

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we cannot bear the darkness. We cannot begin to imagine the suffering that Jesus underwent for our salvation. In times of sadness, in times of difficulty, in times of doubt, help us to hold on to the hope we have in Jesus. Help us to remember that it is always darkest before the dawn, and that, most assuredly, dawn is coming! We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

When Jesus went to the cross and died, it was the saddest thing His disciples had ever gone through. Have you ever had something really sad happen in your life? It's important to know that God doesn't make the sad things happen—the sad things happen because the world isn't the way God wants it to be. But when Jesus was raised from the dead, it proved something we all need to remember—God brings wonderful, good things out of the bad things. It's OK to be sad, to wish things were different, and to tell God that in our prayers. But always remember that God promises that one day, things will be better!

MONDAY 7.13.20

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Today's Scripture reading is the last of four passages in Isaiah that are collectively referred to as the "Songs of the Suffering Servant." In the aftermath of Jesus' death and resurrection, these passages came to be understood by the followers of Jesus as clear prophetic words pointing to Jesus as the promised Savior. In this final song, the reason for this interpretation is clear—God's servant is rejected, pierced, and slaughtered like a lamb, while being innocent Himself. In doing so, He bears the sins of others, brings them peace and healing, and makes intercession between them and God, as a guilt offering. His reward with God is great, receiving a "portion among the great" and seeing "the light of life." As we consider Jesus' death this week, we must remind ourselves that even through the darkest day in human history, God was moving us toward the brightest day in human history. Faith is trusting God is present even when it is darkest.

- As you read the passage, see how many references that apply to Jesus you can find.
- When you read the passage, do you include yourself, personally, in the references to "we," "our," or the "many"? What difference does that make in your own life?

TUESDAY 7.14.20

Psalms 22:1-31

When Jesus cries from the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me," He is quoting Psalm 22 verse 1. In ancient Israel, our Old Testament (their Scripture) was memorized and studied to the extent that the words were extraordinarily well known, and frequently used to express personal emotion. In the original context of Psalm 22, David felt a sense of abandonment by God—and it seems clear, that while hanging on the cross, Jesus used David's words to express His own emotional despair. But scholars also believe that in quoting the first line of the psalm, Jesus was likely both affirming and calling attention to the *entire* psalm. Notice that in verses 3-5, David affirms God's authority and the historic trust Israel's ancestors placed in God even in times of difficulty. By verse 24, he is convinced God has listened to his cry for help, and by the end of the psalm foresees the fulfillment of God's Kingdom on earth. By quoting Psalm 22, verse 1, on the cross, Jesus communicates to those listening His despair, His trust in God, and His confidence in God's salvation, all at once.

- When have you felt that God had forsaken you?
- How might knowing Jesus felt the same way, and yet found comfort in this psalm, impact your faith in dark times?

WEDNESDAY 7.15.20

Malachi 4:1-6

The Matthew passage in which Jesus cries out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" gives the exclamation in a transliteration of the Hebrew and Aramaic that Jesus spoke—"Eli, eli, lama sabachtani." Because the Hebrew "Eli," which means "My God," sounds very similar to the shortened form of the name "Elijah," many of those listening thought He was calling for Elijah! But why would they think someone would cry out for Elijah? Today's passage from Malachi shows us. The book of Malachi is the latest of all the Old Testament prophetic books, being written around 430 BC. At the end, God says that at the "end of the age," Elijah will return from heaven to "turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers." According to 2 Kings 2:11, Elijah did not die, but was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. A tradition developed that Elijah would come to the rescue of a righteous person wrongly accused. While those listening thought Jesus was, therefore, calling for Elijah, He was actually quoting Psalm 22, as we saw yesterday. During His ministry, Jesus insisted that John the Baptist was the one who had come "in the spirit of Elijah," fulfilling Malachi's prophecy.

- Do you think those watching thought Elijah might come?

THURSDAY 7.16.20

Mark 8:31-38

Jesus knew what lay ahead for Him. It is vitally important to see that the cross was not a tragic, unforeseen occurrence. It was a tragic, FORESEEN event! It is no accident that immediately after Peter confessed that Jesus was indeed the long awaited Messiah, the Christ (see Mark 8:27-30), Jesus "began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again." Whatever image the disciples might have had of "The Christ," *this* is what MUST happen to the Christ, and it was important for the disciples to understand that. At the end of our passage, Jesus insists His followers must not be ashamed of this truth. Rather, they must emulate it. Following Jesus is a journey that travels through darkness. Jesus wanted His followers to understand that. He never sugar-coated this reality. And still, many of Jesus' followers today wonder why they experience difficulty and sadness.

- How do you think the disciples would have responded to the idea of "picking up their cross" to follow Jesus? How do YOU respond to it?
- How has God guided you, like Jesus, through the darkness?

