

# Module One:

## Individual Prayers, Meditations, and Reflections

### Preparation through Prayer

This material is designed for personal prayer, meditation, and reflection. Use it in ways that fit your daily patterns. You may choose to spend ten, twenty, or more minutes each day or once a week. Or you may complete one prayer activity each time you work with the material, which can be used for couples, as well.

You may wish to review *Listen: A Centering Activity*, found at [CofChrist.org/CofM](http://CofChrist.org/CofM).

Take time to ready yourself to discern; to listen for the still, small voice of God; to be open to the impress of the Holy Spirit. Although God always is present, engaging in spiritual formation is not a “light-switch” experience. You cannot instantly turn your connectedness to God on and off.

Sit quietly each day to pray, ponder, reflect, meditate, journal, and discern. If you are not in the habit of praying daily, consider adjusting your schedule so that you find a rhythm of prayer and have a comfort level of listening for the divine voice.

As you enter into daily prayer, start with thanksgiving and praise. With a heart of gratitude, experience humility; with humility you can listen better for God’s voice.

A scripture of gratitude to consider is Psalm 103:1–2 NRSV.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and do not forget all his benefits.*

Imagine what it would be like to bless the Lord with “all that is within me.” How would your day be different? What would stay the same? How is it similar to or different from loving, “the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30 NRSV)?

To surrender completely to God is an ideal, but it is accomplished in small, daily acts—a process that moves God closer to the center of life. Intentional prayer and action will raise your consciousness of God’s presence.

“And forget not all his benefits” is a call to remember. A daily practice of remembering how God has blessed you can change your life, elevate your mood, lower your stress, and help you appreciate all that you have. Meditate on these verses and write how the Lord has blessed your life. Then record how you can bless the Lord “with all that is within you.”

Some circumstances can impede our openness to the Holy Spirit. The way we respond can help open the pathway to healing and wholeness. Some examples:

If you are harboring anger toward someone or are troubled by a situation, you may want to participate in a prayer of confession. At the conclusion, sit quietly for several minutes and listen for God’s counsel and affirmation.

- Do you sense a pathway toward reconciliation or a call to continue in prayer?
- Does forgiveness need to be given or received? If your heart is troubled; if you are burdened,

you might want to meditate on Psalm 51:10–12  
NRSV:

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
and put a new and right spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,  
and do not take your holy spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in me a willing spirit.*

The point is that the condition of your heart directly impacts your ability to discern, meditate, reflect, and ponder. As you work on opening your heart and mind to the Divine, God is waiting to bless you.

## Reflections

Go to the area where you pray. Quietly sit, reflect, and possibly write your answers to the following:

As I reflect on my baptism, what do I remember? There may be vivid memories, or the event may have receded. Allow whatever comes to mind to come forward with as much detail as possible.

- What preparation took place as you considered baptism?
- Who supported you on that journey?
- Who baptized you, and how was that person chosen?
- How did it feel to enter the water and be immersed?
- Spend some time holding these memories and feelings and then write the story of your baptism.
- What happened symbolically in this sacrament?
- What is the most important thing my baptism has given me?

- If I were to be baptized today, how would the sacrament be the same or different?
- What kind of preparation would I make today?
- Who would I choose to baptize me and why?
- What meaning would my baptism have for me today?

## Centering

Go to a quiet place. Sit in silence for a few minutes. Because of our busy lifestyles our minds seem to run quickly even when we are attempting to slow down. This first exercise is to help you slow down and find inner calm. Repeat Psalm 46:10 as many times as needed, leaving a space of silence between repetitions until you are centered.

*Knowing that God is always present with me  
I consciously sit quietly and focus on God's presence.*

### **Be still and know that I am God.**

*In my stillness, may my heart be open and sensitive to the movement of the Spirit.*

Another possibility for this exercise is to write out the prayer:

**Be...**

**Be still...**

**Be still and...etc.**

Take it to the whole line and then back down, ending with “**Be...**”

## Discernment

In silence, read the following scriptures. Ask the questions and then listen. Work on them one at a time, one day at a time. You may even want to take more than one day with each section. Write your answers in a journal for review.



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### Doctrine and Covenants 17:7a–d

*And again by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism:*

*All those who humble themselves before God and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end,*

*and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church.*

Several qualities are named in this scripture to describe a person ready for baptism:

- humility
- desire for baptism
- broken heart
- contrite spirit
- repentance
- servant of Jesus Christ
- a lived witness of Christ's Spirit

As you examine this scripture:

- Which qualities resonate most with you?
- Which qualities exist now in you?
- Where do you still have room to grow?
- Among all those who have influenced you, who most closely reflects these qualities?
- Describe how this person manifests these qualities.

Write your answers and ponder them.

Spend a moment in a prayer of gratitude. Imagine the person named above surrounded by the light of Christ, embraced in love. Hold the person in your imagination and offer thanks for his life and impact on you. Ask God to help you grow these qualities more and more.

### Doctrine and Covenants 20:1a

*Behold, I say unto you, that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and everlasting covenant; even that which was from the beginning.*

Explore the nature of covenant. Examine these scriptures about covenant:

Genesis 17:2–8:	The everlasting covenant
Genesis 9:9–13:	Universal covenant with “every living creature”
Jeremiah 31:31–33:	A new covenant written on the hearts of God's people
Luke 22:20:	The institution of the Lord's Supper
2 Corinthians 3:6:	Paul's letter to the church at Corinth

- What is most important in covenant relationships?
- What covenants have you made?
- What covenants have been made with you?
- How have these covenants impacted your daily decisions?

Spend a few moments in meditation. Having considered all these scriptures, what does God want to reveal to you now? Simply take a deep breath and sit quietly without an agenda, allowing God to move into your awareness.

At the completion of this meditation, write your impressions and feelings in your journal.

### Doctrine and Covenants 20:1a–d

Revelation given through Joseph Smith, Jr., prophet and seer to the church, April 1830, at Manchester, New York. This instruction came in answer to Joseph Smith's inquiry concerning the

status of those who desired to unite with the church and who had already been baptized.

*Behold, I say unto you, that all old covenants have I caused to be done away in this thing, and this is a new and everlasting covenant; even that which was from the beginning.*

*Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times, it availeth him nothing; for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the Law of Moses, neither by your dead works;*

*for it is because of your dead works, that I have caused this last covenant, and this church to be built up unto me; even as in the days of old.*

*Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God. Amen.*

## Doctrine and Covenants 147:7

*I am further permitted to say by the Spirit: Instruction which has been given in former years is applicable in principle to the needs of today and should be so regarded by those who are seeking ways to accomplish the will of their heavenly Father. But the demands of a growing church require that these principles shall be evaluated and subjected to further interpretation. This requisite has always been present. In meeting it under the guidance of my spirit, my servants have learned the intent of these principles more truly.*

In your own words, write what you sense these scriptures are saying. As you write, pay attention to your body's response. Do you feel comfortable, unsettled, discouraged, hopeful? Simply notice the inner response.

- What do you see as the role of these scriptures and their relationship to each other?
- What are “these principles” that we should consider as we reflect on the covenant of baptism?
- What do you see as the current “demands of a growing church”?
- What principles should be remembered and evaluated as the church considers its response?
- Do you feel that any current conditions require that principles of baptism “be evaluated and subjected to further interpretation”? If so, what are they?

Look over all you have written. Hold all the pieces together and go for a prayer walk. There is no need to reflect directly upon the material; simply take it into prayer. When you return, journal. What came to your mind as you walked? Notice your body's response and write down what you sense.

Occasionally return to your journal. Ponder your answers and see if there is more to write. Keep asking the questions and keep listening, with expectation for God's voice as you pray again. To receive “more truth and light” requires diligent work, deep listening, and God's grace.

Read Mark 1:9–11; Matthew 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–22 NRSV.

These three passages describe the baptism of Jesus. In each example the “voice” proclaims Jesus as the beloved Son. Read the scriptures several times until you hold an image of the scene. Enter the “active imagination” with your eyes closed. With yourself in the place of Jesus, reenact the scenario. Feel yourself in the water with John. Imagine the heavens opening as you leave the water. Sense what it must have been like to feel the Spirit descend and hear, “This is my [child/daughter/son], the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” Stay with the imagery a while and let it expand.



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- What is it like to hear yourself called “beloved”? Describe in as much detail as possible in your journal.
- What makes one beloved?
- Do you believe we share with Jesus in being beloved of God?
- Is there anything that would prevent a person from being beloved?
- In these scriptures Jesus’ baptism and his being named as beloved are held together. Are they held together for all of us at baptism?

### Praying the Scriptures: *Lectio Divina*

As you prepare for this section, you may wish to review *Listen: A Centering Activity*, found at [www.CofChrist.org/CofM](http://www.CofChrist.org/CofM).

*Lectio divina* (Latin for “holy reading”) is a way of “praying the scriptures.” The central focus is a passage read several times, each with a different approach.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit’s presence and guidance.
- Read the scripture aloud without studying it. Read it simply and attentively.
- Read the scripture a second time. When a word, phrase, or passage catches your attention, stop

and repeat those words silently, meditating on their meaning. What ideas or understandings come? Let the Spirit guide you as you meditate.

- Read the scripture a third time. Pray about the meaning you have discovered. Seek God and pray in response to your thoughts and understandings.
- Read the scripture a final time. Now rest in silent contemplation. Let the presence of the Spirit fill you. There is no expectation except to be in God’s presence.
- Let yourself leave contemplation slowly. Journal any insights.
- Pray that you will have a fuller understanding of what it means to share Christ’s peace.
- Pray for an open heart and mind.

Some suggested scriptures for *lectio divina*:

- Galatians 3:27–29 NRSV
- Book of Mormon, Mosiah 9:39–41 AV
- Doctrine and Covenants 161:5
- Doctrine and Covenants 162:2c–e

As you do these activities keep a journal of your insights, feelings, and thoughts. Review your writings periodically and do the exercises repeatedly, each time trying to remain open to the Spirit regardless of what you have thought or written before.

