

be  
thou my  
VISION

*A Liturgy for  
Daily Worship*



Jonathan  
Gibson

“Jonny Gibson’s new liturgical guide to personal or family worship is a gem! Evangelicals need enrichment of the ‘daily quiet time,’ which has traditionally been little more than Bible study and intercessory prayer. While many have turned to a variety of traditions that are less than gospel- or word-centered, in *Be Thou My Vision* Jonny connects us to the Reformation’s historic forms of prayer and confession, catechesis, and the *lectio continua* reading of Scripture. It’s a feast, and while providing only thirty-one days of different prayers, I believe the book can be profitably used all year, and year after year. Get it and use it!”

**Tim Keller**, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City

“Jonny has gifted us with a project not only of theological and historical retrieval but also, more deeply, retrieval of our own hearts, often wayward and wandering, distracted and distressed. This simple but rich liturgy takes our hearts and leads them back to the Lord with pastoral care and theological integrity. A deeply edifying and useful guide.”

**Dane Ortlund**, Senior Pastor, Naperville Presbyterian Church;  
author, *Gentle and Lowly* and *Deeper*

“We believers sometimes stumble our way through the steps of spiritual devotion, especially in private or family worship. This liturgy for daily worship lets us hold the well-tested handrails of faithful worshippers, carved out deeply and well to help us on. Creeds, prayers, catechisms, hymns, and, most of all, God’s breathed-out word lead us profitably and beautifully to worship the triune God in spirit and in truth. I look forward to using and sharing this book.”

**Kathleen B. Nielsen**, author; speaker

“To use the rich traditions of biblical worship such as prayers, confessions of faith, catechisms, Scripture readings, praise, and more conveys a remarkable freshness in the context of personal worship. Gibson guides you through each of these elements in a thirty-one-day cycle, and provides a familiar one-year Bible-reading plan. With some adjustments it can also serve as a family worship resource. All in all, *Be Thou My Vision* is perhaps the best, and certainly the most thorough and meaty, daily devotional guide I’ve ever read.”

**Donald S. Whitney**, Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Associate Dean, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; author, *Family Worship*; *Praying the Bible*; and *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*

“What if you took thirty-one days and enveloped your Bible reading in a cocoon of riches? Make no mistake—this book is not a replacement for the living and active word of God. But how might it deepen and enliven your morning meditation to lead into it and out of it by drawing on centuries of wisdom? Both the sequence and the carefully crafted prayers and creeds will freshly inform your mind and stir your heart. This is not a book of shortcuts for those looking to abbreviate their time in God’s word. These daily liturgies invite us to give more for a season and hold out the promise of great reward. How might God renovate your soul in these thirty-one days?”

**David Mathis**, Senior Teacher and Executive Editor, [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org); Pastor, Cities Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota; author, *Habits of Grace*

“Jonny Gibson is helping a new generation of Christian believers and pastors find language and structure that will enrich their daily devotional life and weekly worship services. I personally find *Be Thou My Vision* both helpful and inspiring, and warmly commend it to all.”

**Keith Getty**, hymn writer

“When it comes to daily personal worship, Christians are finding it harder to stay disciplined in today’s swipe-scroll-click-search-tap culture. Many have lost the art of staying focused. In the meantime, our souls cry out for authentic worship that lasts more than two minutes. It’s why the book you hold in your hands is so necessary. I love this book! Having been raised in the Reformed Episcopal church, I enjoy the rhythms of liturgical adoration of God in all its depth, discipline, and exaltation of the word. *Be Thou My Vision* will educate you in personal worship that is truly worthy of our great God. I highly recommend this important guide for your personal devotions.”

**Joni Eareckson Tada**, Founder, Joni and Friends International Disability Center

“What a go-to source this volume will be for both individual devotion and family worship, with its carefully arranged daily liturgy featuring select Scripture readings, prayers culled from church history, luminous sections of the creeds and confessions, plus the ringing lyrics of sacred hymnody. Those who take the time for an appropriation of the measured riches and disciplines of this book will experience an intensification of worship that will fill their existence. We believe that *Be Thou My Vision* will grace today’s church and generations to come!”

**Kent and Barbara Hughes**, Senior Pastor Emeritus, College Church, Wheaton; authors, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* and *Disciplines of a Godly Woman*

“A daily ‘time with the Lord’ has become a rarity in the lives of many Christians. This not only robs us of the good things that God has provided for the strengthening, encouragement, and equipping of his people, but it also dishonors the Lord who loved us and gave himself for us. Gibson has mined the devotional treasures of twenty centuries of Christian prayer to produce a structured and easy-to-use guide to thirty-one days of worship involving confession and praise, Scripture readings and creeds, catechism, and intercession. *Be Thou My Vision* will certainly give breadth and depth to your daily time with the Lord. I warmly welcome it.”

**Kanishka Raffel**, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia



*Be Thou My Vision*



# Be Thou My Vision

*A Liturgy for Daily Worship*

Jonathan Gibson



Be Thou My Vision: A Liturgy for Daily Worship

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You move us to delight in praising you;  
for you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

AUGUSTINE



For  
David and Jenny  
Tim and Katie

---

*For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us  
an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,  
as we look not to the things that are seen  
but to the things that are unseen.  
For the things that are seen are transient,  
but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

2 CORINTHIANS 4:17-18



In Memoriam  
Samuel David Dodson Chapman  
(1990–2020)

---

They stand, those halls of Zion,  
all jubilant with song,  
and bright with many an angel,  
and all the martyr throng.  
The Prince is ever in them,  
the daylight is serene;  
the pastures of the blessed  
are decked in glorious sheen.

There is the throne of David;  
and there, from care released,  
the song of them that triumph,  
the shout of them that feast;  
and they who with their Leader  
have conquered in the fight,  
forever and forever  
are clad in robes of white.

“JERUSALEM THE GOLDEN,” BERNARD OF CLUNY

(STANZAS 2 AND 3)



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## Preface

IN 2020, DURING THE COVID-19 lockdowns, I reflected on my devotional life as I became increasingly dissatisfied with its content and structure. My basic format of reading and petitioning, with a few praise points thrown in, began to feel more like a bland time with God than a blessed time with God. Around the same time, my friend Mark Earngey informed me of a short liturgical guide that he had put together for the Sydney diocese to aid families and churches during the lockdown. It inspired me to think about how I might structure my own personal or family devotions more like a mini church service, with elements of a call to worship, adoration, confession, assurance, creed and catechism, *Gloria Patri*, prayer of illumination, Bible reading, intercessory prayer, and the Lord's Prayer. As an experiment, I decided to include these liturgical elements in my devotional times. As a result, I experienced something of a renewal in my devotional life. I found my prayers helped by saints in the past, my knowledge of the Scriptures expanded with a set reading plan, my understanding of the Christian faith deepened through regular instruction from the historic creeds and

the church's catechisms. My devotional times became more praiseworthy rather than mainly petitionary. Overall, I found myself less distracted, more concentrated; less bored, more engaged. The flow of the liturgy was meaningful; the varied content of each element, enriching. My devotional life began to feel more like a delight than a duty. I then "trialed" it with my wife, Jackie, and on occasions with the whole family, before exploring the possibility of publishing the material for the benefit of others. *Be Thou My Vision* is the fruit of that initial experiment and subsequent exploration. My prayer is that this liturgy of daily worship might provide the same experience in your personal or family devotions as it did for me and my family.

Jonathan Gibson, Glenside  
Michaelmas 2020  
*Soli Deo Gloria*

## Acknowledgments

A NUMBER OF PEOPLE DESERVE my thanks in bringing this book to fruition. Although Mark Earngey declined to be involved in this book, I wish to thank him for being a catalyst in my initial thinking about a liturgy of daily worship. Justin Taylor and Anthony Gosling at Crossway were enthusiastic from the beginning and patiently helped me to configure the best possible format. I am also thankful to Elliott Pinegar for his advice on copyright issues, Lydia Brownback for her careful editorial work on the manuscript, and Dan Farrell for the beautiful cover design in keeping with the origins of the ancient Irish hymn “Be Thou My Vision.” The majority of prayers in this book are taken from the *ESV Prayer Bible* (2018); a dozen or so are taken from *Reformation Worship: Liturgies from the Past for the Present* (2018). These latter prayers were translated by Matthias Mangold and Bernard Aubert. I am grateful to Crossway and New Growth Press for permission to use a select number of prayers from these respective works. Other prayers have been modernized from original sources that are in the public domain, such as Augustine’s *Confessions* (c. 400), Gregory the Great’s

“Seven-Fold Litany” (c. 600), the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1552 and 1662), the Middelburg Liturgy (1586), the Savoy Liturgy (1661), and *A Book of Public Prayer* (1857). The prayer by Jonathan Edwards is adapted from a comment he made about God in *A Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue* (1765). The Heidelberg Catechism (1563) in appendix 2 is the modern version published by the Christian Reformed Church in North America and is used here with permission. The Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647) in appendix 3 has been modernized by myself, as well as the Collects from the Book of Common Prayer (1552) in appendix 4.

Jackie, my wife, joined me in “trialing” the liturgy and provided helpful feedback. My children Benjamin, Zachary, and Hannah each participated in the trial in different ways (from reading prayers to raising hands in the *Gloria Patri*). We will always associate this liturgy of daily worship with our holiday at Litchfield Beach, South Carolina, where we praised God “from whom all blessings flow” while we watched dolphins swim gracefully in the calm morning water. Our daughter Leila is never far from our minds during our family worship or on our holidays—always an empty space at the table, always one less ice cream to buy. But we know that she is happy elsewhere, praising God with the great company of heaven (Heb. 12:22–24). In his poem “Resignation,” Henry Wadsworth Longfellow captures, beautifully and poignantly, our experience and hope:

Day after day we think what she is doing  
In those bright realms of air;  
Year after year, her tender steps pursuing,  
Behold her grown more fair.

Thus do we walk with her, and keep unbroken  
The bond which nature gives,  
Thinking that our remembrance, though unspoken,  
May reach her where she lives.

Not as a child shall we again behold her;  
For when with raptures wild  
In our embraces we again enfold her,  
She will not be a child;

But a fair maiden, in her Father's mansion,  
Clothed with celestial grace;  
And beautiful with all the soul's expansion  
Shall we behold her face. (stanzas 8–11)

This book is dedicated to my Australian in-laws—David and Jenny (parents-in-law) and Tim and Katie (siblings-in-law)—all devoted Christians, committed to reading their Bibles and praying regularly. Although they greatly miss their daughter and sister (and now grandchildren, and nephews and nieces), they have graciously supported our calling, for which we are grateful. I pray that this book enriches their devotional lives while together we wait for the eternal weight of glory, when the things that are unseen will finally be seen (2 Cor. 4:17).

This book is also written in *memoriam* of a dear friend, Samuel David Dodson Chapman (1990–2020). Sam or Sammy, as he was affectionately known, was diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia in his late teenage years. He survived the life-threatening disease on several occasions but suffered terribly from the symptoms of a debilitating graft-versus-host disease that robbed him of life's most basic comforts and joys. Yet by the grace of God, he remained a man of faith to

the end (2 Tim. 4:7–8). The times I spent with Sam during his illness were some of my most spiritually uplifting, when the transient things of this world faded and the eternal things of the world to come appeared more solid and real than ever. During his more-than-a-decade-long illness, Sam lived for two days—“today” and “that day.” On February 3, 2020, “that day” came, as he heard the voice of Jesus calling him home to another shore and a greater light. Sam is now at peace, without pain, and praising his Savior all the day long. I pray that this book might help us all to live each day like Sam did—to live today for that day, when our worship by faith on earth will give way to our worship by sight in heaven.

Jerusalem the golden,  
with milk and honey blest,  
beneath your contemplation  
sink heart and voice oppressed.

I know not, O I know not,  
what joys await us there;  
what radiance of glory,  
what bliss beyond compare.

O sweet and blessed country,  
the home of God’s elect!  
O sweet and blessed country,  
that eager hearts expect!  
Jesus, in mercy bring us  
to that dear land of rest;  
who are, with God the Father  
and Spirit, ever blest.

“Jerusalem the Golden,” Bernard of Cluny  
(stanzas 1 and 4)

PART I

DAILY WORSHIP  
IN SCRIPTURE





## Scriptural Foundation for Daily Worship

IT MAY COME AS A SURPRISE, but there is no explicit command in Scripture to have a time of worship each day, either as an individual or as a family. And yet it is a habit that every Christian believer or Christian family is encouraged to practice. The name of the habit may vary depending on one's Christian tradition or background—"devotion," "quiet time," or "personal or family worship"—but the basic elements of Bible reading and prayer are usually present. As one can see from the subtitle of this book, I have opted for the general term "daily worship"; it covers a time of personal or family devotion while maintaining the vertical dimension of worship. But from where do we get this idea of a time of daily worship, which consists mainly in Bible reading and prayer? The answer is that the practice is implied in a number of Scriptures.

In Genesis, God says that he chose Abraham so that he might command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord (Gen. 18:19). This would involve Abraham having a time in the day or week to teach his family and servants what God had commanded him. In Deuteronomy, God commands Israel to love him with heart and soul and mind and strength, a love that is to be expressed by parents taking every opportunity during the day to teach their children the words of God (Deut. 6:5–6). In Joshua, after Moses dies, God exhorts Joshua to be “strong and very courageous” by being careful to obey the law of Moses (Josh. 1:7). The command implies that Joshua would need to familiarize himself with the books of Moses throughout his life, a discipline that would require regular, systematic reading of the sacred text. At the end of his life, Joshua declares to Israel that his commitment to God is not just personal but familial: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15). For his family to serve the Lord, Joshua would first have to know the law of Moses for himself before instructing his family in it. The practice is reflected in the Psalms where Israel is encouraged to tell the glorious deeds of the Lord to the next generation (Ps. 78:4). The prophetic books contain a similar idea of personally hearing from God in his word before passing on the revelation to others. In Isaiah, the servant of the Lord is said to be awakened “morning by morning” to listen to God’s instruction (Isa. 50:4) before he undertakes the work to which God has called him. In Amos, God says that he does no great work in history without first revealing his secret to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7). In Ezekiel, the prophet is told to eat the words of God from the scroll as a symbolic gesture of first digesting the word of God for himself before proclaiming it to Israel (Ezek. 3:1–2).

In each of these examples—with Abraham, Israel, Joshua, Isaiah, Amos, and Ezekiel—it is reasonable to think that the personal reading of Scripture or the familial instruction from Scripture would have also involved times of prayer. This is supported by the fact that the canon of Christian Scripture contains its own prayer book. The book of Psalms includes individual and corporate prayers (e.g., Pss. 3; 96) mixed with encouragement to meditate on God’s word and his promises (e.g., Pss. 1; 119).

The New Testament reflects similar sentiments on reading the Scriptures and praying, either as an individual, a family, or a church. Jesus frequently asks the Pharisees, “Have you not read?” as he rebukes them for not knowing their Bibles (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31; Mark 12:10, 26), which means that he believed that they ought to have been reading the Old Testament for themselves. Jesus also teaches on corporate and individual prayer. On the one hand, the Lord’s Prayer is intended to be a public prayer said by the church, seen in the plural forms that run throughout it: “Our Father in heaven. . . Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:9–13). On the other hand, individual prayer is something Jesus envisages being performed alone, in private: “When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret” (Matt. 6:6). So, according to Jesus, there is a time to pray together as a church and a time to pray on our own. We see a similar focus on reading the Scriptures and praying in the writings and lives of the apostles. Peter encourages Christians to crave the spiritual milk of God’s word like newborn infants (1 Pet. 1:24–2:2), while also exhorting them to

be alert and sober-minded so that they might pray (1 Pet. 4:7). In his epistles, Paul commands the public and private reading of Scripture (1 Tim. 4:15; 2 Tim. 3:15), alongside prayer (1 Tim. 2:8). He reveals the content of his own personal prayers for the churches (Eph. 1:17–19; 3:16–19; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:9–12), while also encouraging believers toward a similar commitment to daily prayer: “Be constant in prayer” (Rom. 12:12) and “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Finally, family instruction from the Scriptures, along with prayer, is implied in Paul’s exhortation to fathers to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

So it is clear from this brief overview that while there is no explicit command to have a time of daily worship as an individual or a family, consisting in reading the Scriptures and praying to God, the habit is certainly assumed or implied in a number of places. If this is so, then some questions arise: How should we structure our own daily worship? What should we do and how should we do it? At a basic level, it obviously involves hearing from God in Scripture and responding to him in prayer. However, can we be more intentional and creative than that? I think we can be. For example, we know that Jesus would rise early in the morning to spend time with his Father. Was this worship time structured or random? I think that we have good reason to believe that it was structured. For one, Jesus knew the Old Testament Scriptures comprehensively and precisely, and he could only have attained such knowledge if he was reading God’s word regularly and sequentially. At the very least, he would have heard the consecutive reading of Scripture at the synagogue. Second, when Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he provided a basic structure in the Lord’s Prayer

of adoration, petition, confession, and further petition. So it is reasonable to assume that when Jesus spent time with his Father each day in worship, he had a system for reading and meditating on the Old Testament as well as a structure for praying. Following our Lord's example can only serve to improve our own daily worship in terms of Bible reading and prayer.

In regard to Bible reading, the last few decades have seen a more systematic read-through-the-Bible approach. This is a welcome advance from the more random verse-a-day reading plan. Systematic reading plans help us to grasp "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), and in the order in which God has revealed it. The sequential reading of Scripture deepens our knowledge of God's word and aids its memorization. In regard to prayer, however, I am not sure we have seen much advance beyond saying a short prayer before reading our Bibles, followed by a list of petitions in which we ask God to bless this or that person and this or that endeavor. Let's be honest: prayer is the hardest part of our devotions and often leaves us feeling distracted and directionless. However, the good news is that help is available to us from those in the past who have exemplified an intentional structure within their prayers as well as a varied use of different prayers, such as adoration, confession, illumination, and intercession. In addition to systematic Bible reading and structured-but-varied prayer, our worship of God each day may be enriched by affirming our Christian faith with a creed or receiving doctrinal instruction from a catechism.

Ordering all these elements in a fixed liturgy provides a healthy and enjoyable rhythm to our worship. This is precisely what this new liturgy of daily worship seeks to do. Of

course, the aim is not to replace corporate worship on the Lord's Day; rather, it is to help prepare us for corporate worship on the Lord's Day by improving our personal or family worship each day. Indeed, it is my prayer that the rhythms of fixed liturgy contained in this book, practiced over a month or a whole year, will instill in us habits of worship that will last a lifetime.