

HOME IS A HOLY PLACE

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Reflections, Prayers and Meditations
Inspired by the Ordinary

Mark G. Boyer

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Home Is a Holy Place: Reflections, Prayers and Meditations
Inspired by the Ordinary
by Mark G. Boyer

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**Dedicated to
Sarah Osia,
my great-grandmother,
who taught me to find God
in the simple things of life.**

Introduction

Home is a holy place, a sanctuary where God is alive and active in the ordinary things and events that surround us. St. Paul wrote, "...Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Through the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, God enters your home and transforms that ordinary place into a shrine.

Home Is a Holy Place is designed to guide you into daily prayer experiences. Our secular society tends to separate the holy from the ordinary, proposing that prayer has no place in our daily lives, that it is best done in sacred surroundings and at extraordinary moments. This book challenges that proposal by offering, as the subtitle implies, reflections, prayers and meditations inspired by everyday items found in the home.

The book follows the alphabet from A to Z, with each reflection based on a household object or activity. A book arranged alphabetically is called an abecedarian, a word that also describes one who is learning the basics of an idea or theme—in this case, domestic spirituality or the holiness of the home.

This book is meant to be both prayerful and fun by illustrating how our home environment is charged with God's presence. Once we can recognize God's presence in the ordinary objects we see and use every day, we are led into a more intimate relationship. A walk through the rooms of our home will be a walk taken with God.

Each exercise in this book consists of five parts: Title, Scripture, Reflection, Meditation and Prayer. The Title is an ordinary item from the home, each beginning with a successive letter of the alphabet. The Scripture section, taken from either the Old (Hebrew) Testament or the New (Christian) Testament, establishes these everyday items in our faith.

The Reflection is meant to stimulate your thoughts, help you to make a God connection, and inspire your awareness of God's presence in your home. The Meditation consists of questions to encourage personal contemplation or journaling to chronicle your spiritual growth.

Finally, the Prayer, designed to summarize the ideas presented in the Scripture selection, the reflection, and your own personal meditation, brings the exercise to a close.

It is my hope that, through this book, you will be awakened to God's presence in every room of your home as you go about the task of discovering the holy in the ordinary—every day of your life.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Corinthians 3:16-17

Apron

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves (Genesis 3:6-7).

Reflection

I have vivid memories of my great-grandmother, who always wore a full apron over her long dress. Great-grandmother's apron was so much a part of her daily dress that she would have felt naked without it. In its one large pocket she carried her coin purse, handkerchief and rosary. Only on Sunday did she remove the apron, and only then to attend Mass in our local parish church.

Aprons are not common apparel today, but most of us still use some sort of protective clothing while working. When we are cooking or cleaning or officiating at the outdoor grill, we may tie a dish towel at our waists or put on a full bib apron. While working in the yard, we might don jeans and a sweatshirt. Chefs, waiters and waitresses, firefighters, and construction workers can be identified by the clothing that protects them on the job.

After their act of disobedience, Adam and Eve fashioned a type of apron for themselves to cover their nakedness and hide their sin from their Creator. Then, writes the author of the Book of Genesis, "...The Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed

them" (Genesis 3:21). Thus, after first protecting them from the elements, God sent them into the world.

When we dress to cook, clean or work, we can recall how God clothes us in divine protection day after day. May our clothing be a reminder of God's watch over us.

Meditation

- When was the last time you wore some sort of protective clothing?
- Make a list of the ways in which it protected you.
- How does God protect you? Keep a running list throughout your day.

Prayer

God of creation, you formed man and woman in your own image and blew into them the breath of life. You entrusted to their care everything you had made. Even when they sinned, you continued to protect them by dressing them in garments of skins. When I dress to cook, to clean, or to work, awaken in me an awareness of your great love and an appreciation for the protection you give every day of my life. I ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Bathtub

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy... Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." ...So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean (2 Kings 5:1, 9-10, 14).

Reflection

Have you ever settled down into a relaxing bubble bath at the end of a long, hard day? Soothed by the warm water, the day's problems and troubles seem to disappear like floating bubbles. Whirlpools, jacuzzis, and hot tubs are all instruments of healing that massage tired muscles and ease aches and pains with the swirl of water and the gurgle of air jets. Steam baths and saunas use heat to relax and restore energy.

The healing of Naaman's leprosy in the waters of the Jordan was a direct result of his faith. Naaman, though not an Israelite, believed in the power of Elisha's God. By plunging into the river, he was healed. Emerging from the river, he stepped into a new life.

Our baths or showers can also be instruments of spiritual healing. As we soak in the calming waters or feel

the warm shower soothing us, we relive the moment of our baptism, when we were immersed into or sprinkled with the waters of the font and raised to new life.

Each time you bathe or shower, renew again your baptismal promises and remember the healing love of Jesus Christ.

Meditation

- Recall the last long, healing bath you took.
- What did you think about?
- Of what were you healed?
- If you seldom spend time luxuriating in the tub, plan right now to indulge yourself in the name of inner healing.

Prayer

God of the waters, through the word of your prophet, Elisha, Naaman entered into the Jordan as a leper and, after seven plunges in the death-dealing river, emerged cleansed and healed. On the day of my baptism, you immersed me into a watery tomb and raised me up to new life with Christ, your Son. Make me grow in awareness of the daily dying and rising to which you call me through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Bed

*What do people gain from all the toil
at which they toil under the sun?
A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.
The sun rises and the sun goes down,
and hurries to the place where it rises.
...All things are wearisome;
more than one can express;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing
or the ear filled with hearing.
What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done;
there is nothing new under the sun.*

Ecclesiastes 1:2-9

Reflection

In our beds, we find the ideal place to pray and reflect on our lives. Each night, as we slip under the covers, all that surrounds us slips away. Drifting into sleep, we enter into a peaceful but passing experience of death from which we are resurrected each morning. Sleep refreshes us and gives us the energy to rise and face another day. Even a simple afternoon nap can put us in contact with this rhythm in our lives.

Sleep teaches us to put aside the anxieties of the day. The unwashed load of laundry, the missed deadline, all those small and not-so-small irritations that seemed so important during the day are placed in perspective. We are with our God, who will watch over us as we sleep and give us a brand new day of resurrection when we wake.

Meditation

- When you go to bed this evening, close your eyes and consider the following questions:

What has this day brought for which I am thankful? for which I am sorry?

How does the natural rhythm of sleep and rising prepare me for my death and resurrection?

Prayer

Lord God, guardian of my life, you never sleep. From the rising of the sun to its setting, you watch over me and protect me. You teach me to not fear death, but to embrace it and practice it daily through the rhythm of sleep and rising. Strengthen my faith and trust in your promise of resurrection. Upon my bed may I always praise you through your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Chair

[Bazalel] made a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half was its length, and a cubit and a half its width. He made two cherubim of hammered gold; at the two ends of the mercy seat he made them, one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat he made the cherubim at its two ends. The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were turned toward the mercy seat (Exodus 37:6-9).

Reflection

The mercy seat of God was constructed on top of the ark of the covenant, which contained the two tablets of the law, possibly a jar of manna, and Aaron's staff. From this chair above the ark, God presided over the chosen people, Israel, and received the nation's offerings of atonement.

In biblical times, a chair symbolized authority. A king's throne signified dominion over his subjects. Decisions concerning life and death were rendered daily from a judge's bench, much as they are today. The expression, the Chair of Peter, indicates the teaching authority of the pope, and in church pews around the world we gather to celebrate God's loving authority over our hearts.

We spend most of our waking hours sitting—at tables, on couches and benches, in our cars, at our desks, in waiting rooms. We arrange the chairs in our dens or living rooms so family and friends can visit and talk comfortably. We circle our chairs around the dining room table to share food and conversation.

Most of us have a favorite chair, a familiar place to rest, watch television, and share time with our family or friends. Other chairs in our homes have particular functions, and some chairs are associated with events that helped to shape our lives.

Meditation

- Go through your home and make a list of the chairs in each room and how they are used.
- Record any memory you have that is associated with a particular chair.

Prayer

God of mercy, you once took your seat among your chosen people, Israel—leading, guiding and accepting sacrifices. In the fullness of time you sent us your only begotten Son, Jesus, who now sits at your right hand and will come again to sit upon his throne and judge the world. When I sit to pray, make me humble. When I sit to work, make me diligent. When I sit to eat, make me aware of your blessings. When I sit to rest, make me secure in your love. I ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Clock

*For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Reflection

Our days are ruled by clocks. Our bedroom alarm clock wakes us; we time our meals by the clock on the range or oven; ornate clocks decorate our living room walls or our mantles. A time clock or desk clock signals it's time to begin or end our working day. In bus stations and airports, clocks help us to get where we are going on time.

Every time the hands of a clock circle the face, twenty-four hours of life elapse. Digital numbers flash on our watches, counting the seconds and minutes of our day. A calendar is a yearly clock, dividing our lives into days, weeks

and months.

We talk about losing time, finding time, looking for time, wasting time, spending time, making time, being ahead of time or behind time, killing time, passing time, or taking time—but we cannot stop time from happening. In our world, time matters, and we count every moment, day, week, month or year.

Not so with God. Eternity is not time-limited. Eventually, we too will pass beyond the boundaries of time and enter eternity. But for now, God gives us time to do what we must do in the world. Let's share our time with God, for time spent with God is time well spent.

Meditation

- Make an hour-by-hour outline of your daily routine. Be sure to indicate how much time you spend sleeping, eating, working and praying in twenty-four hours.
- Have you spent as much time with loved ones as you should?
- Are there better ways to use your precious gift of time?

Prayer

Eternal God, with you there is no time, but you gifted me with years, months, days, hours and minutes to serve you. You are with me at all times, when I weep and when I laugh, when I seek and when I lose. The face of my clock is a sign of your infinite love. Enable me to make each sacred moment a hymn of praise. I ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.