

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy and loving God, help us to live out our salvation with fear and trembling. Empower us to live pure and blameless lives, to stop arguing and complaining, and to truly live as Your children. We thank You for the grace that enables us to both want and to accomplish Your good purposes. We pray in the holy name of our Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

What are you really, REALLY good at? It might be a subject in school, or a sport you play, or an instrument you play, or it might even be something like making new friends! Whatever it is, you probably weren't as good at it when you started as you are now—getting better at things takes time and practice! The Bible teaches us that God wants to make us really, REALLY good at being followers of Jesus, too! God encourages us to pray, to go to church, to read the Bible and to help other people as ways to cooperate with Him as He makes us better and better at following Jesus. God says His goal is for us to become just like Jesus, in the way He demonstrated His love for God, AND His love for other people!

MONDAY 6.22.20

Acts 17:22-28

In this week's readings, we will look at Scriptural references to six of the "stages of grace" in the Wesleyan Order of Salvation, beginning today with "prevenient grace." Prevenient means "seen before" - and is the theological way of describing the reality that God cares for all of God's creation, including all people, whether they acknowledge God or not—including God's continuous beckoning of people to Him. When the apostle Paul preached in the philosophically and academically rich city of Athens, he spoke eloquently of God's prevenient grace. Even though the Athenians don't realize it, Paul says, God gives them "life, breath, and everything else." He tells them, "God isn't far away from any of us," and that he hopes they will "reach out to Him and find Him." As early as 529 AD, at the Council of Orange, the church agreed that "Christian faith has its beginnings in the grace of God, enlightening the human mind and enabling belief." That, in a nutshell, is a declaration of prevenient grace.

- Why do you think Paul appealed to the words of a poet in describing prevenient grace, and not Scripture?
- Do Paul's words give you insight on how to speak about God to friends who do not believe?

TUESDAY 6.23.20

Romans 7:13-25

For many people, a time comes in their lives when they become internally convicted with regard to their sin. In Wesleyan theology, this conviction is itself a gift of God called by one of two names—"convincing grace," or "convicting grace." Typically, it leads people to the point of desiring to repent of their sin, of wanting to "do better." This "first repentance" often leads people to a desire to obey God's commandments, to want to know what the rules are, and to work hard to keep them. In today's reading, Paul writes about how hard that is—we know what we SHOULD do, but we feel powerless to act the way we think we should. It's like "sin" is this separate, powerful master living inside us that we can't overcome. Some people continue to live in a state of unbelief, not acknowledging even the idea of sin ... but for those who respond to God's convicting grace, the burden of sin weighs heavily, maybe even leading to an intense fear of eventual judgment. It's like living in the constant fear of "am I good enough?"

- How do Paul's words resonate with you? Do you find yourself doing things you know you shouldn't?
- Where has your own conviction of sin led you?

WEDNESDAY 6.24.20

Romans 3:21-31

For Christians, the problem of dealing with sin leads to one place, and only one place—the cross of Jesus Christ. Through what we call "justifying grace," or "saving grace," God has provided the solution to sin in Jesus' sacrifice. As Paul writes, even though everyone has sinned, "all are treated as righteous freely by God's grace" because of Jesus. Jesus was perfectly faithful to God, and if we have faith in Jesus, His faithfulness is applied to us. Even though He Himself was without sin, He sacrificed His own life to pay the penalty for OUR sins, effectively paying a "ransom," buying us back, or "redeeming" us to free us of our former master, "sin." If we accept, by faith, that Jesus has done this for us, we are declared innocent of our sin, and our relationship with God, broken by sin, is healed. We are "justified" - which is simply another way of saying we are declared righteous in God's sight. The issue of our sin need not burden us—it has been dealt with through Jesus' sacrifice, if we BELIEVE, by faith, that it truly has been dealt with.

- What reason does Paul give for God's decision to save us, to justify us, to ransom us, or to redeem us in this way?
- Has your burden of sin been lifted by receiving this grace?

THURSDAY 6.25.20

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

How do we live our lives knowing that by God's grace, the guilt of our sin has been dealt with? How do we overcome the temptation to sin that we still have even with this knowledge of God's grace? The answer is that God sends God's Holy Spirit to live in us, empowering us, more and more every day, to overcome the temptation to sin. In theological terms, we call this "sanctifying grace," because through it, we become "sanctified." That might be an intimidating word, but all it really means is that our lives become more and more dedicated to God's will and God's purposes in the world. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that God wanted them to be "sanctified" ("dedicated to Him" in newer translations like the Common English Bible). What does it look like for us to become sanctified? We will avoid immorality. We won't mistreat other people. We will love others, live quietly, mind our own business, and earn our own living. And we will continue to do so, more and more and more.

- Why do you think many Christians look at readings like today's and think these are just "more rules" Christians have to live by?
- How do you see your life becoming more sanctified?

