

**Jesus' Values,
The Kingdom of God**

A Prayer for What I Want:

Lord Jesus, You humbled Yourself
by sharing with friends
what You thought and felt and desired.
Lord, as You gave them the gift of knowing You
and feeling Your great love for them,
so too may I continue to know your love for me.
May I grow in love for you;
May I grow in knowledge of You
and desire and value the same things that You desire and value
for me and for our world.

Suggested Scripture Passages:

Matthew 4:23 – 5 :12. Jesus proclaims the Kingdom and heals

Luke 4:14-22. Jesus begins to preach, his mission is revealed

Matthew 10: 37-42. Following Jesus is costly

Luke 19:1-10. Jesus meets Zacchaeus

OR

You may choose the following Prayer of Consideration

Power and Love

As we go through middle age, we confirm a basic choice we have been making for a long time. Am I going to reach for power, or am I going to open myself to love? I can take either way and still hope for God's mercy, but I cannot doubt which way the Spirit of God invites me to live.

We find ourselves surrounded by people who have made that fundamental choice. They are not divided between the bitter and the disgruntled and the cheerful and creative. We find both kinds of people living out both of the choices. We also find people in every vocation living both choices. Each of us has to choose for himself.

Those who reach for power want, more than anything else, control over their lives. They may want to choose what kind of work they do and refuse to let others' needs influence their decision. They might drag their families all around the country for the sake of job promotions, for example, or simply refuse to spend enough time to rear their children because they work twelve- or fourteen-hour days. They want complete control over their own time. If every other kind of control fails them, they will keep tight control over their attitudes and opinions, refusing

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to let friends' convictions really influence them, or staying far away from the Church's teaching.

The interior consequences of this option for power emerge constantly. Those who go for control tend to tell very little about themselves. They keep their own counsel and are rarely open or frank with others, even with their own spouses. Self-revelation, after all, threatens our control over ourselves and over others. They will hold on to their own opinions and tend not to really listen to others' opinions. They ordinarily have a difficult time with authority, perhaps criticizing and ignoring their superiors or being subservient and manipulating them. Even those who do not want to hold authority tend to think that they could do a better job of running things than those who are in authority. Above all, they show their choice of power in the way they live friendships. They do not allow themselves to be vulnerable to others.

They may be very happy to help others when others are in need, but they want to choose what help they will give and when they will give it. They are rarely lonesome (the hard feeling of actually missing a concrete person); their usual pain is loneliness (the harsh feeling of insulation, alienation, of there not being anyone there for me). Yet, those who opt for power do not really confront their own brokenness; that they are both sinful and called by Christ is a mental truth they consent to, not a religious truth they live in and out of.

Those who choose the way of love, on the contrary, know their own brokenness and out of that humbling knowledge, let the Spirit lead them on to growth. The immediate reality in this way is openness to friendship and perhaps also to intimacy. Those who choose the way of love are very active in forming and enjoying friendships. They come to know at a deep level that they need to die to selfish ways that mar friendships. They risk being vulnerable, having to grow and change under the influence of their friends and colleagues. At some point, even if they are married, they recognize that they have to give up possessing the other and let him be himself. As they grow in love of God, they see that some friendships focus on doing and making, but others relate almost exclusively to our humanness, to our weaknesses. Those on this way continually deepen in compassion. They experience powerlessness again and again, always finding it difficult, and always finding truth in the experience. They are glad just to live and work with those that God puts into their lives. When they are asked to take on some authority, they can take it in the general conviction that they can help people, more concerned to serve and help than to get some job done – even if they are astoundingly efficient.

Does this go some distance toward distinguishing two ways of life? It is important to distinguish them in yourself, as you make the many choices that lead down these two different roads. Only one of them is truly Christ's way.