



Discipleship

at Leicester Cathedral

# DAZZLING DARKNESS

## A SUGGESTED 60-MIN PRAYER GUIDE

Below you will find a centring prayer, scripture, poetry, guided mediations and prayers. Use what you want at your own pace, or follow the suggested timings. You may need a pen, notebook, Bible, candle, matches and a device with Wifi to listen to a music track.

### INTRO

We join with Leicester Cathedral Discipleship, embarking on a Lenten journey, prayerfully exploring the theme of 'Dazzling Darkness'.

*'The 'deep yet dazzling darkness', the 'unfathomable abyss', the 'cloud of unknowing', the 'embrace of the beloved', all respond, not to the transcendent, but to the mystics relation with the transcendent; not an object observed, but an overwhelming impression felt'*

– Evelyn Underhill

The invitation - to spend enough time with the theme of darkness, that our sight adjusts itself to perceive, to discover, to sense the treasure of the darkness - the treasure is God.

If you are able and it feels comfortable, close the curtains, switch off the lights. Settle into the low light or darkness as you pray.

### CENTRING & SILENCE [3 min]

Get into a comfortable posture and pray,

*'As we enter prayer now, we pause to be still, slow our breathing, and centre ourselves in the abiding presence of Christ'*

Bring your attention to your breath. Treat each breath in as an arrival. Breathe in God's presence. As you breath out, imagine letting go of future worries and responsibilities to God. Become present.

Spend 3 minutes in silence. Breathe deeply. You may like to pray this breath prayer,

(BREATH IN) *We wait in darkness, Lord.*

(BREATH OUT) *For the treasures of your presence.*

## **OPENING SCRIPTURE [2 min]**

Read slowly, aloud or in your head. You may like to read several times.

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.*

- *Genesis 1 [NLT]*

What does the Spirit of God feel / sound / look like in the darkness?

## **DARKNESS REFLECTIONS [15 min]**

What words and images come to mind when you think of the word Darkness?

Take a pen and paper and make a list or mind map. Feel free to sketch as much as you write.

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Look at what you have written and drawn. Which images particularly resonate for you?

What has darkness been for you, or what does your current darkness feel like?

You may like to write or draw some more

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**WE NEED THE DARK!**

*“Darkness is as essential to our biological welfare, to our internal clockwork, as light itself” - Verlyn Klinkenborg, Our Vanishing Night*

We need darkness for rest and rhythms of waking and sleeping. Our bodies do essential tasks in the dark while we sleep, that we would not survive without.

We need darkness so that our bodies produce melatonin, which fights disease. This only happens when it is truly dark.

We need darkness for birth to be easier. There is an instinct for the safety of darkness that takes a female fox to its den to give birth.

We need darkness for nocturnal animals to thrive and play their part in the deeply interconnected life cycles of the natural world.

We need darkness for seeds to germinate in the ground.

We need darkness to see and appreciate the light.

We need darkness to feed our spirit, protect our health and protect the health of our planet

Ask yourself again, what words and images come to mind when you think of the word Darkness?

You may like to record your reflections in word or image.

*[Reflection & Meditation adapted from words written by Fiona Koefoed-Jespersen for Discipleship at Leicester Cathedral's Lent Course - 'Dazzling Darkness']*

## **POEM //**

Read the poem slowly. If poetry is not your thing, permission to skip by.

The Night,  
BY HENRY VAUGHAN

## John 3.2

Through that pure virgin shrine,  
That sacred veil drawn o'er Thy glorious noon,  
That men might look and live, as glowworms shine,  
    And face the moon,  
Wise Nicodemus saw such light  
As made him know his God by night.

Most blest believer he!  
Who in that land of darkness and blind eyes  
Thy long-expected healing wings could see,  
    When Thou didst rise!  
And, what can never more be done,  
Did at midnight speak with the Sun!

O who will tell me where  
He found Thee at that dead and silent hour?  
What hallowed solitary ground did bear  
    So rare a flower,  
Within whose sacred leaves did lie  
The fulness of the Deity?

No mercy-seat of gold,  
No dead and dusty cherub, nor carved stone,  
But His own living works did my Lord hold  
    And lodge alone;  
Where trees and herbs did watch and peep  
And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.

Dear night! this world's defeat;  
The stop to busy fools; care's check and curb;  
The day of spirits; my soul's calm retreat  
    Which none disturb!  
Christ's progress, and His prayer time;  
The hours to which high heaven doth chime;

God's silent, searching flight;

When my Lord's head is filled with dew, and all  
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;  
    His still, soft call;  
His knocking time; the soul's dumb watch,  
When spirits their fair kindred catch.

    Were all my loud, evil days  
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark tent,  
Whose peace but by some angel's wing or voice  
    Is seldom rent,  
Then I in heaven all the long year  
Would keep, and never wander here.

    But living where the sun  
Doth all things wake, and where all mix and tire  
Themselves and others, I consent and run  
    To every mire,  
And by this world's ill-guiding light,  
Err more than I can do by night.

    There is in God, some say,  
A deep but dazzling darkness, as men here  
Say it is late and dusky, because they  
    See not all clear.  
O for that night! where I in Him  
Might live invisible and dim!

> <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50441/the-night-56d22d9009233>

**MYSTERY // A GUIDED MEDITATION [10 min]**  
[Darkness as a hiding place]

Spend a few minutes gazing upon the word below. What word or words do you see?

*N O W H E R E*

The difference between “*nowhere*” and “*now here*” is a little space.

It is amazing what a little space can do.

Moving from ‘nowhere’ to ‘now here’ is just a matter of pressing the spacebar,

Yet, a completely new reality arises.

‘Nowhere’ can be defined as, *not anywhere, absent.*

‘Now here’ can be defined as, *at this moment, in this place, present.*

*Hide-and-seek God is  
Silent, but never absent.  
Present in darkness  
#haiku*

*Truly, you are a God who hides himself,  
O God of Israel, the Savior.  
[Isaiah 45:15]*

Make some space now.

In the stillness of this moment, become present to God’s presence.

God is now here.

You may like to pray this breath prayer,

(BREATH IN) *We wait in darkness, Lord.*

(BREATH OUT) *For the treasures of your presence.*

Amen.

## **PAIN // PRAYER FOR OTHERS [15 min]**

[Darkness as suffering]

We turn our attention to praying for those we know who are suffering.

Our God is a God, who stays with us in our struggles,  
Let us join with Jesus, praying, by name, for those we know who are struggling.

### **HAND PRAYERS**

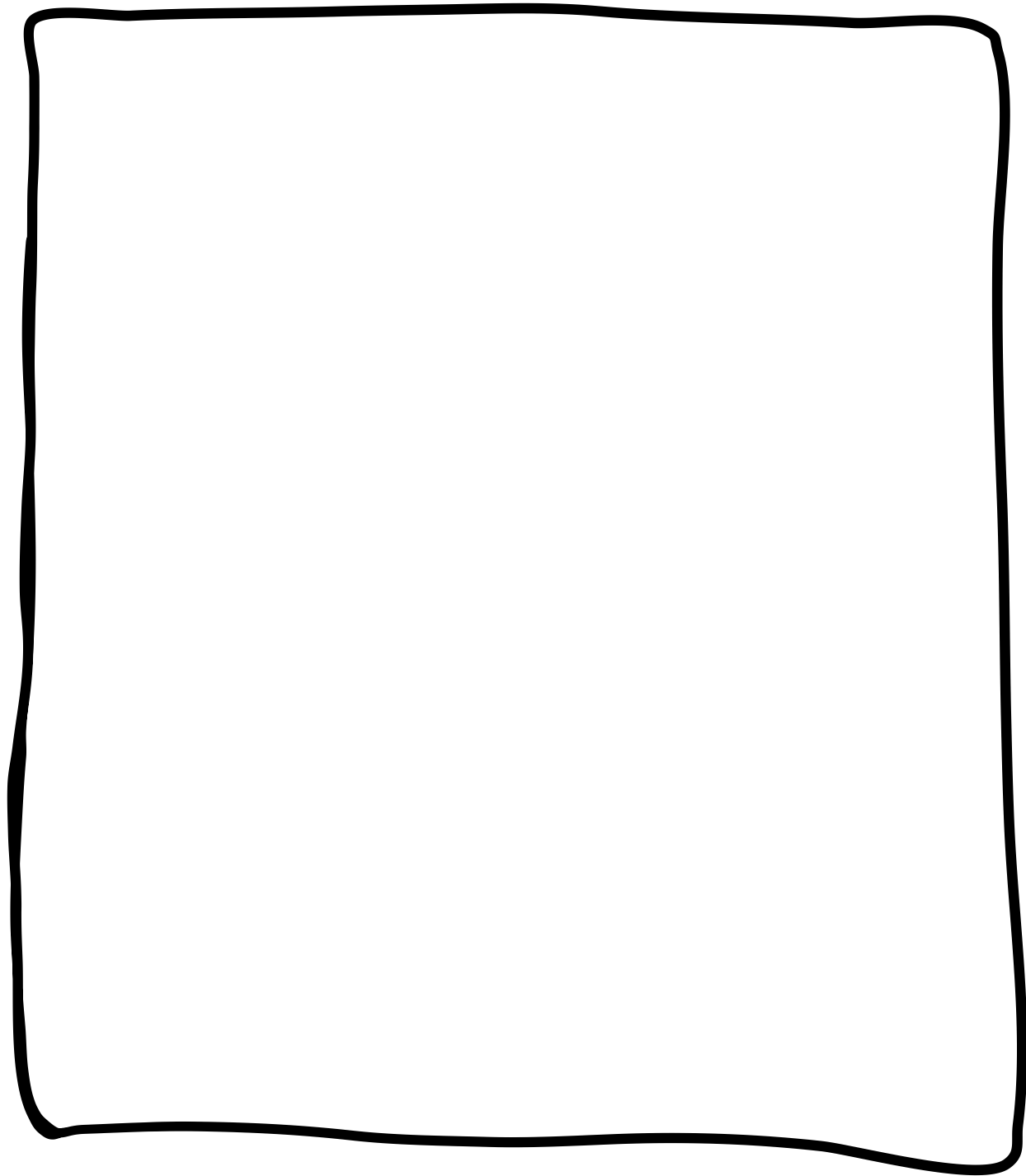
Use the space below to draw around your hand.  
Choose five people, situations or people groups to pray for,  
Write them, one along each finger.

*The simple act of holding a loved one's hand may be more powerful than it seems, especially for those in pain. According to a new study by researchers at University of Colorado, when loved ones hold hands, their brainwaves sync, and pain is eased.*

Pray for healing, restoration, justice, peace and freedom.  
Pray for God's presence to be, made known.

Lift people to God in prayer...





You may like to use the scriptural promise as a prayer,

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. Amen. - John 1:1-14*

## **DAWN [10 min]**

### **[Darkness as the beginning of hope]**

We return to where we started our journey, Genesis 1,

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.*

*Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."*

*And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.*

Resurrection begins in the dark. Dawn always follows the night.

*"...new life starts in the dark. Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark." – Priest & writer, Barbara Brown Taylor*

If you have a candle. Light it now.

Alternatively, turn the lights on or open the curtains.

Spend a few moments receiving the light.

## **LISTEN (OR READ) // VILLAGERS – TRICK OF LIGHT (SONG & LYRICS)**

Listen to and/or read these lyrics aloud.

Go to > <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7Xqo6dvDmM>

Or Google 'Villagers Trick of Light'

Open in spotify >

<https://open.spotify.com/album/3qAqTaAeKYccquZIEqRwV?highlight=spotify:track:2nBsRuOnPWCmfXvLaf9u8L>

Read the lyrics >

[https://www.google.com/search?q=villagers+trick+of+light+lyrics&rlz=1C1CHBF\\_en-GBGB819GB819&oq=villagers+trick+of+light+lyrics&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i22i30l2.3867j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=villagers+trick+of+light+lyrics&rlz=1C1CHBF_en-GBGB819GB819&oq=villagers+trick+of+light+lyrics&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i22i30l2.3867j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

Take a few moments. Bring your awareness back to your breath. Pray,

(BREATH IN) We wait in darkness, Lord,

(BREATH OUT) For the coming of your light.

## **LINKS & INFO:**

Fiona Koefoed-Jespersen Blog > <https://www.ordinarypilgrim.co.uk/>

More Prayer Resources from the Community > <https://leicestertreeoflife.org/prayer/>

We'd love to hear your feedback on these prayer resources > <https://us19.list-manage.com/survey?u=cbd6384064124b364f971d785&id=86cdc9720a>