

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Lord, we pray for justice. Help us to recognize injustice in our lives, and in our world, and to take the steps we need to take to correct it. We give You thanks for instilling a longing for justice in our very souls and pray that You would form us into the kind of people who work tirelessly to bring it about. We pray in the holy name of Christ our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Have you ever been in the middle of a situation where it felt like one person got treated fairly, but another person didn't? Would you be able to say in words why it did or didn't feel fair? The people in ancient Israel faced a lot of difficult decisions—just like we do. And God insisted that they had to always do the right thing and not treat one person better than another, especially because of how much money or power they had. God's word for that is "justice." One of God's greatest desires for humanity is that there is justice for everyone. The Bible says growing closer to Jesus will help all of us make sure justice happens.

MONDAY 8.31.20

Exodus 23:1-9

If there was ever a question whether our God is the God of justice, this passage would settle it. Several different types of everyday issues of justice are addressed, with emphatically stated expectations. Slander is forbidden, as are perjury and bribery. Favoritism is not permitted, whether in favor of the rich and powerful or the poor and powerless. It doesn't matter if someone's your enemy—if you see their animal in distress, you have to help it! And while there are certainly offenses in Exodus that call for the death penalty, it is made clear here that if an innocent person is put to death through a failure of the justice system, those who do so are guilty of murder in God's sight. Finally, those who are living among us, but who are not "us" - different Bible translations call them aliens, strangers, foreigners, or immigrants—must not be oppressed, and must receive fair treatment. The reason for such a law should be obvious to the Israelites—they know what it's like when you're a stranger in a foreign land, and there is no such law. The bottom line—God demands, and expects, justice for all.

- What current or recent world events came to mind as you read today's passage?
- What do you think God's critique of us (or you) would be?

TUESDAY 9.1.20

1 Kings 3:1-15

Solomon did not get off to a great start as king of Israel. He married Pharaoh's daughter in spite of warnings in Deuteronomy against such intermarriage. He worshipped at the hilltop shrines that were common in Israel before the Temple was built, but Deuteronomy prohibits worship in those places. And yet, Solomon seems to have recognized his own limitations. When God appeared to him in a dream, Solomon confesses his sense of inadequacy in comparison to his father, David, and asks God for the ability to rule with justice, to be able to discern the difference between good and evil. Solomon recognizes that a ruler must be concerned with fair governance and administration of his kingdom. Solomon also recognized that what he *needed* to achieve that was God's help. In spite of all of Solomon's other failures, as measured against the Deuteronomic laws, God is pleased with Solomon's request, because God's heart is also a heart for justice. The wisdom that Solomon became so well known for is God's response to Solomon's request.

- What does it say about God's priorities that because of Solomon's request, God was pleased with him even though he had failed to be obedient in other ways?

WEDNESDAY 9.2.20

Psalms 96:1-13

Psalms 96 is typically classified as an "enthronement psalm," which simply means that its purpose is to invite Israel, and the entire world, to acknowledge God as the sole king of the universe. Scholars believe Psalm 96 may have been used to celebrate Israel's return from exile in Babylon, which would certainly have been understood as evidence of not only God's universal sovereignty, but also of God's justice. Whatever the circumstances, the celebratory tone throughout the psalm suggests a great deliverance from oppression, with God given all the glory and praise for the deliverance. But beyond whatever present reason for praise the psalm may proclaim, the final verses provide the ultimate reason for praise—God is coming! But ultimately, God is praised because the reason for God's coming is to establish justice. The words are rung out three times—God is coming to establish justice, establish justice, establish justice! For a people familiar with oppression, who have experienced the elation of finally receiving justice, the promise of a world defined by justice is indeed cause for praise.

- How do you see God at work, through the church, to establish justice? Where do you see the church failing?

THURSDAY 9.3.20

Isaiah 59:1-20

Isaiah 59 is the flip side of Psalm 96. Whereas yesterday's psalm rejoiced in the coming of God's justice, Isaiah rails against the fact that Israel, the "children of God," are failing, and failing miserably, at this one expectation of their God. Hands are covered with blood, tongues speak only lies, and justice is nowhere to be found. The result, according to verse 18, is that, with corruption so prevalent in society, even those trying to turn from evil are overrun. Isaiah is blunt about the situation: "The LORD looked and was upset at the absence of justice." So God takes matters into His own hands, and while the details are not given, the picture is not pretty. Battle imagery is used to describe how God will come to rescue the victims of injustice, along with language of vengeance, retribution, and wrath. But if you continue reading into Isaiah chapter 60, you will see that Isaiah puts forth the promise of a new world as a result of God's cleansing and bringing of justice! The people will become a beacon of God's glory to the world. Christians believe that the redemption God promises, through which justice will come, is in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit working through His church.

- Where does the church need to be working to bring hope of God's justice? Where are you working?

