

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Holy and Loving God, we give You thanks that You are our Shepherd. We give you thanks for protecting us in times of trouble, and for providing for us in times of plenty. Help us to recognize You when Your goodness and love pursue us, so that we might continue to walk in paths of righteousness. We pray in the holy name of our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Can you think of a time where you had to give away something you didn't want to? Sometimes we have to give up our possessions because someone else needs them more, or we have too many things. Maybe once a year your family donates toys, or maybe you take food to a family in need. Whatever the case maybe it can be difficult to give away things you want. We can see in the Bible that Jesus gave up His life for us on the cross. He knew that is why God sent him here but in the last moment he asked God to forgive us. A way to honor God's sacrifice for us is to maybe go through your things this week and donate items, or give them to a friend in need.

MONDAY 9.28.20

Luke 11:1-13

"Means of Grace" are the ways God works in our lives to strengthen our faith and to help us to grow in relationship with God and each other. In general, there are four "categories" of means of grace—both individual and communal expressions of both acts of devotion and acts of service. This week, we will look at Scriptural references to six of these channels of God's grace, beginning with *prayer*. Prayer, of course, can be offered either individually, or communally. In today's reading, Jesus provides the disciples with a general guideline for how to pray—the foundation of the prayer that became widely used in the early church, and that we call "The Lord's Prayer" today. The importance of prayer for the disciple of Christ cannot be overstated. Richard Foster, in his book "Celebration of Discipline," says "Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life ... it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father." Of all the means of grace, prayer is central because it is the primary means God uses to transform us into who we are called to be.

- How frequently, and how intentionally, do you participate in this means of grace?
- Can you identify ways God has changed you through prayer?

TUESDAY 9.29.20

Luke 4:14-22

The second of the means of grace we will read about this week is *study*. Did you catch the subtle implications of verse 16? Jesus "went to the synagogue as He normally did." Ancient Jews went to the Temple to worship—the synagogue was the place for study. Verse 16 let us know that Jesus was a frequent participant in the vigorous study of the Scriptures (our Old Testament) that happened in the Jewish synagogues. Here in Luke, we see Him read, and then expound upon, the text from Isaiah 61:1-2, proclaiming its prophecy fulfilled. Biblical study has the power to transform our lives—because it is in Scripture that we gain knowledge of God's truth. Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32), and it is through study of God's word that this freedom-giving truth is discovered. To be frank—biblical study can be hard work at first. But like anything worthwhile, perseverance in study yields a bounty of God's grace unlike any other. The greater our immersion in God's word, the greater the "joy in Christ" that God promises us.

- How frequently do you not just read, but *study* God's word? Would you consider joining a group for study?
- Can you identify ways God has changed you through study?

WEDNESDAY 9.30.20

Psalm 95

Prayer and study are primarily individual acts of devotion through which God shares His grace with each of us. In *worship*, the people of God gather together to praise God in community, both as a response to the grace we have received, and in anticipation of a further outpouring of that same grace on the entire gathered community. Psalm 95 is a call to the entire community to respond to God's voice calling us to worship. Our worship is always a response to the divine initiative, as God calls us to Himself. In fact, God actively seeks worshippers—Jesus said "True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship Him" (John 4:23). This points to an essential truth about worship—we can have a wonderful message, the best music, and the correct liturgies, but worship does not happen until the Holy Spirit touches our human spirits. True worship happens wherever and whenever God touches our spirits, uniting our gathered body with Him, regardless of the form it takes. This sharing of the divine self through worship is the primary means of grace for a church community.

- What importance do you place on communal worship?
- Can you identify ways God has changed you in worship?

THURSDAY 10.1.20

1 Corinthians 11:23-29

Jesus invited His followers to remember His loving sacrifice whenever they gathered together to break bread and share wine. Even by Paul's day, when bread was broken and wine was poured, accompanied by an intentional remembrance and reenactment of the Last Supper, the gathered community understood *Holy Communion* as a means of grace. This "remembrance" involves far more than merely recalling a date, a place, and an event. Rather, it involves laying hold of events so significant that in their retelling and reenactment these events actually reach forward in time and touch us in the present—often in vivid, profound, and life-changing ways. The past becomes present, to the extent that we are, spiritually, sharing the same meal at the same table with Jesus and the twelve. In Christ's presence, we are flooded with the same life-giving power of Jesus' Spirit that was experienced by the apostles. When Jesus invited us to "do this in remembrance of me," He invited us to remember not only an event, but a living person—Christ Himself. Christ is present, profoundly, in Holy Communion, filling us with His presence.

- How do you understand the invitation to "remember" Jesus in Holy Communion?
- How have you been changed through Holy Communion?

