

SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL DAY

THE GOD WHO SPEAKS



SPIRITUAL LIFE
— greater**eu**rope**em**ission —



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WELCOME

Dear GEM Family,

These days set apart to spend time with our God ‘together separately’ are a true gift to me, and that has been the heart of my prayers leading up to this: that this day would be a good gift from God to you.

Our focus is ‘the God who Speaks.’ More specifically, the creator God who seeks us out and initiates conversations with us, not just to tell us things, but to interact *with* us. We’re going to spend time with Adam as he hides, Hagar as she flees, and Jacob as he wrestles. God approaches each one of them and asks them a question—a question He knows the answer to, but that invites them to interact with Him, learning more about who their God is, and who (or where) they are themselves.

My greatest encouragement to you for this day is to allow God to approach you. Let your Lord come to you as you are and open your hands, heart, and mind to whatever conversation He chooses to have with you.

Speaking of hands, hearts, and minds; that is the second element built into the day. Engaging God with our whole selves, heart, mind, soul, and strength. For each passage you will find options for engaging God—one that’s more mind-centered, one that’s more heart-centered, and one that’s more body-centered. Think of them as different doors, but all with the goal of entering a conversation with God. Some approaches will feel more natural to you than others. I encourage you to start with an option that is natural for you to ease into that sacred space of conversation with God, and then to stretch yourself with a different approach for each of the subsequent passages.

There is also a page in the appendix with selected “conversation starters” adapted for kids.

I look forward to catching glimpses of God’s interaction with us when we gather at the end of the day to debrief together.

With you in Christ,

Lena Larsen



WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT OF THIS TIME?

Expect God to speak to you and be with you. What does it mean to become aware of His presence? How do we hear Him? As we become more aware of God's qualities or attributes in our lives, we become more aware of His presence. Throughout the day, be aware of what God brings to your mind of His person.

- *Is it His faithfulness, love, grace, compassion, mercy, justice, patience, goodness...?*
- *How are you experiencing His presence in light of these qualities in your everyday life?*
- *How is your understanding of His different attributes deepening as you spend time with Him?*
- *What are you longing to experience?*

The main thing to remember is that God is initiating. He delights in you and has specific ways He is engaging with you and in this season. Some questions that can help you notice how God might be speaking include:

- *Where are your thoughts turning?*
- *What is grabbing your attention?*
- *What are you feeling—contentment, anxiety, sadness, anger?*

Talk to God honestly about what you are feeling or thinking. Then take some time to sit quietly with Him—being with Him and listening to Him. When we are with a trusted friend, there are times of sharing and times of quiet. Give God the option to just be with you or to speak to you.



PREPARING FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL DAY

Remember, (again!) God is the initiator. Try to release your own expectations or any desire for control over the day. What are the things that, if they didn't happen, would leave you feeling disappointed or with a sense of failure or lack? Ask God to help you let them go and to open you to whatever He will do. It may be helpful to write out your prayer here:

It also can be very helpful to have a few key people praying for you on the Renewal Day.

Do take a bit of time the night before to gather up any things you will want at hand (a Bible, a journal, and this guide—preferably printed. You may also want paper and pens and some crafty-type item). Also, to eliminate as many distractions as you can from the space you'll be using. We encourage you to spend as much of the day in silence and solitude as is possible for you in your setting. For more thoughts on that or a more in-depth preparation plan see our previous guide ([link](#)) pp 6-8.

If you'll be participating as a family be sure to discuss expectations ahead of time (time together and alone, limits on technology use, etc.), even if it's on the morning of before you start.



BRIEF SCHEDULE

The time schedule is identical for both Central European Time and Mountain Standard Time.
Use this Zoom link for the whole day:

[ZOOM MEETING LINK](#)

09H00 – 09H30

Orientation – Full Group Zoom Meeting

The Initiative of the Creator God

09H30 – 09H45

Guided Morning Reflection – Full Group Zoom Meeting

The Lord Calls to Adam

09H45 – 11H45

Personal Reflection Time #1

11H45 – 12H00

Guided Midday Reflection – Full Group Zoom Meeting

The Lord Finds Hagar

12H00 – 13H45

Personal Reflection Time #2 – Lunch Optional

13H45 – 14H00

Guided Afternoon Reflection – Full Group Zoom Meeting

God Wrestles Jacob

14H00 – 16H00

Personal Reflection Time #3

(Note: At 3:45 pm you may want to begin preparing for debrief and final prayer.)

16H00 – 16H30

Debrief Time and Prayer – Full Group Zoom Meeting



EXPANDED SCHEDULE

The time schedule is identical for both Central European Time and Mountain Standard Time. Use this Zoom link for the whole day:

[ZOOM MEETING LINK](#)

09H00 – 09H30

Orientation – Full Group Zoom Meeting

The Initiative of the Creator God

09H30 – 09H45

Guided Morning Reflection – Full Group Zoom Meeting

The Lord Calls to Adam

09H45 – 11H45

Personal Reflection Time #1

Genesis 3:8-10

BODY

Go for a walk with God. Before you leave, read the passage several times slowly and write it out on a card to carry with you (or you can [listen](#) to the whole chapter as you go).

- *How do you sense God's presence with you as you walk?*
- *Is there anything about this passage that God seems to be bringing up?*
- *What question(s) might God be asking you? The same question He asks Adam ("Where are you?") or something else?*
- *What is your response?*
- *Do you notice your pace or stride changing as you converse? Or does adjusting your pace change your sense of God with you or your availability to God?*

HEART

Examen—Let God guide the conversation as you move through the steps below. As a reminder, the Spirit of God brings conviction, not condemnation. He wants you to see His love for you in your life. If there is anything God wants to address in your life, He will do so with kindness.

- Begin by taking a few minutes to thank God for the gifts He's given you: His pursuit of you, grafting you into the Vine, His conversations with you...

- Ask God for the grace to be open to Him and whatever He wants to draw your attention to.
- Turn to Genesis 3:8-10 and read through it slowly. Read through it a second time (slowly). Imagine God is approaching you like He approached Adam. What feelings rise up? What are your impulses or responses? Tell God honestly what comes up for you. If it's helpful you can even borrow Adam's words: "I heard the sound of you and I was _____ because _____ so I _____."
- Read the passage a third time and this time sit with God's question, "Where are you?" (Or if God brings up another question sit with that.) What tone of voice do you hear the question in? What does it bring up in you? Talk to God about this. Take your time. Sit with Him to see if there's anything else He wants to talk with you about.
- What is your response to this conversation? Is God offering you any specific invitations? How does He want you to live out this conversation?

MIND Look at Genesis 3:8-10 and Psalm 32:1-7. (They are side by side in the appendix on page 15 for your convenience.) Begin by offering this time of study to the Lord and asking Him to direct your reading and observation. Read slowly through both passages several times. Then go back and begin to mark things that catch your attention. Are there words that are repeated? What are the similarities and differences between the two passages? Pay special attention to what is said to or by God? What verbs are used in relation to God in these passages? What verbs are used in relation to people? What other questions or observations arise? Note your observations.

Now prayerfully look through your observations. How were you aware of God's presence with you in your time of study? Were there particular moments when you felt closer to Him or more distracted from Him? Talk to Him about the things He brought to your attention in these passages. What resonates with you? What challenges you? What do you want to say to God about these things? What is He saying to you?

11H45 – 12H00

Guided Midday Reflection – Full Group Zoom Meeting

The Lord Finds Hagar

12H00 – 13H45

Personal Reflection Time #2 – Lunch Optional

Genesis 16:3-14

BODY Grab a stack of paper or sticky notes. Read slowly through the passage several times. On your final reading, focus in on the first part of God's question to Hagar, "Where have you come from?" Write down some of the things that come to mind as you think about where you have 'come from'. It could be looking back over your whole life,

over your time in ministry, or just over the past year. Write down one thing per piece of paper. Do the same thing with the rest of the question, “Where are you going?” As you look ahead, what situations, hopes, fears, etc. come up? Write each one on a piece of paper.

Now space out all the pieces of paper on the ground in a line or a circle. Take turns standing (sitting, kneeling) at each paper. Talk honestly to God about what you wrote. What does God bring up? How does He respond to you? Converse with Him and move to the next paper when you feel ready. Experiment with your body posture as you move from one to the next. Are there specific postures that corresponds to specific events/feelings or that represent how you feel in relation to God at that point in the conversation?

HEART Lectio Divina (also called meditative or devotional reading) allows us to interact prayerfully with God through His word. Take your time going through these steps of Lectio Divina or use the guide in the appendix (page 14) to do a similar process “in color”:

- *Silencio/Silence* — Take 1-2 minutes to settle and become present to God and His conversation with you. Quiet your thoughts. Take some deep breaths. Thank God that He is with you.
- *Lectio/Reading* — Read the passage slowly and carefully, either silently or aloud.
- *Meditatio/Meditation* — Re-read the passage paying attention for a word or phrase that catches your attention.
- *Oratio/Prayer* — Read the passage a third time, asking God why this word or phrase is important to your life right now. Listen to Him. Ask Him questions. Express your thoughts.
- *Contemplatio/Contemplation* — Allow the conversation will come naturally to an end. Take a few minutes to marvel in the fact that the Creator of the Universe is in conversation with you. He is always pursuing relationship with you. Enjoy sitting in Silence with Him.
- *Incarnatio/Practice* — In moving out of this time, what is God asking of you in response to this conversation? How will you remember what God has been saying to you?

MIND Read slowly through the passage several times. Here we get a glimpse of Hagar’s recent experiences before God speaks to her and the promises God gives her for her future. Using your journal or some sheets of paper, ask God to help you make an outline of “where you’ve come from” (either your whole life or a more recent time frame). Talk to God about it and jot down anything that comes up between you and Him as you look back. Then write down what comes to mind as you think about “where you are going”. Again, ask God to guide your thoughts. Listen and talk to Him about what comes up. Record highlights of the conversation.

After Hagar’s conversation with God, she called Him the “God of seeing...who looks after me.” (Genesis 16:13 ESV) Ask God to bring your attention to specific details or themes from what you just journaled. What aspect of His character is He revealing to you? If you can, find a verse that refers to God in this way and spend some time trying to memorize it.

13H45 – 14H00

Guided Afternoon Reflection – Full Group Zoom Meeting

God Wrestles Jacob

14H00 – 16H00 (Note: At 15H45 pm you may want to begin preparing for debrief and final prayer.)

Personal Reflection Time #3

Genesis 32:22-32

BODY Find something you can use to create with your hands: clay, yarn, pen and paper, paper and glue, mixing up a batch of cookies...

Before you begin creating, read the passage through several times slowly. (Or listen to the whole chapter [here](#).) Think about Jacob’s hands, grasping at his brother’s heel and inheritance, striving for success, grappling with the mysterious man in the night. What things in your life make you want to clench your hands or tighten your grip? Hold your hands in tight fists as God brings these things to mind. Talk to God about them. Slowly relax your grip as you talk to Him. When you feel that part of the conversation is done, sit for a minute or two letting your hands rest open on your lap. Then begin creating.

As you start, picture God’s hands creating and molding you. Does He have anything to say to you about how He feels as He is shaping you and your life? The name Israel came out of this significant wrestling experience Jacob had with God. Listen and talk to God about how He is involved in your life. Is there a specific thing He is doing that He wants you to embrace as a new part of your identity in Him? Is there a way you can represent that in what you’re making? Do you notice anything about Him there with you or working with you as you create?

HEART Engage with the passage (and God) using your imagination. Read through the passage slowly, picturing the setting in your mind. What’s happening? What does it look like? Feel like? Smell like?

Read the passage again, imagining yourself as Jacob. What are you thinking? How do you feel? What do you notice...as the man approaches...as you wrestle...when he asks, “What is your name?” How do you respond? Do any emotions surface? Does God say anything back to you? Any words of blessing? A new name? How do you feel when He leaves?

As you come to the end of the narrative, begin to reflect on the experience. Ask God and yourself: What is going on in my life that led me to interacting in that way? Were certain emotions engaged? Why those emotions? Did any issues come up? Why those issues? Why were certain details in the story important to you right now in your life? What is Christ saying to you now as you reflect on the experience? What kinds of conversations do you need to have with Jesus?

MIND Jacob means ‘the supplanter’ or ‘heel-grabber.’ Israel on the other hand means either striving with God or God strives. According to Gerard Van Groningen, “The name, expressing the concept of wrestling, clinging firmly to God, and overcoming, and God's confirming of his covenant with Jacob, indicates that Israel is to be understood as Jacob's covenant name. The name spoke of his being bound with a bond of life and love to God.”¹

Take some time to sit with God asking Him for a word that describes the identity He’s freeing you from and a word that describes the identity He’s offering you in Christ. On a piece of paper draw two columns and write each word at the top of a column. Then, using a concordance, look up verses related to each word, writing the reference and what it teaches you about that word/identity in the appropriate column. Take your time. It’s not about collecting information, but about engaging with God about what He’s teaching you as you go. To wrap up the time, ask God to help you form an identity statement summarizing the things He spoke to you through His Word.

NOTE: Allow yourself 15-20 min at the end of this time to begin reflecting/looking back on the day and preparing for our debrief time. Consider these questions:

- *How did you experience God’s approach and interaction today?*
- *Are there any other “next steps” where you feel an invitation, compulsion, nudge, or burden from the Lord?*
- *What came up today that you would like to celebrate? How would you like to do that?*

16H00 – 16H30

Debrief Time and Prayer – Full Group Zoom Meeting

¹ Elwell, Walter A. "Entry for 'Israel'". "Evangelical Dictionary of Theology".



APPENDIX

FAMILY OPTION

Here we've selected and adapted a few of the above reflections and put them together into a suggested schedule for families. They're in order here, but the length of time you spend on each one and in between each one is up to you.

BEGINNING Start with a conversation about God as our creator. Talk about how God created us and that He made us in His image, so we can interact with Him. By making us, He started a conversation with us. In each story we'll read today, God comes to the person and starts talking to them (they didn't go to Him) and we want to pay attention today for the ways God is talking to us too.

PART I Examen with Genesis 3:1-10.

- Begin by taking a few minutes to thank God for the gifts He's given you. (Among the other things that come up, thank Him for being with you and talking to you.)
- Ask God for the grace to be open to Him and whatever He wants you to notice in this story.
- Read Genesis 3:1-10 slowly. Work together to tell the story in your own words.
- Reread verses 8-10 (slowly). Why did Adam and Eve feel like they needed to hide from God? Imagine God coming to you like He came to Adam. How do you feel? What would you do? Use Adam's words to make your own statement to tell God: "I heard you and I felt _____ because _____ so I _____. What do you think God wants to say back to you? How would God sound when talking to you (angry, happy, sad...?) Is there anything else you want to say to God?"
- Take an age-appropriate number of moments to sit, arms crossed over your chest like a hug, breathing deeply, and remembering that God is with you and He loves you.
- If you want, think of something you can do as a family to watch for God's interactions with you each day.

PART II Read Genesis 16:3-14. Retell the events of the story in your own words.

After Hagar's conversation with God, she called Him the "God of seeing...who looks after me." (Genesis 16:13 ESV). Pray and ask God to help you remember times or ways God has helped your family. What memories do you have of times when you felt close to God or when God helped you in specific ways? What name would you use for God to remind you of

how He has been with you? If you can, find a verse that refers to God in this way and spend some time trying to memorize it.

Memorization game—write out the verse on a white board or large sheet of paper. Use a ball or a bean bag and toss it back and forth from person to person. Each time you catch the ball say the next word in the verse. Do it several times until you're comfortable with the verse. Then cover up part of the verse and see if you can still do it. Cover up more and more of the verse until you can say the whole thing without looking.

PART III Find something you can use to create with your hands: clay, yarn, pen and paper, paper and glue, mixing up a batch of cookies... Then read Genesis 32:22-32 together.

As you start making things, picture God's hands creating and molding you. How do you think He feels as He's shaping you and your life? In this story Jacob got a new name. His new name, Israel, means 'wrestled with GOD.' It describes how Jacob met and interacted with God. What are your interactions with God like? Are there specific ways you notice Him with you or specific things that help you feel close to Him? If God gave you a new name, what do you think it would be? Is there a way you can represent that in what you're making?

ENDING Take some time to talk about the day together.

- *Did you experience God with you or talking to you today? What was that like?*
- *Are there any other "next steps" you think God is inviting you to take?*
- *What would you like to celebrate from today? How could you do that?*

PRAYING IN COLOR

for tactile learners or those who think in colors and shapes

Do you find that you concentrate better or listen better if you are doodling?

Do you think in shapes and colors? If you answered yes, this variation on Lectio Divina might be for you. As you use this practice, try to remember that the end product is not what is important. The doodling, drawing or coloring are means to help you listen, stay present, and engage in the conversation that God is having with you. The result will be a visual reminder of that conversation, but don't let the creative process distract you from being with God. You will need paper, pens, colored pencils, or markers.

Slowly read the passage through a couple times and note a word or phrase that stands out to you—even if it seems random. Write that word or phrase on a blank piece of paper.

Begin to enhance or doodle around the word as you meditate on the verse and particularly the part that you've written. Converse with God asking questions and listening. Why is this word or phrase important to your life right now?

What does God want you to notice? What do you learn about His character? What do you learn about yourself? Maybe there are other words that God brings to mind that you should jot down on your paper and incorporate into your drawing.

As you wind down, thank God for His presence and conversation with you. Marvel at His presence with you.

Before moving to another activity, reflect on how God is inviting you to respond to this conversation as you move throughout your day/week.

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION #1, MIND

Genesis 3:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

Psalms 32:1-2, 5-7 (ESV)

Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

...

⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.

⁷ You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah