**Prelude to Prayer:**

Let me offer a modern analogy. When a baseball field is laid out, the first thing put down is home plate. The foul lines are drawn out from the back of it. And those foul lines tell you whether a batted ball is “in” or “out.” The life, teachings, and example of Jesus establish the lines in our lives of what’s “in” and “out,” not just morally, but also in keeping with God’s expanding purposes in the world. He is, in effect, a “living home plate,” and we are a “living infield” and a “living outfield.”

~ Dr. Christopher R. Smith, author of *Understanding the Books of the Bible* study guides

**Prayer Focus: 1 Peter 2:4-10**

*As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says:*

*“See, I lay a stone in Zion,*

 *a chosen and precious cornerstone,*

*and the one who trusts in him*

 *will never be put to shame.”*

*Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,*

*“The stone the builders rejected*

 *has become the cornerstone,”*

*and,*

*“A stone that causes people to stumble*

 *and a rock that makes them fall.”*

*They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.*

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

* Lord, You are the Rock, the Foundation, the Mighty Fortress. It makes sense Jesus would be Your living Stone, a chip off the oldest block, a picture of Your nature and Your plan. He is precious to You and chosen. Thank You for inviting me into Your choosing through Jesus.
* You are the Alpha and Omega, the Before and After. My before and after alter forever because of You.
* Before, I was not part of a people unified by anything other than genetics, birthplace, or opinions. My ties were tenuous and temporary.
* After, I belong to a global community that transcends race, class, and gender. There’s strength in belonging to Your people. There’s an eternity to my relationships now. Thank You.
* Before, there was a time I had not embraced the mercy You offer so relentlessly. I was trying to pay my own way, and it turns out I was broke. That left me embarrassed and powerless.
* After, I received the mercy that gives me a place at Your table without owing the bill. There’s freedom in accepting Your mercy. Now I’m confident and clothed in Your power. Thank You.
* In Your plan, I’m a living stone with a specific supporting role in Your spiritual house. You know where You’re placing me, my position on the field, and why. Open my eyes to a bit of Your blueprint. Give me the purpose and peace that come from taking my spot in Your work.
* Tim Keller writes that work (*my* work) is a channel of *Your* love for the world, a vehicle of *Your* provision for the world. That’s immense. Thank You for designing meaning inside what You designed me to do.
* I’m apt to feel rejected now and then (okay, maybe now). Remind me not to sit in that darkness. Remind me that trusting Jesus will never bring me

shame.

* Shame is about hiding. I don’t have to hide with You. With You, I live in the wonderful light. Help me with the shame I sometimes feel over...
* Remind me that it’s my identity in Christ that matters, not…
* You amaze me with Your openness and Your love of diversity. Your message is destined for every person on the planet. Now *that’s* Love.
* I confess I’m a little sad, and sometimes even a little mad, that people You love stumble over Jesus. Help me not to be part of their stumble. Help me not to harbor insults and judgment in my heart for people who are still reckoning with Jesus.
* If I’m going to be in Your royal family, a part of Your priesthood, equip me with the humility and patience not to get in the way. I just want to be one big arrow pointing directly to You.
* I want to give You permission to put this living stone in Your tumbler and knock down my rough edges. Be gentle with me, but polish me up. I trust You with my growth.

In the name of Jesus who makes my spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, **Amen**.