

## 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, loving Father, Son and Spirit, we come to lay our sin before You, yet we come with doubts and fears. We know we have failed You, Your creation and Your people, in many ways. Often, we have even failed ourselves. But trusting in Your love, we turn again to You. As we open our hearts to Your mercy and forgiveness, grant us Your peace. Accept these prayers, accept our worship, and accept us, through Your holy love, so that we might grow to accept that we are accepted. Amen.

### My Prayers this Week:

### Family Activity:

Think back to something you did that hurt someone. Or maybe something you did that hurt yourself. And then remember how you felt. Were you angry with yourself, or maybe frustrated? Did you ever think, "That was SO dumb" or words like that? Guess what, we all have done those things and had those feelings. Sometimes the hardest thing is remembering that God stays with us even in those "dumb" things. How long did it take you to get past what you had done? How long did you think you did something "dumb"? If your friend did the same thing, would you forgive them pretty quickly? How quickly could you do what God does, and forgive yourself?

## MONDAY 2.17.20

## Isaiah 55:1-9

When we begin thinking about the process of forgiving in human relationships, it's easy to see it as simply a human process. But forgiveness is not just a sociological way to get along. The prophet Isaiah suggested that it is not "natural" at all. Forgiveness is God's idea, Isaiah said, springing from One whose thoughts and ways are higher than ours.

- The Bible's teaching about forgiveness always starts with the fact that all of us, in our brokenness, do things that hurt others. We need forgiveness. Both in relation to God and to others, how clear is your vision that you are, in Isaiah's imagery, "thirsty" and have "no money"? From whom, besides God, do you need forgiveness?
- Forgiveness is sometimes called "weakness" in global politics, business, and legal settings, or even in a family or community dispute. How do you react when Isaiah says mercy and pardon are a "higher" way than the usual human response? Think about a time when you were forgiven. How did it affect your relationships?

## TUESDAY 2.18.20

## Matthew 6:9-15

Jesus did not say that forgiving someone else earns God's forgiveness. Scholar Michael Green wrote: "It is not as though God petulantly says, 'I won't forgive you unless you forgive those who have wronged you.'" Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:21-35 showed that we can't truly accept forgiveness if we close our hearts to forgiving another person.

- In his classic, *Forgive and Forget*, Lewis Smedes wrote that "Forgiving is outrageous. When we do it we commit an outrage against the strict morality that will not rest with anything short of an even score." What inner fears and defenses do you have to face to even consider the outrageous process of forgiving those closest to you?
- The essence of God's dealings with us is forgiving grace. How does the prayer that "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" lead naturally to our willingness to seek forgiveness, as well as to forgive? What healing examples, if any, of forgiving (in deep hurts, not trivial matters) have you seen?

## WEDNESDAY 2.19.20

## Ephesians 5:21-33

These verses teach us much of value about marriage. Many people miss their value, however, because verses 22-24 have too often been used in abusive one-sided—and inaccurate—ways. The passage starts at verse 21, not verse 22. "Submission" is a mutual duty, not something only a wife gives while the husband takes.

- What do you believe it means for a husband to love his wife "just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her"? How does this compare with the "lord of the manor" image in some cultures? How does this image challenge husbands to act at times when they may need to extend forgiveness to their wives?
- In Paul's day, Greeks, Romans, and Hebrews all told wives to submit and obey their (mostly much older) husbands. Only Paul said husbands, too, should submit "out of reverence for Christ." Think of healthy marriages you've seen. Is mutual "submission" or "respect" (v. 33) part of these thriving marriages? How do you think that works?

## THURSDAY 2.20.20

## Hosea 3:1-5

The prophet Hosea married a faithless woman. She bore him three children, but repeatedly left him for a life of prostitution and promiscuity. When she was used up, for sale as a slave, her husband, despite a life of heartbreak, bought her back, saying, "You are to live with me many days. Be faithful to me now," he said, "and I will be too."

- Hosea's brief account can fool us into thinking it reflects a quick process. That's unlikely. Lewis Smedes wrote that "the worse you've been hurt, the longer it takes to forgive." What hurts have you been working at forgiving for some time? As your own hurts gradually heal, what changes do you find in how you perceive the one who hurt you?
- Despite the pain and regret, Hosea took his wife back. Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, and 1 Corinthians 7 indicate that, in some situations, it is better and healthier for a marriage to end. When, for emotional or physical safety, is it wiser to leave a hurtful relationship? How can forgiveness be important even under those conditions?

