

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we give You thanks for sending John as a witness to Jesus, so that we might believe in the One he testified to. Help us to move out of the world defined by the failure to recognize Jesus, and into the world defined by its reception of Him. We give thanks for Your mercy and compassion, that You would desire to call us Your children. We pray for the faith in the name of Jesus that makes us Your children. We pray in the name of Christ our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

We can forget the importance of Christmas throughout the year. We tend to only think about the gift of Jesus' birth during Christmas time. Jesus was born so that we would be adopted into a relationship with God. It is so important for us to remember the gift of Christ each month and day. Take some time as a family and talk through how you can remind each other of this gift throughout the calendar year.

MONDAY 12.21.20

Matthew 5:43-48

Although throughout the Old Testament, God often referred to the people of Israel as His children (even if they were wayward children), it was generally understood among the people that this metaphor was used to portray the kind of obedience a young child was expected to give to his or her father in that culture. When Jesus began to speak, as in today's passage from the Sermon on the Mount, about what it takes to become "sons of your Father in heaven" (inclusive translations say "children of your Father"), He began to extend the metaphor to imply a categorically different kind of relationship with God the Father. In ancient Hebrew, the idiom "son of (fill in the blank)" meant to perfectly embody that person or thing—hence, James and John were called the "sons of thunder" because of their booming personalities. When Jesus suggested that we could become "sons of God," He implied that we humans could actually begin to take on characteristics of God Himself. No wonder Jesus says that when we "love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us" we will become "sons of our Father in heaven"!

- How do you currently understand your relationship with God as a "child of God"? In terms of obedience, or "likeness"?

TUESDAY 12.22.20

Galatians 3:26-4:7

In one of his earliest letters, the letter to the church in Galatia, Paul expounds upon what it means to be "sons (children) of God." As we discussed yesterday, Paul describes a categorical change in our relationship with God. Whereas previously in the relationship we had been mere children, with no more rights than slaves (even though we were rightful heirs), we now have "the full rights of sons." This has happened as a result of our "baptism into Christ Jesus, clothed with Christ" - because Jesus was truly the Son of God, when we are baptized *into* Him, united with Him, we gain all the rights of sonship that were Christ's to begin with. But not only does this categorically change our relationship with God, it categorically changes our relationship with each other! Because we who have been baptized into Christ are all *equally* "sons of God," our earthly differences like ethnicity, social status, and gender, are irrelevant. We are all equal co-heirs of God's Kingdom, having gained the "full rights of sons" through faith in Jesus Christ!

- How would you describe the difference in relationship with God that faith in Jesus brings?
- Is your self-image that of a full heir of the Kingdom of God?

WEDNESDAY 12.23.20

Ephesians 1:3-14

Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus comes from ten to fifteen years later than his letter to Galatia. Still, his theology of our relationship with God as a result of faith in Christ has not changed. Now, however, he begins his letter with the confidence that it has been God's plan all along that we would not only become adopted sons, or children, but that we would also fully take on the attributes of our Father, destined to become "holy and blameless in His sight"! Notice how frequently Paul speaks of believers as being "in Christ" - in verses 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, and 13! It is our union "in Christ" which accomplishes everything that God has planned for us since the creation of the world. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is the "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" until that day when we receive the Kingdom in full. Jesus has paid the price to buy us out of our previous servitude, so that we become full heirs of the Kingdom. From the beginning, God's plan has been that those persons who put their faith in Jesus' redemption will receive this gracious gift. That fact has been "predestined," since before creation.

- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus was born specifically so that you could be adopted as a child of God?

THURSDAY 12.24.20

Matthew 1:18-25

As you read Matthew's version of the Christmas story today, on Christmas Eve, contemplate the fact that all of the events we read about both here and in Luke's version in Luke 1:1-2:16 happened so that your relationship with God could be different than it would be had these things never happened. Angelic visitations. A virginal conception. A humble, even humiliating, birth setting. The testimony of shepherds. Fulfillment of ancient prophecy. All these things happened so that your relationship with God could be different, so that you could become like the baby to be born—a true child of God, with all the rights and attributes of God's own child. Jesus was born so that through belief in Him, we could receive God's gift of adoption as sons and daughters of God.

- Is the celebration of Christmas personal for you?
- How are you acknowledging before God the fact that you have been given this gift of adoption?
- It is obvious that without Christmas, there would be no Easter. If Jesus had not been born, He would not have gone to the cross or been resurrected. But is it as obvious to you that without Easter, there would be no Christmas? We only celebrate this birth because of what happened 33 years later, and how that changes our relationship with God!

