

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Loving Father, we give You thanks for the gift of eternal life, and for entrusting Your Kingdom to us. Help us to live free from worry and anxiety, secure in the knowledge that You have done everything necessary to provide for our security both now, and for all eternity. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

At Living Word, when we talk to a big group of kids, we often don't just say, "Children!" or "Hey, kids!" ... we remind you that you are "Children of God!" What do you think it means to be a child of God? What does it mean if all the OTHER kids are ALSO children of God? Does that make them your brothers and sisters? Have you ever thought of them that way? The Bible calls them your "brothers and sisters IN CHRIST." Do your parents expect you to treat your siblings nicely? Did you ever think that God wants you to treat your "brothers and sisters in Christ" that way, too? How can you start doing that this week?

MONDAY 6.29.20

Isaiah 63:15-19

In Isaiah 63:7-14, just prior to today's reading, Isaiah has recalled God's previous acts of redemption, including the Exodus. Now, in the aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction, he calls upon God to look at Israel's present situation and act in a powerful way again. Something unique in this passage is the appeal to God as "our father." Whereas the Gospels refer to God as "Father" again and again, the Old Testament rarely employs such language. Yet here, in an emotional appeal to God to help his people, Isaiah calls God "our father." Even in ancient times, where the image of God as a powerful sovereign was more prevalent, the expectation was that God would exhibit the compassion of a loving father. We need to remember that this was not a way to assign gender to God—it was a way to communicate the nature of God's character in a time and place that expected fathers to assume primary responsibility for their children in a firm yet loving way.

- Why do you think Isaiah draws a connection between God being our "father" and our "redeemer"?
- What does the ancient expectation that God will be there to help us tell us about God's character?

TUESDAY 6.30.20

Jeremiah 3:19-22a

In today's second rare example of the Old Testament portraying God using "father" language, it is not the prophet imploring God to behave like a loving father as in Isaiah, it is Jeremiah speaking FOR God in saying how wonderful it would be if Israel ALLOWED God to treat them as if He were their father! We see God longing to lavish gifts upon His children, to be acknowledged as a loving father—but instead, the people have betrayed God. The passage ends with God calling His children "rebellious" ... but promising to heal their rebellion, nonetheless. In many other prophetic passages, God has compared Israel to a wayward, adulterous spouse, as is also done here in verse 20. But in verses 19 and 21-22, the primary imagery is of Israel as a selfish child determined to go their own way, and not to follow the path their father knows would be best for them. God longs, God aches, for His rebellious children to come home, just as any loving father would.

- How does the different perspective between Isaiah and Jeremiah change the way we read and respond to the "father" metaphor in the two passages?
- How have you rebelled against God, your Father? How is God healing your rebellion?

WEDNESDAY 7.1.20

Matthew 11:25-30

Jesus emphasized the understanding of God as Father in ways that the Old Testament had only hinted at. In today's passage, we see clearly that Jesus addressed God as "Father" in His personal prayers, and also that He understood His own relationship with God explicitly as God's "Son." Jesus acted and taught with the kind of authority that a father was able to bestow upon his son in the ancient world. When the Son speaks, listeners hear the word of His Father, because the Father has given the Son this kind of authority—in Jesus' words in this passage, "All things have been committed to me by my Father." In focusing upon "Father" language in speaking of God, Jesus, with His Father's blessing, is teaching His followers that the primary way God desires to be related to is as a loving Father who is concerned about the welfare of His children. Fathers may also expect, even demand, obedience, but Jesus promises that God's "yoke" is not burdensome. In perfect relationship with our Father, we find rest for the soul.

- What do you think it implies about God that Jesus referred to Him as "Father," as opposed to "King," or "Creator," or "Master"?
- How do you perceive God's relationship to you?

THURSDAY 7.2.20

Mark 14:32-36

In Gethsemane, we see Jesus at His most personal, most vulnerable moment. In the depths of despair, Jesus cries out to His "Abba, Father." The Aramaic word "Abba" that is there even in the original Greek documents is a child's way of saying "Daddy." It was extraordinarily intimate, and Jews in Jesus' day would never dream of using it to address God. In using the word, Jesus demonstrated an intimacy of relationship with God that would have truly astounded anyone who heard Him. Most likely, Mark included the Aramaic word to communicate this intimacy, which is not there in the Greek word following it, translated "Father." It was one thing for Jesus to refer to God as "Our Father," as a father who has transferred authority to an adult son. It was altogether another for Jesus to crawl into God's lap in prayer and call Him "Daddy." In doing so, He modeled the potential for us to have a whole new level of intimacy with God.

- Not everyone has the kind of earthly father who they were able to cuddle up to and call "daddy." What does Jesus' willingness to do that with God suggest about the *kind* of father God is for us?
- How do you approach God when you are afraid?

FRIDAY 7.3.20

Romans 8:12-17

Many of the Jews, and early Christians, related to God primarily in the same way a servant relates to their master. Servants are obedient to their masters because they fear the repercussions of disobedience. Paul says that relating to God in this way makes you a “slave to fear.” We live in a perpetual state of fear of punishment, or banishment, for not doing what the master (God) tells us to do. But Paul insists that when we follow Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit, our attitude towards God should change! We shouldn’t relate to God as if we are the servants and slaves on God’s plantation, we should relate to God as if we are God’s children—the very heirs of the estate—co-heirs with God’s Son Jesus! No wonder Paul uses the language of “brothers and sisters in Christ”! Relationships among Christians are always talked about in family terms because all those who follow Christ and have received the Holy Spirit are equal members of God’s family. Our obedience to our Father arises from a place of familial love, honor, and respect, and not from a place of a servant’s fears.

- Does the concept of actually being a child of God, a co-heir with Christ, motivate your behavior? How?
- Why does Paul say that we too can cry to God as “Abba”?

SATURDAY 7.4.20

Galatians 1:1-5

Here is an interesting bit of trivia—there are 37 occurrences of God being referred to as “Father” in the Gospel of Matthew alone—but it is common throughout the four Gospels. In addition, though, every single other New Testament book, with the sole exception of 3 John, begins by referring to God as “Father.” Today’s introduction to Galatians is but one example—you might even take a moment to thumb through and look at the beginning verses of every other New Testament book! John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, said “If Jesus and the apostles all focused on this language, so should we!” Whereas kings and monarchs demand and even determine the way everything will be, good fathers create an atmosphere conducive to children *choosing* correctly. Whereas many Christian theologies focus on God as Sovereign King as the dominant image, Wesleyanism insists—the truly biblical view of God is that of a father wanting to reassure his children concerning His relationship with them. And that makes all the difference in the practice of our faith.

- Why do you think that Jesus and the biblical writers focused on this language? Is there more to it than simply that they had a patriarchal worldview?
- What is your primary way of viewing God?



Daily Study Guide

June 28-July 4, 2020

Sermon Series: The People Called Methodists

Week Three: “Wesley and God” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, June 28: Luke 12:22-32

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Therefore, I say to you, don’t worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. There is more to life than food and more to the body than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither plant nor harvest, they have no silo or barn, yet God feeds them. You are worth so much more than birds! Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? If you can’t do such a small thing, why worry about the rest? Notice how the lilies grow. They don’t wear themselves out with work, and they don’t spin cloth. But I say to you that even Solomon in all his splendor wasn’t dressed like one of these. If God dresses grass in the field so beautifully, even though it’s alive today and tomorrow it’s thrown into the furnace, how much more will God do for you, you people of weak faith! Don’t chase after what you will eat and what you will drink. Stop worrying. All the nations of the world long for these things. Your Father knows that you need them. Instead, desire His Kingdom and these things will be given to you as well. Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights in giving you the Kingdom.’” (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Michael Fink
- Naomi Secoy
- Peggy Hendrick
- Ken Mann
- Carolyn Mann
- Doug Nash
- Charlotte Ottley
- Vicki Robinson
- Delaney Digman
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Peggy Cruse
- Bill Cruse
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider

Everyone affected by the COVID-19 outbreak

Our communities suffering from the violence

Our community, country and world

The Combs family on the loss of Benjamin Combs, father of Rodney Combs

The Park and Norris families on the loss of Gary Park, brother of Doreen Norris

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org