

## Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

### The Grace Trifecta, Part II: Scripture

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Hi, I'm Allison Gingras with Reconciledtoyou.com. We're continuing on our Lenten journey together, talking about The Grace Trifecta of prayer, sacrament, and scripture. In session one, we talked about prayer, and today we're going to dive into some scripture. First, let's start with a prayer. *In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Dear good and gracious God, we are so grateful for this time together. Lord, we ask You to open up our hearts and our minds to the message that You have specifically to us in this time together. Lord, we ask for Your blessing upon each and every one of us in our Lenten journey, and we ask You please, dear Lord, to continue to bless and guide us along our way. I ask specifically, Lord, for Your work and Your will to be done, and for me to get out of Your way. And we ask all this in Your most precious name, Jesus Christ. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

When I look at the scriptures about Jesus, there is one that stands out particularly to me, especially in this last 2 years as I've journeyed and dealt with a chronic, what do you call it? An affliction. Let's go with chronic affliction. Atopic dermatitis. It's a hand eczema, and it is chronic, it's inflammation. There is no cause that they can determine, and therefore they can't really come up with a cure. So, it's been kind of a frustrated two years, but I love that the Lord has allowed me to see so much good in this time. Has allowed me to see Him at work, and learn from this affliction, instead of becoming despaired by it. Though I have to say there have been moments I have been pretty frustrated with it. It's... it's ugly, it's difficult sometimes. There have been times when I haven't even been able to use my hands, and that's been frustrating. Not to be able to serve my family, not to be able to work. But, again, the Lord showed me, for instance, here's a really great example.

We've, you know, like every family, we have financial difficulties, and I have been working in ministry now since 2009, and my husband said "You know, perhaps we need to consider you returning to one of your other careers that you had leading up to here." I was a childcare provider, and I was a paralegal. And he said "Well, even just get a part-time job at a fast food place or, you know, a retailer." And so I decided to pray about it. And one of the greatest concerns about my hands is that I am very susceptible to infection. So I can't work with money, nobody wants me touching their food, I couldn't go back to childcare, because that requires constant hand-washing. And paralegal, well, that requires a lot of typing, but it also required

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me to go back and learn all the laws, because it's been quite a while, quite a long time since I practiced that.

And in it, I started to realize that the Lord has allowed this inflammation at this time of my life because it kept me where I believe He wanted me to be. I believe it kept me in ministry, it kept me serving Him. And, you know, the most amazing thing is right after we came to the conclusion that, right, you know, there is nothing else right now I can do. But we trust in the Lord's providence for us, for our lives and for our families. And right after, we had a couple of things in our life happen where it really showed that the Lord was providing, and we had a family member give us a little bit of inheritance because he wanted to see us enjoy it before he passed away. And I was also given a little bit of work, enough work that it paid some of the bills. But more importantly, it reaffirmed that this is what the Lord has called me to.

And perhaps that's something that you're dealing with right now. You're trying to discern God's will in your life, and you're trying to decide "What does God want me to be doing right now?" And discerning can be so hard. You know, just trying to get this video accomplished, things kept coming up and interrupting the process. And I thought "Okay, is this God telling me 'You're on the wrong path. Change direction, and I'm going to keep interrupting you until you do what I'm asking you to do.'? Or was this the enemy going 'This is going to be too good, and she's going to, well, the Lord through her,' because this isn't me, 'is going to encourage too many hearts to love Him. So we need to stop her, and maybe discourage her from going on.'"

I'm sure that there's moments, maybe right now, or in your past, or will happen eventually, and for me, the one true way of knowing that I'm in God's will is to spend time in His word. Because it's in the scriptures that I hear God's voice most clearly, because that is the word of God. That is the inspired word of our Lord, and of... I mean, it's the eyewitness accounts of our Lord. It's His actual words that people heard Him speak. To know what Jesus is teaching us, we don't have to guess. We can read the gospels, and right there we have His words. And then we have Paul, who gives us more insight into what Jesus taught, and of course the Old Testament, the Salvation History, with God's voice.

And reading that, and spending time with it really helps, at least me, helps me to discern, because when I'm praying and when I'm trying to decide and listen to God, to have the scriptures on my heart means I also have them in my head. And I can hear His voice as much as my feeble human mind can, Him guiding me, and teaching me. And this is, the ones I'm going to share with you today, are just a few that the Lord has brought to me during this real struggle with this chronic

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inflammation and this affliction which, of course, I've prayed more than 3 times for the Lord to take away. But I trust that His grace is enough, as Saint Paul teaches us in Corinthians, that it is enough. And that, in it, God's will is made perfect in my weakness, and in weakness in general. And in this case, my inflammation and my affliction.

So, Jesus as divine physician is one of the first one that comes up to me. Mark 2:17 ***Jesus said to them "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*** And it was very interesting, as I look at Jesus being the divine physician, being the doctor, the one thing about this inflammation that, this sickness, is that I avoided doctors for a really long time. I struggle sometimes to trust in them, and I, you know, think I can handle it all on my own. You know, if there's no cause and there's no cure, what's the point? I'll have to just figure it out.

And, you know, I kind of did that with God for a really long time too. I struggled to trust that He was real, and to trust that this God that I could not see actually existed. And I'd like to think that through His grace, through His mercy on my heart, that through what I call God-cidences – You know, the world may think of it as a coincidence, but I see it as a God-cidence, as God's moving in my life – that He made himself known to me. Like, why would the God that made Himself visible in Jesus then make Himself invisible to us? Of course He wants us to know that He's with us. And if we ask, He will make Himself known, He will reveal Himself to us, and He does that, of course, in His word, most specifically, but I also see Him in different ways in my life.

But one of the ways I think that we see Him is through the lives of the saints, and through their intercession with us. So I had this inflammation, and it was getting pretty bad, and my hands were very red and swollen. And clearly, there was an infection happening, but I was still choosing to ignore it. But I was really struggling, and I had just kind of fallen in love with and discovered at that time Venerable Solanus Casey, now Blessed Solanus, Father Solanus Casey. And decided one day just to ask for his intercession. I had... I don't even know how I found him, but someone had sent me this adorable little relic of him. He's chk on the back.

And so I decided "You know, Father Solanus, I really need your help. I don't know what's going on with my hands, but I really need your help." Very long story short, I discovered through a mammogram that I had an inflammation, an infection in my body, and I finally called the doctor and finally went on medication. And the hands started to clear at that point, the infection, God, thank God, healed as well. And I was sitting at the hairdresser, and I was just on my phone, kind of waiting for my

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hair to get all beautiful. And I got this email that Father Solanus Casey was being beatified.

Now, this was just days after discovering the infection, and starting to feel better, and really believing that Father Solanus had helped me. But I didn't really realize how much Father Solanus had protected me, and what his favor had meant until I started to read on. It said that he was being beatified, and that the healing was the healing of a woman from a chronic skin disorder, which made sense because that's what he died from. And I was like "Really? I did not know how he died." So I went on the internet, because that's what we do to find stuff nowadays, right – I don't know how we ever survived without it before – So I went on the internet, and I looked up Father Solanus Casey.

Now, I knew a little bit about him, carried this around with me, and prayed to him. But what I didn't know, and what was so remarkable, is that the very infection that I had contracted, that his favor had protected me from, was the very one that he died from. And just to be sure that I wasn't imagining things, that this was truly his favor, his intercession, and that God was listening, as I am reading all of this, a friend of mine pops up on my instant message and said "Hey, do you know what? I have this relic of Father Solanus Casey. Can I pray for you?" The very moment I'm praying and thinking "Is this really happening?" Like, those are God-cidences. I couldn't make that happen if I tried. And it just really helped me, to know and to see that I'm not alone, and maybe you need to know that too. You're not alone. The veil between heaven and earth is far thinner than we believe. We are always in God's presence. Our guardian angels never leave our sides, and they're always looking upon the face of God. And they're with us to guide us, to lead us, to, you know, light and guide, rule and guard.

And so understanding that avoiding Jesus, whether it be for help with my physical wellbeing or, more importantly, my spiritual wellbeing, was... I'm going to call myself foolish, because I was missing out on a real great gift that God gives us, in knowing that we are not alone. And it made me think, when I think about the scriptures and illness, of course I can't help of think of the hemorrhaging woman from... you find her in Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, and Luke 8:43-48. Long-suffering, 12 years with this hemorrhaging that no doctor could solve. And I actually laughed out loud when it said how much money she spent, because when I really started to first contract the atopic dermatitis, I probably spent, over the last 2 years, I've probably spent well over a thousand dollars on ointments, creams, medications, vitamins. You name it, I have tried it. And I thought "Oh, well look, I'm not the only one. We even have somebody in the scriptures who was doing the same thing. Trying to get well."

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But what I loved is what Jesus says to her, and I feel like sometimes when I read the scriptures, okay, a lot of times when I read the Bible, I feel like things are being said right to me. And I hope that if you spend some time, especially during Lent, if you open up the scriptures and spend some time with God's word, that you too feel God speaking right to your heart. And what He said to her was "Daughter, take courage." In some translations, He says "Take heart," which I really like. "Take heart. Take courage. Go in peace." Well first "Your faith has made you well. Go in peace." And there's a few things that happen.

First of all, being called "daughter" reminds me of my adoption into God's family. My being part of God's family, being His adopted daughter and son. And that's kind of really significant to me, because I am both a biological mom and an adoptive mom. And when we were waiting to adopt Faithy from China, I remember thinking "Am I going to love her as much as I love my boys?" Like, I carried them, I gave birth to them. There was just something about that connectedness, of being, you know, carrying them, being one with them. Would I ever feel that way about Faith? And it really... it really was a concern for me, especially because she's profoundly deaf. Would I be able to communicate enough with her? Would I be able to build that bond that I have with them?

Well, truth be told, there's days that I love her way more than her brothers. We have been able to bond and connect in a way that never thought possible. And one day, as I was contemplating that beautiful bond, I thought about God, and my sometimes insecurity as His daughter, as His beloved daughter, and really being adopted by Him. And I thought "If I, an imperfect human being, could love an adopted child as my own." I don't call her my adopted daughter, I call her my daughter. "How much more can God do that?" Like, we are truly beloved by Him. We are His children. There are no differences. There is no "He couldn't possibly love us because we're adopted." No. He just is crazy about us. He created us out of love, and he is love, as John tells us in the gospel. He can do nothing but love us.

So, I thought that was... Reading that really touched my heart. And then "That faith has made you well. And lastly, that "Go in peace," because, as I said in the first session about prayer, I really, truly believe that the answer to every single prayer I've ever prayed has been peace. It's not always the answer I'm seeking, it's not always some profound understanding or answer, or even sometimes I don't even feel a spiritual connection with God. But I always leave prayer in peace. And that's what I see here. When the... when the hemorrhaging woman touches Jesus, just the tassel was enough for His power to be unleashed.

And in one of the gospels, He says, I think it's Mark, He says "Who has touched me?" And of course, the apostles think he means physically, and they said "Oh

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Lord, we're in the middle of a crowd. How could we possibly know which one of these people touched you?" But if you think about Jesus and His heart for me people, and how He says to the woman when He finally discovers who it is "Take heart." I believe that He said, "Who touched me?" regarding her faith. Her faith touched His heart. "Who touched my heart?" And when we come to Him, regardless of, you know, what it is we're bringing, when we show that we have faith enough to pray, we touch God's heart. We touch Jesus' heart. And then He says to you "Your faith has made you well, and you may go in peace."

The last thing I wanted to talk about this session with you is when our answer isn't what we wanted, or what we asked for, there's some scriptures I think that are really important for us to look at. The first one being Isaiah 59:8-9: ***For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor My ways your ways, or your ways My ways. Declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts higher than your thoughts.*** We think that what we're praying for and asking God for is what's best for us. The funny thing is we're not God, and we really don't know what's best for us. We'd like to think so, I like to think so, but I don't. And God's ultimate... He promises to make good of everything, and the ultimate good, of course, He promises is for us to be in heaven with Him forever.

So everything that He allows in our life – He doesn't bring the bad, but He allows it, because there's free will in the world, because it gives us an opportunity to rely on Him, for grace to come from it – There's so much good, if we can just allow God to work in our hearts. That we just can't even... we can't even fathom quite honestly. But to remember that God's ways are not our ways, they are higher than our ways, really helps bring that peace from when my prayers aren't answered quite the way I had hoped they would be. My spiritual director teases me that I am willing to be the spouse of the beloved Jesus, but only the Holy Spirit, God. I'm open to this relationship, as long as I have a prenup, and prenup with Him that everything I ask for happens. You know, God's will, my will, they should be the same. They should be the same. But they should be mine bending to His, because His will is perfect. And our Blessed Mother responded to God's will perfectly, and so she's such a good model. And how did she do that? She was full of grace, which brings me back to prayer, sacrament, and scripture. It's a great foundation and way of growing each one of us in grace.

And the last thing I want to... I know I said this was, but this is part of the last part – is this trust. So all of this really leads up to "Do I trust God?" And "Am I willing to open my heart to trust Him?" And there's 2 scriptures I want to leave you with to contemplate to help you grow in your trust in the Lord. And the first is Proverbs 3:5-6: ***Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own***

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*understandings, but acknowledge Him in all your ways, and He will make straight your path.* And the second is Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you. Plans for good, and not for your woe.* So, you know, as we continue through our Lenten journey, open up the scriptures, ask the Lord “What is it You want me to know about You, and about me in You? Teach me, guide me, lead me.” Ask your guardian angel to take you on that journey, to grow closer to God through the scriptures.

I’m going to close with a quick prayer. *Dear Jesus, we thank You so much for the gospels. For Your words spoken through the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, for those eyewitnesses, who saw Your work, and shared it with us. Lord, help us during this Lenten time to read those gospels, to see what it is You want from us, the model, the life that You modeled for us, and the life that You want us to embrace. The abundant life that You came and died to give us. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*