

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:

Dear Heavenly Father, we lower our heads before You and we confess that we have too often forgotten that we are Yours. Sometimes we carry on our lives as if there was no God and we fall short of being a credible witness to You. For these things we ask Your forgiveness and we also ask for Your strength. Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to You in our world. Remind us to be who You would have us to be, regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Hold us to You and build our relationship with You and with those You have given us on earth.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Activity:

Think about the last time someone hurt you. Maybe they hit you or shoved you down. Maybe they said really unkind things about you to one of your friends. Maybe they wouldn't let you join a group. Or maybe you got blamed for something you ABSOLUTELY didn't do. When I was a kid, these things made me angry. Now I'm an adult and these things still make me angry. And then I know I need to forgive the people who hurt me...and that's hard. First I have to let go of my anger, which is a big deal. Then I need to forgive. What was the hardest thing for you to forgive? How long did it take you? How long do you think it takes God to forgive us?

MONDAY 2.3.20

1 Kings 8:22-30

King David had been a warrior king—his role was to unite the twelve tribes of Israel into a unified kingdom. David had wanted to build a Temple for God—but God forbid it, insisting that the Temple be built in a time of peace. With David having achieved that goal, King Solomon, King David's son, was the one to build the first Temple to God in Jerusalem. King Solomon offered the prayer in today's reading to dedicate the Temple upon its completion. He knew his people (and he himself) would most often come to the Temple to seek God's mercy. Through their sacrifices and prayers, God's Old Testament people counted on God's grace, and trusted in God's forgiveness. "When you hear," Solomon asked God humbly, "forgive."

- What if Solomon had prayed the kind of prayer we are tempted to pray (and sometimes do): "Lord, hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear ... bless us, reward us for being your people, and give us great success." What different spirit would such a prayer show? Which prayer is more often your prayer?
- Solomon had built the temple—a stunning building! But he knew the limits of any physical building, saying, "The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" Do you tend to see God as present mainly in certain places or structures? How can you more fully sense God with you in ALL places?

TUESDAY 2.4.20

Psalms 130:1-8

Consider the depth of emotion the psalmist opens up to God within this prayerful psalm! "Out of the depths I cry." The psalmist knew how awful it is to sink deeper and deeper into despair. For emphasis, the psalm repeats the image of watchmen waiting in the darkness for the first gleam of morning light, saying, "that's how eagerly I wait for God's mercy." Even though the psalmist is in the depth of this despair, he expresses confidence and hope that God will respond. He himself waits and hopes for God, and he implores the nation of Israel to do the same—wait, and hope for God—because God's love is unfailing. God will redeem from all sins.

- Verse 3 says, "If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, my LORD, who could stand?" Compare Psalm 103:10 and 12: "He does not treat us as our sins deserve ... as far as east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." What do these poetic images tell you about God's passion to forgive?
- Verse 7 says that with God is "full redemption." Have you ever received (or given) "partial" forgiveness, which is the best we broken humans can do at times? The sort of forgiveness that never lets the other person forget they blew it, and holds a small grievance in reserve?

WEDNESDAY 2.5.20

Luke 7:36-50

Picture the first century world of Palestine—dinner parties were an important social function, a way to maintain one's place in society. In Luke, Jesus attends many of these dinners with those who have NO place in that society: Pharisees, tax collectors, and the poor. Jesus was also famous (and in some circles, infamous) for forgiving sinners. Christian counselor Bruce Narramore wrote that self-righteous people want those who have failed "to walk forever under the black umbrella of permanent shame." Jesus' host at this dinner party— Simon, a Pharisee, felt that way about the woman in this story—but not Jesus. "Your sins are forgiven," He repeats to her.

- Freedom from her guilt before God also gave this woman freedom from feelings of shame before others. If not, she would not have been able to act out her gratitude in such a bold act of love to Jesus. When have you been "ashamed to show your face"? How can opening your life to God's love and forgiveness set you free to live more fully?
- Most of us "get" Simon's reaction. "Jesus must not know about her past," he thought. "If he did, he couldn't possibly accept her presence." Who are you more like—the woman who had been forgiven much, or the Pharisee who thought he was a lot better than "her kind"? How does that affect your life and relationships?

THURSDAY 2.6.20

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

Paul had founded the Corinthian church, but sometime later, they and Paul had a serious conflict. Paul then wrote a letter that clearly caused great pain and sorrow in the Corinthian church. In today's reading, from an even later letter, Paul contrasts "Godly sorrow" and "worldly sorrow." What's the difference? Counselor Bruce Narramore calls worldly sorrow "guilt feelings" and Godly sorrow "constructive sorrow." "Guilt feelings are punitive. Constructive sorrow is loving. In psychological guilt we take the initiative to punish ourselves. In constructive sorrow we respond because God has taken the initiative."

- What positive results does Paul name as coming from "Godly sorrow"? In what ways do those steps lead toward a positive outcome and genuine change for the better? When have you seen this process operate in your life or the life of someone close to you?
- Worldly sorrow means punishing ourselves by hanging on to feelings of guilt and shame. How can these feelings keep us from taking steps toward healing? When is the spiritual discipline of counseling needed to help us recognize and live beyond "worldly sorrow"? In what way is Paul right in saying that this kind of sorrow brings death?

