

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day. Then, pray for church requests and personal friends and needs.

Prayer of Confession:

Wesleyan Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

My Personal Prayers:

Family Activity:

Most of the kids at Living Word know what the right thing is...and most of the time they do the right thing. As we start talking about judgment, have your kids think about the times they see someone at church...one of their friends, or a classmate they don't know well...doing something that is NOT the right thing. What kind of response can you make? What if it's one of your brothers or sisters? Do you act differently? What if (gasp) it's an adult? How do you decide when to step in and say, "Hey, don't say that," or "Please don't do that." When should you get an adult involved? Finally, how would you feel if someone reminded you that you had acted in a way that wasn't what God dreamed for you?

MONDAY 1.6.20

Genesis 16:1-6

Sarai and Abram had been promised a child—but when no child came, Sarai took an action appropriate to her cultural time—having her maidservant bear the child for her. But sometimes the best-laid plans have unintended consequences, and Sarai's maidservant Hagar adopted an attitude of superiority over her mistress. Sarai judges Abram ("This is your fault, you got her pregnant"), Sarai judges Hagar ("I'll show YOU who's in charge"), and, still, God gives grace. Hagar and her son Ishmael are blessed, and, in just a few chapters, Sarai herself will give birth to a son, Isaac, in her old age.

- What standard does Sarai judge Abram by? What standard does Sarai judge Hagar by? What standard does God seem to judge any of the principal players by? What standards do you use when you judge?
- Note that even though Sarai got herself into this mess, her judgments ARE, on some level, fair. Abram could have said no to the plan, so he does bear responsibility. Hagar DID get "uppity" with her mistress, and should have expected consequences. But is it fair to judge the actions of others when we are ultimately responsible for the unintended consequences of our actions?

TUESDAY 1.7.20

Exodus 18

After Moses had led the captive Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, they began a long period of wandering in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land where their ancestors had first lived. Apparently, as leader, Moses was taking personal responsibility for not only spiritual leadership, but for acting as judge in all sorts of civic disagreements and misunderstandings as well. In this story, his father-in-law, Jethro, gives him some advice. You don't have to do it all alone—find responsible people who can share the load, and allow them to judge the easier cases.

- What kinds of disputes do you imagine would arise while a formerly enslaved people wandered as nomads in the desert? What would be the end result if no one acted as a judge over these cases? What standard does the passage imply Moses, or his delegates, are to use in judging these civil disputes?
- Why are television programs like "Judge Judy" or "The People's Court" so popular? Why do people find it so difficult to settle civic disputes themselves? Have you ever been involved in a civil dispute that required a third party to resolve? If so, which side of the judgment did you end up on? Did you feel like the judgment was fair? What attributes of the judge would affect how you view their judgment? What does that suggest about how Christians should judge each other?

WEDNESDAY 1.8.20

1 Samuel 24

When David proved himself a great warrior against Israel's enemies, King Saul became more and more paranoid that David's popularity with the people would entice them to depose him, and install David as king. In fact, Saul had already been rejected by God, and the prophet Samuel had anointed David to become king in his place. Even so, David did not actively seek the role, but waited for God's timing. In today's reading, Saul has been pursuing David in order to kill him, but unknowingly has entered a cave where David and his men are hiding. Although David has the upper hand in the situation, he spares Saul's life, acknowledging Saul's own anointed kingship. When Saul realizes what David has done, he acknowledges that David is in fact the better man, more suited for Godly kingship than he himself—and seeks mercy from the future king.

- What is implied in David's calling upon God to judge between himself and Saul? Why does David believe his actions should vindicate him in Saul's eyes? How does Saul arrive at his judgment that David will in fact become king?
- What is the role of personal integrity in this story? How does Saul judge David? How does David judge Saul? What actions does each take in response to their judgments? Would David have been justified in killing Saul, given that Saul was out to kill him? When is mercy the most appropriate response even when you judge someone guilty of wronging you?

THURSDAY 1.9.20

Luke 19:11-26

Jesus' parable of the ten minas is all about putting the resources God has given us to use to multiply the impact on God's kingdom. The king in the story gave money to each of ten servants with the explicit instruction, "Put this money to work until I come back." Most of the servants did as they were told, but one just socked the money away instead, fearful not only of losing the king's investment, but of what might happen to him if he failed in his charge to put the money to work. When the king returns, he tells the man, "I will judge you by your own words!" In other words, by the king's actions, the man has received exactly what he expected from the start—harsh treatment from a reputedly harsh man.

- From the outcomes in the story, was the king's reputation deserved? Is he a "hard man"? How will the other servants judge the king's actions toward them? How will the fearful servant judge the king's actions? From your objective stance, are the actions the king takes as a result of his judgments fair?
- Is it "fair" to be judged by our own words? What information was the fearful servant acting upon, and how do you think he reached the judgment that the king was a "hard man"? Why did the king think it appropriate to judge the servant by his own expectations? What do you expect from your judgments of others? What do you expect from God's judgment of you?

