they had before.

Yet the greatest leader of all time led in a way that propelled him, not to an emperor’s palace, but to a borrowed tomb. His last hours were spent washing the feet of followers who would soon abandon him en masse. He spoke of a “good” shepherd, who literally gives up his own life for a herd of smelly livestock who neither notice nor care (John 10:11). His follower Paul charges husbands who lead their wives to be willing to die for them, just as Christ did for the church (Ephesians 5:25), because in the upside-down kingdom of God, leaders choose to suffer for their followers, not vice versa.

Leaders’ decisions are frequently second-guessed and critiqued, both from within and without, and this often seems doubly true at ACU. I am grateful that for over a century God has brought us servants willing to lead.

Today's Prayer

Father, bless Dr. Schubert with wisdom to discern, clarity to see as you see, and courage to stand firm when leadership is hard. Give him a deep, profound love for you and for ACU. Guide us as we follow, and help us to make his work a joy. In the name of our ultimate leader, Jesus Christ.

Dr. Mark Phillips is professor and chair of management sciences.

Day 20

JIMMY ELLISON | LEADERSHIP

Today we pray for the Senior Leadership Team's commitment to Christ.

One Scripture I like about commitment is Matthew 22:37. Jesus tells us to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind." Jesus didn't say part of our heart, soul and mind. He said all of it. I'm committed, I'm all in, praying for our Senior Leadership Team. I hope you will join me.

Devotional Thought

Leadership and commitment are separate things, neither of which can be successful without the other. Leadership is often confused with authority and power. But in reality, leaders serve and sacrifice. They set examples and direction. They make tough decisions, get second-guessed. Leadership is easy when times are good and challenges are few, but gets tough when controversy swirls. That's when doubts arise, judgments flow, and critics grow loud. It happens whether the leader is on the field of battle, the stadium sidelines or in the boardroom.

Yet leadership doesn't happen without commitment. Commitment to mission, to values. Commitment to faith, courage and risks taken for the survival of the platoon, for the team victory or for organizational progress.

Our Strategic Leadership Team at ACU is no different. They are Christ-like men and women who are committed to Christ, committed to the ACU mission. Like all leaders, they get second-guessed. They need our support and our prayers. They need our commitment to provide both, even when we disagree.

So just what is commitment? I'm no scholar, so to me it's pretty simple. Commitment simply means "all in." No one can be partially committed to anything. You're either committed, or you're not. All in, full throttle.

Today's Prayer

Father, my prayer is that our Senior Leadership Team remains all in, full throttle, in its commitment to Jesus Christ and to ACU. In Jesus' name, amen.

Jimmy Ellison is chief of ACU Police.

Day 21

SAMANTHA ADKINS | STAFF

Today we pray for staff who are on the front line of serving students every day.

*"The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights."
– Habakkuk 3:19*

Devotional Thought

The day-to-day of serving students isn't an easy task. It's definitely not for the faint of heart. Thankfully for our students, there is an amazing group of women and men who aren't just willing to serve, but they run to the calling. These frontline staff members are willing to live in residence halls; work side-by-side with those involved in student productions; care for their medical and mental needs; and challenge them spiritually. Our students are better for their sacrifices. But it often takes a toll on the individual providing the support. So for these staff members who walk alongside students, through the good times and the bad times, I pray they remember that our Father is the one who gives us ultimate strength. And he will always provide; we just have to ask.

Today's Prayer

Holy Father, thank you for the ACU staff who are serving students on the frontlines – those who are willing to put their lives on hold to care for students. Thank you for their words and deeds that encourage our students. Thank you for the support they provide every day. Give them strength as they walk beside our students in the difficult and trying times. Encourage their hearts when they feel they cannot carry on. Guide their tongues as they speak into the lives of our students. May those providing the support feel your support and strength. May they always call upon your name. Amen.

Samantha Adkins is director of stewardship for the Office of Advancement.

Day 22

DANIEL GARCIA | STAFF

Today we pray for staff who serve at locations throughout the world.

“Then they gathered around him and asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’” – Acts 1:6-8

Devotional Thought

From the beginning, our focus at ACU has been to educate Christian students to make a difference throughout the world. We understand that if we want to be part of God’s mission, we need to both make sure we take care of those around us and look beyond our immediate community. At the Abilene campus, we have the blessing of counting on a vast network of brothers and sisters in Christ that can help us stay focused and encouraged in our walk with God. Those who work at ACU Dallas, our Study Abroad centers and other locations away from the main campus are key partners in taking our mission to “all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” Let us be intentional in strengthening our relationships with these partners, so together we continue to let God work throughout our community in Abilene and beyond.

Today's Prayer

Dear God, helps us as a community to understand how we can be part of your mission by showing your love and compassion to those around us as well as those whom we might never meet. We thank you for all our ACU friends who work with us to take your mission beyond our physical campus in Abilene. Continue to bless them and encourage them each day as we all find ways to strengthen this community of faith.

Daniel Garcia is instructor of management sciences.

Day 23

COREY RUFF | STAFF

Today we pray for staff who work behind the scenes to keep the campus operating smoothly every day.

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” – Romans 12:10-13

I love this description of how God walks with us, especially for my children. It gives me the peace and confidence to put all of my questions and worry aside and trust that God will guide and protect my kids. As we prepare to welcome back our students and meet new ones, I hope we can celebrate the promise of their lives in God and the trust their parents have placed in us to love and nurture them.

Devotional Thought

What a blessing it is to work on such a beautiful and loving campus! To keep ACU running, it takes a lot of staff working behind the scenes, and they play an important role in creating the “ACU difference” that we all enjoy. I’m reminded of the story when President John F. Kennedy visited the NASA headquarters for the first time in 1961. While touring the facility, he introduced himself to a custodian and asked him what he did at NASA. The custodian replied, “I’m helping put a man on the moon.” This is the same attitude that so many of our awesome staff members embrace as they carry out their daily task. They understand ACU’s mission and the important part they play.

Today's Prayer

Holy Father, thank you for this day and for the opportunity that you provide us to serve your kingdom at ACU. I ask a special prayer on the staff members who often work tirelessly behind the scenes to make ACU a place where our students, faculty, staff and alumni can grow closer to you. Please keep them safe this summer, please provide them with opportunities for rest and renewal, and please bless the fruits of their labor. In Jesus’ name, I pray, amen.

Corey Ruff is associate vice president of operations.

Day 24

ROB FORKNER | STAFF

Today we pray for staff who are new to ACU and those who are taking on new roles and responsibilities.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot." – Matthew 5:13

Devotional Thought

Starting a new position usually means we are venturing into new territory, leaving our comfort zone for the unknown. It is easy in these situations to simply put our head down to the grindstone and get the job done. In doing so, we can forget what we truly are supposed to be about. We can miss opportunities to serve and to minister. We are not simply employees of ACU who happen to be Christians; we are Christians who happen to be employees. We are the salt of the earth, providing change even here on this campus. We are the seasoning, the preservative, even a disinfectant. Just as it is required of salt to come into contact with what it is preserving, being a Christian means we must be in contact with people. We can't be superficial; we have to be involved in people's lives. We cannot change the world if we separate ourselves from it. The distinction is we – not the world – are the change agent. If we follow the wisdom of the world, if we have lost our saltiness, if we have forgotten our first love (Revelation 2:4), then we're not good for anything. To avoid this, we have to regularly be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2) to be made in Christ's likeness. Let us daily renew ourselves with the conviction that it is never about us – our work here serves a far greater purpose – and that our strength to be selfless and salty in this world comes not from within, but from the Lord, who loved us and gave himself up for us.

Today's Prayer

Dear Lord and Father, I pray today that you will bless our staff and that you will bless those who are new to our family. May they be welcomed, strengthened and encouraged by those around them, and as iron sharpens iron, may we all be strengthened and blessed by one another. I pray also that you will bless those staff members who are taking on new roles, and that their work and their efforts will be fruitful, and that you will be glorified through their work. And I pray also that whatever we set our hands to do, our salty Christlikeness will be clearly seen on this campus among our peers, our students, our community and the world. Amen.

Rob Forkner is senior systems administrator.

Day 25

LIZ BROWN | STAFF

Today we pray for staff who have served ACU faithfully for many years.

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." – Philippians 1:3-5

Devotional Thought

American culture tells us to value what is new – the latest fad, the most current trend. God's work is often furthered in the quiet places, the unassuming moments in which people of faith have decided to lean into their callings and not shirk away from their responsibilities as followers of Christ, even when there may be minimal recognition or glory. The staff members of ACU who have come to work every day for years and who continue to tirelessly pursue the work of God through the university are the backbone that keeps us all moving forward. They bring layers of wisdom, history and depth to our campus and to a culture that often over-values new as better. Explicitly expressing our gratitude to these people and thanking God for them is a simple but powerful recognition and reminder of all they have contributed and will continue to contribute to ACU. Take a moment to say thank you to someone who has served this community for years.

Today's Prayer

God, thank you for your servants who daily choose to engage in work that honors and glorifies you, and who do so tirelessly and without seeking glory or fame. Your work is not complete until Jesus returns, but we are so grateful for those who decided long ago to honor you with their lives and who choose to do so at ACU. Help us be a people who honor and value their contributions, and who make our gratitude known. Thank you for continuing to complete your good works in us; help us remain faithful on the journey. And thank you for Jesus and the promise of his return when we can see the full picture of your plan revealed.

Liz Brown is director of university access programs and ADA compliance officer.

Day 26

JAMA CADLE | ALUMNI

Today we pray for recent graduates who are looking for jobs.

"I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken." – Psalm 16:7-8

Devotional Thought

In this passage, David continues to praise God in times of uncertainty. God is not only his refuge, treasure and sovereign, he is also his counselor. David made God his focus, his perspective. God becomes our refuge by teaching us how to walk in the way of life and not death. There is always hope with God.

Today's Prayer

Dear God, thank you for today. Thank you for your unconditional love. Father, please bless our recent graduates with clarity, wisdom and direction as they begin this new season of life. May their faith in you be the foundation for all things in their lives. As they look for career opportunities may you use their strengths to glorify you. May they be living examples to others of your love. Help them to always remember their worth and identity is in you. Protect them and guide them all the days of their lives. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Jama Cadle is assistant director of alumni and university relations.

Day 27

RON HADFIELD | ALUMNI

Today we pray for alumni who are serving in ministries around the world.

“And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.’” – Mark 16:15

Devotional Thought

As editor of *ACU Today* magazine, I’ve been looking for stories to tell about Abilene Christian for more than three decades. In July 2008, I traveled 27 straight hours on three consecutive flights with a group of faculty, staff and trustees to conduct the homeland Commencement ceremony promised to a couple dozen graduates of the Madagascar Presidential Scholars Program.

One of the excursions planned for our group took us to a church-sponsored orphanage many miles from the island nation’s capital city of Antananarivo. We came upon it – a sturdy-looking cinderblock building on a dusty road, with a large cross embedded in the masonry, between its eaves. Inside to greet us were dozens of happy children, each wearing an oversized souvenir ACU T-shirt with the words “Step right up and change the world” on the back, the theme of the university’s Homecoming in 2007. The children sang for us in Malagasy, in tunes we recognized but in words we did not. How in the world, I wondered, did these purple ACU shirts end up here, more than 10,000 miles from Abilene? The scene was surreal, the coincidence overwhelming.

In an adjacent room, volunteers dispensed medicine through an open window to people who walked miles down well-worn footpaths to receive it. One of the workers was a woman who lived down the street from me on the Hill. She explained that ACU connections with this most rural of all rural ministries were actually well established. I was astonished. The globe we had traveled a considerable distance across suddenly felt very small at that moment. I was humbled at the sight of someone from my neighborhood back home quietly serving in such a faraway place, without fanfare. Yet acts of kindness like this happen every day, and have so for decades.

It’s not trite to refer to Abilene and our campus as a crossroads of the world. We have come to take for granted the sending and welcoming of people with whom we engage, but that international scope was probably unthinkable to founder A.B. Barret and his small cadre of educational pioneers at the turn of the 20th century.

Today, our adventuresome students easily journey to study and live abroad, a habit we encourage them to form. Many learn about vocational missions and develop a heart for incorporating it into their careers as they travel widely for work and pleasure. Other ACU graduates earn degrees in ministry and devote their lives to planting churches and preaching the Gospel in the most needy places. They have for more than a century. It’s staggering to realize our alumni reside in more than 110 of the world’s 195 nations. The sun truly never sets on an ACU student or graduate engaged in making a real difference in the world, around the world – like stars shining brightly, as a certain school song reminds us.

May God continue to give us the faith and energy to follow his call, wherever it leads us, and to join hands with the people we find there. Don’t be surprised when you encounter those on your journeys who share the uncommon legacy formed in this place. It’s just another example of God at work among us. Be thankful, then pitch in to help.

Ron Hadfield is assistant vice president for university communication and editor of ACU Today magazine.

Day 28

DR. CLIFF BARBARICK | ALUMNI

Today we pray for alumni who are serving God's kingdom in their secular careers.

"When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the Lord God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person." – Genesis 2:4-7

Devotional Thought

The creation accounts in Genesis 1–2 introduce God as a life-giving creator who brings beauty and order out of lifeless chaos. And he creates human beings to join him in his work. It's not that he needs humans to complete the work for him. The stories make clear he's the ultimate source of life. But he invites us to join him in his work, cultivating what he has made to bring it to full flourishing. These stories inhere our work with deep meaning. In many different ways in many different fields we can join God in his ongoing work of bringing beauty and order out of chaos. Ultimately, this is what we strive to prepare our students to do after they graduate. Yes, we want to train them for excellence in their chosen fields; but, even more so, we want to help shape them into God's coworkers who cultivate the communities they join so that God can bring flourishing life. Today, we remember and pray for our alumni we have sent out to build God's kingdom through their various careers.

Today's Prayer

Father, Creator, thank you for continually pouring out your life to fill your creation. Empower our alumni, filling them with your Spirit, so that your life flows through them into the various communities to which you have called them. And as they empty themselves for the sake of your world, may they find the true flourishing revealed and modeled by your Son, who gave up his life only to be raised by your power. By his Spirit we live and pray, amen.

Dr. Cliff Barbarick is associate professor of Bible, missions and ministry, and director of faculty development in the Adams Center for Teaching and Learning.

Day 29

TOD BROWN | ALUMNI

Today we pray for alumni who have sent their children and grandchildren to ACU to receive a Christian education.

"Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever." – Joshua 4:5-7

Devotional Thought

Not long ago I was standing in front of the Hardin Administration Building when a powerful memory hit me out of the blue. I remember being a freshman at ACU and attending Tuesday night devo on the steps. I was the first of my family to attend ACU and that first night, lost in worship with my fellow students, I knew that God was going to use this place to change my life.

There is something powerful and mysterious when faith moves from one generation to another. Parents who long for their children to know God start them on a spiritual journey by teaching them to mimic the spiritual rituals that helped form them. Our hope isn't just that our children go to ACU like we did; our hope is that somehow, by being exposed to the places and people and stories that have given our lives meaning, the next generation will experience a genuine personal connection with the same God we know.

Today's Prayer

O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we thank you for the way you have used ACU to shape students for generations. We pray that as we encourage our children and grandchildren to come to this place that you will be alive to them just as you have been to us.

Tod Brown serves on the ACU Board of Trustees.

Day 30

SHERITA NICKERSON | ALUMNI

Today we pray for alumni who support ACU in many ways, such as providing jobs and internships, supporting the university financially and keeping ACU in their prayers.

“When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more, will be required.” – Luke 12:48

Devotional Thought

Through our beloved university, God has blessed us “much.” During our academic career at Abilene Christian University, the faculty, staff and our cohorts chose to invest their time, talents, energy and material goods into us and other students. What type of return is the university to receive from us now? The most valuable return on his investment is when we become his hands and feet, pouring into the lives of others who follow after us. Keeping our eyes on Jesus, we see how we can bless others daily in ways great and small. We have all been blessed with “much.” Much is not limited to the amount, as with the poor widow in Luke 21:1-4; much is equal to the sacrifice. Alumni, thank you for your sacrificial support.

Today's Prayer

Gracious God of Heaven, thank you for your abundance. We praise you, God, for the many ways you pour out blessings in our lives daily. Thank you for entrusting us with bountiful blessings in our health, wealth, relationships, careers and our salvation. May we live our lives daily in pursuit of you, evidenced in our blessing of others. We offer this prayer in the precious name of Jesus, amen.

Sherita Nickerson is Title IX deputy anti-harassment coordinator.

Day 31

ZACH SNYDER | PARENTS

Today we pray for parents who are dropping a student off at college for the first time.

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 4:6-7

Devotional Thought

Every year as freshmen move into the building I oversee, I remember what it was like as a parent to survive that move-in day and the even more stressful weeks and months that came after. There are just so many things for parents of new students to be anxious about: Will he get enough sleep? Will she do well in her classes? Is he making friends? Now she wants to change her major?!

The passage I chose can be a source of comfort in stressful times, even as things inevitably do not go according to plan. Instead of saying we will receive what we ask for, Paul promises us we will receive holy serenity as refuge for our anxious hearts. Paul also leads us to couple our petitions with thanksgiving because remembering what God has already done can bring welcome relief for minds otherwise consumed with worry. We can be reminded that, as the hymn says, God will “guide the future as he has the past.”

Today's Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we consider the parents who are experiencing this separation for the first time, we thank you for the students they will be entrusting to our care. Give these parents your peace as they bring their concerns and anxieties to you. Help them to remember all you have already done for them and their children so that they may watch with joyful expectation all you will continue to do. Amen.

Zach Snyder is resident director of Edwards Hall.

Day 32

JESSICA MANNING | PARENTS

Today we pray for parents of seniors who are looking toward graduation and finding careers.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”
– Jeremiah 29:11-13

Devotional Thought

The Lord has a plan for each of us that is good and will provide for each step of our journey. Through Jeremiah, God is telling the exiles that their scattering isn't accidental. God has plans for them, plans that include even what seems chaotic and random. Moreover, these plans mean the exile isn't permanent. That isn't because of their faithfulness but because of God's promise to Abraham – a promise that was itself looking forward to Abraham's son, the Lord Jesus (Romans 4). We who are in Christ can count on him to help guide our students as they reach graduation and transition to the next chapter in their lives. “He will shield you with His wings. They will shelter you for he orders the angels to protect you wherever you go.” (Psalm 91:11)

Today's Prayer

O Heavenly Father, we come to you today thankful for Jesus. We are in awe of who you are and what you do for us. We call upon you to follow the one we love and to provide the guidance of your spirit. May our children hear your gentle call and follow the plan you have created for them. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

Jessica Manning is associate vice president for enrollment and student services at ACU Dallas.

Day 33

ALICIA ENGLISH | PARENTS

Today we pray for parents of our international students.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 4:6-7

Devotional Thought

The emotions and feelings parents go through once they head back home after dropping their child off at college can be overwhelming. Even being a few hours away is difficult for families to first navigate. It's a blessing for students from all over the country to desire education and spiritual formation; however, imagine being countries away from your home family. The courage and belief it takes for students to step out on faith to follow God's plan for their lives is a big accomplishment. God tells us in 2 Timothy 1:7 to not have a spirit of fear, but of power, love and sound mind. The Lord gives us these tools because he knows it's not easy to leave what and who you know to be a vessel for him. Finally, he tells us even more to not be anxious but to pray about everything in order to have his peace to guard us through every situation.

Today's Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, as we begin to start a new school year, we want to thank you for our amazing international students and their parents who allow them to come to ACU. Thank you for opening doors and giving opportunity to families who have come from a far place to be a Wildcat. Bless these parents as they allow their child to grow here on campus. Give them peace and confidence to know that every student is being loved and cared for as their own. Bless their labors and fill their hearts with joy as they desire to see great things from their child. May we all grow closer to you in this season of opportunity and growth. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Alicia English is assistant athletics director for external operations.

Day 34

DR. RICHARD BECK | PARENTS

Today we pray for parents as they watch their students become independent adults that they may let go and entrust their children to God.

“Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: ‘This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.’” – Luke 2:34-35

Devotional Thought

When the infant Jesus is presented at the temple, Simeon has a specific prophetic word for Mary: “A sword will pierce your own soul too.” Being Jesus’s mother will bring fear, confusion and suffering into Mary’s life.

Every parent can identify with Mary. There is great joy in becoming a parent, but having children makes us vulnerable to heartache. The successes and victories of our children become our successes and victories. But their pain and sorrow also becomes our pain and sorrow. When our children hurt, a sword pierces our heart as well.

The burden of this vulnerability can overwhelm us with fear, especially during times of letting go when our children step away from the protective, caring space of home. Wildcat Week is a joyous time, but it’s also a time of great sadness and anxiety for the parents of our ACU students. Love has a cost, and it’s often paid with tears and sleepless nights.

Today's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, a sword also pierced your heart when you gave your Son to the world in love. We, however, are but dust. Our fears as parents can overwhelm us with worry. And the sorrows of our children can cripple us with grief. So today we pray for the parents of our students as they let go of their children during this season of life. We ask that you replace any fear and anxiety they may have with peace, courage, comfort, trust and joy. Give our ACU parents – give all of us – the power and courage to fearlessly carry the burden of love. Amen.

Dr. Richard Beck is professor and chair of psychology.

Day 35

JULIE GOODENOUGH | PARENTS

Today we pray for parents who are sending their final child to college and adjusting to an empty nest.

"I will be your God throughout your lifetime until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you." – Isaiah 46:4

I love this description of how God walks with us, especially for my children. It gives me the peace and confidence to put all of my questions and worry aside and trust that God will guide and protect my kids. As we prepare to welcome back our students and meet new ones, I hope we can celebrate the promise of their lives in God and the trust their parents have placed in us to love and nurture them.

Devotional Thought

Parents may experience feelings of sadness and loss when the last child leaves for college. Although you actively empower and encourage your children to become independent, the experience of letting go can be painful. The realization that there are no longer children at home who need your daily care is difficult because you figure out that your life was built around them. Entering this new stage of life is daunting, and there are unknowns everywhere. However, with each stage, there is a new beginning. There is a freedom to evaluate yourself and strive to become the person you really want to be. God will provide us with an incredible sense of worth when we trust him to guide our journeys! He promises to walk beside us and to never leave us. Remember that you are not alone and that God has a great plan to find the perfect balance for your life in this next stage! (And P.S. your children will always need you!)

Today's Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, while our hearts may not be prepared for the changes that life brings, may we always, without ceasing, seek your will and comfort. Your love for us is so real, and we thank you for embracing us throughout every stage of life. May our uncertainty be replaced by joy in you as your grace gives us a sense of value, importance and a higher calling. We love you and humbly seek to serve you. It's in your name we pray, amen.

Julie Goodenough is head women's basketball coach.

Day 36

DAWNE MEEKS | FACULTY

Today we pray for faculty as they serve as professional and spiritual mentors to students.

“This is what God the Lord says – he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: ‘I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light.’” – Isaiah 42:5-6

Devotional Thought

In a world that is media-driven, that often feels chaotic and dark, I am grateful to engage in a tradition of education and oration. Aristotle suggested that students learn through active engagement. I am thankful for a career that allows us to communicate face to face with our students. We have the opportunity to impact our students and watch them mirror back what we project. Humanity in its pure form.

We engage in community. I am reminded that we are not alone. I am reminded that our Father takes our histories, our stories, and transforms us into his perfect image. We seek, search, apply and learn. We all are students journeying through this mysterious life, mapping our way by his word and promise. There is hope to be shared with our amazing students and with one another, and foundational truths that we may cling to as we travel our academic path, donning titles and robes.

I am humbly reminded by author and blogger Lisa Bevere that “truth is a who, not a what,” and we only find academic, emotional and spiritual “wholeness through his holiness.” May we be co-seekers of him, learning and growing individually and together.

Today's Prayer

Father, we bow before you today in humbleness. May we lead by prayer, discernment, active listening and modeling by your image and example. Thank you for providing daily opportunities to mentor our students spiritually and within our discipline and craft. May we more fervently seek you. May we listen more deeply, be slow to speak, slow to judge and remember our youth so we may peer through the lens of our students' eyes. May we feed our souls with prayer, meditation and reflection. May we roll up our sleeves and challenge ourselves to be our best selves in the classroom and out of the classroom. May we engage in times of restoration so that we may re-energize, focus and root our feet in gratitude. May we honor you in word and action. Amen.

Dawne Meeks is associate professor and chair of theatre.

Day 37

RALPH DRAPER | FACULTY

Today we pray for faculty as they prepare students to work in their career fields and to serve in the kingdom of God.

"It was he who 'gave gifts to people'; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers." – Ephesians 4:11

Devotional Thought

In this scriptural text, Paul is speaking specifically of functions within the context of the Christian church. While ACU is not the church, one of its primary missions is to prepare students of the church and beyond for kingdom service. As Reggie McNeal in his book *The Present Future* asserts, "The idea that God has gifted people only for church jobs flies in the face of his redemptive mission in the world."

Our faculty, perhaps more than any other ACU group, represents our frontline delivery system in this mission. As such, their success is critical. Prayer offers us an opportunity to partner with faculty daily in the noble task of preparing students for the work of service and leadership. This equipping of students for kingdom service in this global society is a gift bestowed on the faculty for such a time as this – a time of upheaval and spiritual awakening. A time of prayer.

Today's Prayer

Gracious and loving Father, we thank you always for the privilege of being invited to participate in your redemptive work in our world. We thank you for ACU as an instrument of good in this purpose. Especially are we mindful of our faculty as they discharge the grace of teaching and shepherding into the lives of students. We ask for divine wisdom and guidance and that this grace be sufficient for each day. In the name of our great teacher, Jesus, amen.

Ralph Draper serves on the ACU Board of Trustees.

Day 38

DAVID FLOW | FACULTY

Today we pray for meaningful and lifelong relationships between faculty and students.

“Be assured that from the first day we heard of you, we haven’t stopped praying for you, asking God to give you wise minds and spirits attuned to his will, and so acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. We pray that you’ll live well for the Master, making him proud of you as you work hard in his orchard. As you learn more and more how God works, you will learn how to do your work. We pray that you’ll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul – not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us.” – Colossians 1:9-12

Devotional Thought

What if every ACU student during their time in Abilene and then continuing through their lifetime had someone praying specifically for them by name: That they would gain spiritual wisdom and discernment that would lead them to live well, glorifying their creator each and every day. That they would know and feel the presence of the Holy Spirit, and would endure those seasons of hardship. That they would remember the great love and mercy of God, who cares deeply for them at all times. That they would experience the joy that leads to a life of thanksgiving and gratitude. How would this impact our students, impact us and impact the world?

Today's Prayer

O Almighty God, thank you for Jesus. Thank you for the Holy Spirit. Thank you that you created us not to live isolated but among community, the body of Christ – a body found all over this world. We do lift up every student, past and present, that the seeds planted and the relationships made during their time here are the works of your hands, and that they would know they are deeply loved wherever they may find themselves today. We pray they will find everything bright and beautiful you have made of them, which is found only in you and you only. I pray this in and through the holy name of Jesus, amen.

David Flow serves on the ACU Board of Trustees.

Day 39

DR. NIL SANTANA | FACULTY

Today we pray that our faculty and students may be filled with a passion for lifelong learning.

"In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us." – Titus 2:7-8

Devotional Thought

One of the most important spiritual impacts we can have on our students, I believe, is by modeling for them the passion for lifelong learning and growing our relationship with Jesus. Through God's words we gain an understanding that God is the one who gives us the gift of knowledge, discernment and wisdom that should distinguish every disciple of Christ. I take the words of Colossians 1:9 – "We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way" – to be a mandate for all those who claim the lordship of Christ as we are called to learn and gain spiritual wisdom and growth in the knowledge of God, not just accumulating knowledge but providing us with direction for living.

Today's Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, Thank you for your love and for the Holy Spirit. Thank you for giving us the ability to learn, and most important, to learn more about you. Illuminate our daily paths with your knowledge as we walk our journeys, enlightening our understanding. Teach us how to live as you would have us live. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

Dr. Nil Santana is associate professor of art and design.

Day 40

DR. DAVID KNEIP | FACULTY

Today we pray for endurance and courage for our faculty.

"We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience." – Colossians 1:9b-11

Devotional Thought

Paul and Timothy wrote Colossians to a group of Christians they had seemingly never visited. However, they had heard a lot about them and had relational connections with them. It might be the same for you regarding our faculty members. Whether you know one of us or a lot of us, we need your support. Like all of us on campus, faculty face many challenges, and our work is both exhausting and rewarding. To be sure, some of those challenges have to do with our day-to-day work – how to motivate our students, how to work well with our colleagues, etc. – but others are more clearly spiritual in nature, just like the things Paul mentions in our text. Thank you for your prayers!

Today's Prayer

O God, you are the giver of all good gifts and the fountain of all wisdom. Please grant to our faculty a spirit of wisdom, that they may instruct your children with words of truth; a spirit of holiness, that they may go before your children in a life imitating Jesus; and a spirit of endurance, that they may persevere through the challenges of another school year. In the name of Jesus, who endured the shame of the cross for the joy that was set before him, we pray: Amen. (inspired by a prayer of Rev. Walter Gwynne published in 1888)

Dr. David Kneip is associate chair of the Department of Bible, Missions and Ministry.

