

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:

Holy God, we confess this morning that we have not always accepted the responsibilities of discipleship. We seek Your forgiveness for those times when our actions, our lack of actions, our words, or our lack of words, have contributed to anyone's decision to wander from Your truth. We ask You to strengthen us all to witness to our faith with a freshness that attracts, with a sincerity that convinces, and with an integrity that confirms our allegiance to Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Activity:

Who are the people that help you do the right things? Your parents? Your brothers or sisters? Maybe a good friend? When God made us, God made sure that we had other people around us. We live in "community," which means we don't live all alone. Sometimes it's up to us to help other people see how to live in God's love. And sometimes it's up to them to help us know how to do that. Talk with your family about when it's REALLY important to help others follow Jesus. And then be REALLY happy that you are with people who you can help and who will help you.

MONDAY 1.20.20

2 Samuel 12:1-25

The background to the story in today's reading can be found in 2 Samuel 11. The gist is this—King David saw one of his soldiers' wives bathing on a rooftop, desired her, slept with her, and then, when she became pregnant, tried to cover it up first by having her husband return from the front to sleep with her, and when that failed, by arranging to have her husband killed on the front lines and taking her as his own wife. In today's reading, we focus on the fact that Nathan, a prophet of God and one of David's key advisors, holds David accountable for his sin. He pronounces God's judgment upon David, and calls him to repent of his sin. The cost of David's sin is enormous—the death of the son conceived in his sin. While we may not understand why this child suffers the consequences of David's sin, it demonstrates the truth that innocent people sometimes suffer as a result of our sin. For the purposes of the story, God's will is accomplished—David cannot escape the judgment, but he sincerely repents, and another son is born. Solomon will succeed David as king over Israel.

- What is Nathan's purpose in speaking to David? How are accountability and a call to repentance both in view here? What might have been the ramifications to Nathan of his words to his king? Why does he take this risk?
- Are there people in your life who expect you to hold them accountable for their actions? Are their people in your life who you expect to hold you accountable? What are the risks/advantages of such relationships?

TUESDAY 1.21.20

Hosea 3:1-5

The story of the prophet Hosea is simultaneously one of the most shocking and most beautiful stories in the Old Testament. God commanded Hosea to marry a woman, Gomer, knowing she would be unfaithful to him. Chapter 1 of the book explains that Hosea's experience of an unfaithful wife was to mirror God's experience of an unfaithful Israel, who had worshipped other gods and forsaken their "first love." In chapter 3, though, God again uses Hosea to demonstrate that His love never fails—Hosea bought Gomer back out of prostitution, and showered her with love, just as God remains faithful to Israel in spite of their wandering hearts.

- Does the story of Hosea and Gomer change your perspective on how desperately God wants to restore His relationship with those who have wandered from Him?
- How do you imagine Hosea feels about the command to restore a relationship with someone who has hurt him emotionally?
- What do you imagine Gomer's response is, when she realizes Hosea welcomes her back, regardless of her past behavior?
- Who do you know that God wants you to invite back to faith?

WEDNESDAY 1.22.20

Mark 10:13-30

Notice how in each of the episodes in today's reading, Jesus gently directs people from a misguided faith to a better foundation of faith. First are those who assume Jesus would have little time for "unimportant" children. With a word, Jesus teaches that there are no second-class citizens in God's Kingdom. Next is a man who has diligently obeyed the Ten Commandments his whole life, but who cannot part with his wealth. Jesus reminds him that God desires more than obedience to the letter of the law—He wants hearts transformed by love. And finally are the disciples, who still anticipate material blessings from God because of their own sacrifices and obedience. Jesus reminds them that the greatest blessings are in our relationships—and that although the ultimate reward is eternal life, followers of Christ can anticipate persecution as well.

- How would you describe the faith of the people Jesus teaches in this passage? What are their expectations of God, and of themselves?
- How would you characterize the way Jesus corrects their misinterpretations of faith? Do the people feel judged, or guided?
- Have you ever been faced with wanting to help someone to a fuller understanding of Christian faith? What approaches have you used that worked? What approaches have failed?
- Are you ever tempted to judge the faith of another person? What responsibility do we have to guide the faith of others? Is it possible to do that non-judgmentally?

THURSDAY 1.23.20

John 21:15-19

After Jesus had been arrested, Peter followed him to the courtyard of the house where his trial before the Jewish leadership was being held. While there, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, just as Jesus had predicted. Now, after Jesus' resurrection, He appears to Peter and the other disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (also known as the Sea of Tiberias). After sharing a meal with them, Jesus has a discussion with Peter meant to guide Peter back into a loving relationship. Peter certainly had doubts about his love for Christ given his recent denial in the courtyard. Jesus takes the time, and makes the effort, to help Peter overcome these doubts by asking again, and again, "Do you love me?" The repeated questions force Peter to dig deeper into his feelings than just a pat "yes" answer. While Peter is hurt by Jesus' pushing, in the end, his love for Jesus allows him to emphatically state that he will follow Jesus, even though Jesus has prophesied concerning Peter's own death.

- Why do you think it is so important to Jesus to have this discussion with Peter? How does Jesus restore Peter's faith with his questions? Notice the subtlety with which Jesus invites Peter to probe the depth of his own faith, rather than judging Peter's actions.

