

Wednesday: The Power of a Name

Many names are associated with a particular gender. Trans and nonbinary people often choose a different name than the one they were given at birth. They may refer to the name given to them at birth as their "dead" name. Changing a name, especially for trans and nonbinary people, can be a long and barrier-ridden process that can involve hefty fees and a team of willing professionals. Even changing a name socially can be a frustrating process as family and friends adjust to new language.

God, we know that you call us each by name—not necessarily the name of birth certificates or ID cards, but the name that we claim as our own. Help us to recognise the grace and power of each others' names, be they given or chosen. Amen.

Name changes occur often in scripture. From Sarai to Sarah and Saul to Paul, some changes occur to renew a covenant (Abraham), or recognise a vocation (Peter), or accomplishment (Israel). Sometimes changes occur gradually, as if the Bible is trying to get used to the newer language. Other times, the change is instantaneous, and the "dead" name is never mentioned again.

Genesis 32:22–29

10

Tuesday: Open to the Outcasts

The New Testament authors make a point to show Jesus interacting positively with those considered outcasts by the culture they were living in. Jesus listened to women, socialised with foreigners, ate with tax collectors, and asked for children to be brought to him. Jesus's welcome to outcasts echo the Hebrew people's experience as an outcast nation, repeatedly occupied and colonised by foreign rulers with sparse periods of autonomous self-rule. Even so, God claimed this outcast nation as her own.

Dear God, as you chose the outcasts, we know you choose us. Help us to welcome the outcasts as your son Jesus did. Amen.

Mark 28:5–10

Luke 8:43;47–48

In the crowd was a woman who had suffered hemorrhages for twelve years, and had found no one who could heal her. She came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of his cloak, and immediately the bleeding stopped.

When the woman realised that she had been noticed, she approached in fear and knelt before him.

Wednesday: The Power of a Name

Exodus 3:13–15

"But," Moses said, "when I go to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is this god's name?' what am I to tell them?"

God replied, "I AM AS I AM. This is what you will tell the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

God spoke further to Moses: "Tell the children of Israel: God, the 'I AM,' the God of your ancestors, the God of Sarah and Abraham, of Rebecca and Isaac, of Leah and Rachel and Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my Name, forever; this is the name you are to remember for all generations."

Let us pray for ...

- Trans people around the world who cannot use their chosen name for fear of retribution, or whose chosen names are ignored by loved ones.
- Trans people facing barriers to legal name changes.
- People struggling to adjust to their trans family and friends' new names.
- People who fail to recognise the sanctity of trans people's chosen names.

11

Thursday: Struggling Against Institutions

Then they went on to Jerusalem. Jesus entered the Temple and began driving out those engaged in selling and buying. He overturned the money changers' tables and the stalls of those selling doves; moreover, he would not permit anyone to carry goods through the Temple area.

Then he began to teach them: "Doesn't scripture say, 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples? But you have turned it into a den of thieves!' The chief priests and the religious scholars heard about this and began looking for a way to destroy him.

Let us pray for ...

- Trans people throughout the world who are criminalised because of their gender identity.
- Trans people discriminated against through institutional regulations.
- Nonbinary people, whose gender is not considered valid by many governments around the world.
- Trans people and their allies who work to undo discriminatory laws, policies, and practices, as well as those who struggled against institutions before us without seeing the results.
- Institutions that discriminate against trans people – whether deliberately or unintentionally – that they may work to reform their policies to make their institution safe and affirming.

Thursday: Struggling Against Institutions

Trans people of colour, Indigenous trans/Two Spirit folks, and trans people with disabilities who may be unsafe or excluded in LGBTQ+ spaces
Trans people often struggle to have their gender, names, and basic human dignity recognised by government institutions—where transgender people are not criminalised. In many European countries mandatory sterilisation is a requirement for legal gender changes, while many U.S. jurisdictions use the infamous “bathroom bills” to restrict access to washrooms.

A common theme in the Hebrew Bible is struggling against powerful institutions and governments. Moses confronted Pharaoh, and Esther risked her life to intervene with the King of Persia on behalf of her people. In the New Testament, Jesus struggled against the religious authorities.

Dear God, we know that you are greater than any human institution—even those that claim to represent you—and that you are present with those who are affected by unjust laws and policies. Help us to oppose institutionalised discrimination against transgender people, wherever it may occur. Amen.

Daniel 3:16–22;49

Mark 11:15–18

12

Tuesday: Open to the Outcasts

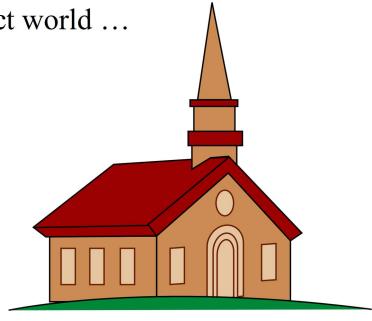
She explained in front of the crowd why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.

Jesus said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

Let us pray for ...

- Trans people who are ostracized and discriminated against in employment, schooling, and housing.
- Trans people who feel excluded from those around them, whether this exclusion occurs deliberately or unintentionally.
- Faith communities, that they work to welcome outsiders, especially historically excluded trans people who have had their identities denied.

In a perfect world ...



“All welcome. No exceptions.”

9

Friday: The Body of Christ & Trans Bodies

The bodies of trans and nonbinary people are often disparaged and regulated. Trans people may be subjected to invasive questions about hormones, surgery, and their genitals. Nonbinary people face scrutiny over their identities on the assumption that there is no body that “matches” their gender. This ignores the existence of intersex folks and insists on attaching the words “male” and “female” to particular body types, even though this is a human construct.

Dear God, as you resurrected Christ’s body, help us to appreciate the resurrecting power that living authentically—whether through surgery, hormones, or other changes to appearance—can have for trans people. Amen.

Ancient Near East religions were concerned with purity, through regulating sexual activity, diet, and contact with objects considered “unclean”, such as corpses. The religion of the ancient Israelites was no different. However, both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament point to the primacy of the soul or spirit. Our bodies were made from common clay, but our soul is the breath of God. It is not that our bodies are unimportant or that we shouldn’t take care of them; rather, our souls take precedence in determining

14

Monday: Creation & Identity Formation

- People who are currently questioning their gender identity.
- Children and youth, that they might be free to explore their gender identity without shame or disapproval.
- Trans people who are certain in their identities, but whose identities are not seen as Godly by those around them.
- People who believe that being trans is a rejection of God’s plan for us, that they might treat trans people with respect and dignity regardless.



7

Monday: Creation & Identity Formation

The Bible tells us that our identities are purposefully and lovingly bestowed upon us. From humanity's creation as stewards of the earth, to shaping individuals like Moses for specific purposes, God's creation of us as a humanity and as individuals is deeply meaningful and deliberate. Furthermore, God calls us to be co-creators. The first human helped God name creation, while the Hebrew Nazarites engaged in self-creation in order to become closer to God through renouncing wine and keeping uncut hair.

Dear God, you formed us in your image. Help us to become that people that you created us to be, and to support others on their journey of identity formation.

Amen.

Psalm 139:1-14

Jeremiah 29:11

I alone know my purpose for you, says YHWH, my purpose for your prosperity and my purpose not to harm you, my purpose to give you hope with a future in it.

Let us pray for ...

6

Resources for this Devotional

On the SCM website:

- Full devotional:
<http://scmcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Glory-to-the-Gender-Bending-God-full-devotional.pdf>
- Trans Terminology:
<http://scmcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Trans-terms-definitions.pdf>
- Tips for a Trans-Affirming Church:
<http://scmcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Tips-for-a-Trans-Affirming-Church-PDF.pdf>
- Queer Christian Resources:
<http://scmcanada.org/queer-resources/>

Priests for Equality (2007). *The Inclusive Bible*. UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC.

What is SCM?

The Student Christian Movement (SCM) of Canada is a youth- and student-led grassroots network passionate about social justice, community in diversity, and faith in action. As a radical ecumenical movement, we welcome all, regardless of belief, sexual orientation, faith tradition, and age. Together, we take action for social justice, engage in progressive faith activism, and seek to foster community in diversity. We work to be a prophetic voice for justice in our world.

Friday: The Body of Christ & Trans Bodies

who God intended us to be rather than the genitals we happen to have.

1 Corinthians 12:12-21

1 Samuel 16:7

But YHWH said to Samuel, "Pay no attention to appearance and height; I have rejected him. YHWH does not see as mortals see; mortals see only appearances but YHWH sees into the heart."

Let us pray for ...

- Trans and nonbinary people who want to take hormones and/or have gender confirming surgery, but cannot because of the costs or pre-existing medical conditions.
- Trans people who are struggling with dysphoria or who are misgendered because of their appearance.
- Trans people who do not want to take hormones or have surgery, that their identities and choices are respected
- The Communities of the Body of Christ, that they remain open to all who wish to be a part of it.

15

Saturday: Chosen Family

was close to his Apostles, choosing to be with them the night before his death.

Psalm 27:10

Even if my own parents reject me, you, YHWH, will accept me.

Ruth 1:11-17

Let us pray for ...

- Trans youth whose parents have told them to leave home, causing them to become homeless or perilously housed.
- Trans people who are lonely or isolated.
- Trans people whose chosen families do not have the same rights and legal recognition as biological families
- Organisations that provide support to trans youth, their parents, and non-traditional families.



Saturday: Chosen Family

Coming out as transgender to family can be daunting, especially for youth. Even if trans teens or young adults are not sent away, un-accepting family can make life at home unbearable, pressuring them to leave all the same, resulting in staggering statistics—as many as 2 in 5 homeless youth are LGBTQ.

Many trans and nonbinary people have to rebuild family from scratch. Through affirming friends, partners, communities, and connecting to other LGBTQ people online or at events, trans people begin to create a new, chosen family, allowing them to leave behind toxic relationships for healthy ones. These families may not always be legally recognised, but they are intrinsic to the health and wellbeing of trans and nonbinary individuals.

God, help us to see the love within chosen families so that we may celebrate them alongside traditional families. Amen.

Bible is full of nontraditional family structures. In many cases, children are raised by people who are not parents or family members. Esther was raised by her cousin Mordecai, Samuel was raised by the priest Eli, and Jesus himself was raised by Joseph. The Bible also demonstrates strong friendships. In particular, Jesus

Suggested Order of Service

Open the devotional with these words:

- One: O God, open our lips
- All: **And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**
- One: God is our refuge and our strength.
- All: **O come, let us worship.**

You may read the full Introduction paragraph(s) or simply read the prayer in bold.

Each day has Scripture assigned that can be read aloud.

In lieu of a sermon, reflect or discuss the topics. Context, reflection and discussion questions for each day are available in the full guide online.

The Prayer section offers suggestions related to the theme. Add in prayers suited to your own situation.

To close the devotional, you may use these words:

- One: God of peace, enable us to do your will in every kind of goodness as you work through us, for in you we find wholeness, strength, and affirmation.
- All: **Amen.**
- One: Go forth into the world, to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.

All: Thanks be to God!

16

5

Sunday: Refuge

The Bible gives many different names to God as a source of refuge. Zie is described as a rock, stronghold, shield, protector from the violence of enemies, relief from oppressors, and defense against slanderers. Many biblical figures turn to God for comfort. When Jesus knew his death was near, he retreated to Gethsemane to pray to God his Parent.

God, we pray that those in need of safety, refuge, and comfort may find this in you and in those through whom you work. May we ourselves have recognise the need for comfort among others, and work to provide a safe space for vulnerable people wherever we may be. Amen.

Many trans people do not feel safe in daily life. Judgemental stares, verbal harassment, sexual abuse, or physical assault may all be regular experiences for trans and nonbinary people. Transfeminine people of colour are particularly vulnerable. Harassment can occur at work, at school, at church, out in public, on transit, in washrooms, or in change rooms. Therefore, trans people need safe spaces where they can receive support and unwind.

1 Samuel 2:1-10

1 Peter 5:7-11

Introduction

The complete version of this Devotional with additional resources, terms & definitions is available for free on the SCM website.

A Note About Language

Though many adherents of the Abrahamic traditions use masculine language to refer to God, most agree that God is not solely a male figure. This devotional will therefore alternate the pronouns each day used to refer to God. It will use he/him, she/her, they/them, and zie/zer. It may feel awkward at first to use a traditionally plural pronoun to refer to God, but remember, the Hebrew Bible also uses the word "Elohim" (plural of "El", the Hebrew word for a god) to refer to God.

This devotional uses he/him pronouns for Jesus because these were the pronouns he used during his time on earth.

All scripture readings come from The Inclusive Bible, a translation published in 2007 by the Catholic group Priests for Equality. Some minor changes have been made to make it more trans-inclusive (such as changing phrases like "pregnant women" to "pregnant people"). Some commentary from The Inclusive Bible has been used to provide context to the readings.

Introduction

Historically, transgender and gender nonconforming people have not been treated well by Christianity. In most Christian communities, the existence of trans people is ignored, if attitudes towards them are not openly hostile. These circumstances can leave trans Christians struggling with their identities, both as trans people, and Christians.

Christians hostile to trans people often root their hatred in the Bible. However, the Bible makes no mention of trans people. Most of the talk about transgender people and the Bible takes verses out of context and applies them uncritically to trans people. This is the case among both those who wish to affirm and those who condemn trans people. For example, Galatians 3:28 reads "In Christ there is no Jew or Greek, slave or citizen, male or female." Taken literally, this verse would mean that upon Baptism, each Christian becomes nonbinary. But a literal reading disrespects the complexity of the Bible. Biblical interpretation in any case depends on both perspective and context.

Even though the Bible doesn't mention trans people specifically, many recurring themes are common experiences of trans people—creation & identity formation, the outcast experience, name changes, struggling against institutions, body regulation & liberation, chosen family, and seeking refuge. This devotional invites you, whoever you are, to explore these themes each day.

2

LEAVE THIS PAGE BLANK

LEAVE THIS PAGE BLANK

Sunday: Refuge

Cast all your cares on God, who cares for you. Be sober. Be watchful. For your adversary the Devil roams about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Stand up to the Devil as one strong in faith, fortified with the knowledge that your siblings throughout the world share the same afflictions.

But the God of all grace, who called you to eternal glory through Jesus Christ, will fulfill, restore, strengthen, and establish you after you have suffered a little while. To God be glory and dominion forever and ever! Amen.

Let us pray for ...

- Trans people in need of refuge, solace, security, and affirmation.
- Trans and nonbinary people who feel abandoned by God, that they may find comfort.
- Those who make it more difficult for trans people to access God, that they might learn to remove barriers rather than create them.



19

LEAVE THIS PAGE BLANK

LEAVE THIS PAGE BLANK

