

## My Prayer Journal

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

### Prayer of Confession:

*Holy God, for one last time this Christmas season, we come to give You thanks for the gift of Jesus. Help us to live as those who are not ashamed of the gospel, who prefer praise from You to praise from people. We believe in Jesus, we see Jesus, we hear Jesus, and we too know that believing in Him, seeing Him, and hearing His words lead to eternal life. It is in His holy name we pray, Amen.*

### My Prayers this Week:

### Family Time:

In our passages on Sunday it talks about how Jesus has come as the light of the world and whoever does not believe in Him will live in darkness. At the end of each year we often reflect on the events that have happened. 2020 has been a year unlike any other, while there have been some hard times for everyone there has also been good things to happen. Take some time this week to reflect on the ways God has blessed your family in 2020.

## MONDAY 12.28.20

## 1 John 1:1-10

Throughout this Advent season, we have been emphasizing God's gift of love to us, and for us. This week, then, we are going to read through the New Testament letters of John, which are beautiful essays on the meaning of God's love, and its impact on the way Christians live their lives. In chapter one of 1 John, John introduces this using language of "fellowship with God." Later, this idea will be expressed with language of "being with God" or "abiding in God." Although every world religion expresses this longing for fellowship with God in some manner, John will develop this basic Christian principle: the way to fellowship with God is exclusively through the Son. Furthermore, it is not a temporary, momentary experience. Fellowship with God is a permanent possession, intimately related to "salvation" and "eternal life." It is characterized here in chapter one as "walking in light," rather than darkness—but the fundamental problem is that the darkness of our sin is undeniable, and must be confessed if we are to achieve the goal of fellowship with God.

- How would you express the inner longing for fellowship with God? What does it feel like in your own life?
- How prominent is confession of sin in your faith life?

## TUESDAY 12.29.20

## 1 John 2:1-29

Chapter two begins with the clear statement of the solution for our sin: Jesus is the atoning sacrifice. But faith in this atonement for sin is only proven to be genuine when it is accompanied by obedience to Jesus' commands—in particular, Jesus' command to "love one another." This command is both old and new—from ancient times, we have been given the commands to love God and love neighbor; yet John calls upon us to demonstrate that love the way Jesus did, by sharing His light with the world. Only those who truly fulfill this command are, themselves, proven to walk in the light. When John speaks against loving "the world," we must understand that the phrase "the world" here does not mean the created order itself, as if the world God created were inherently evil. Rather, it is the fact that this fallen world gives rise to evil desires which are not to be embraced. Love for these kinds of desires is incompatible with the kind of love God has shown for us and that we should emulate. The chapter ends with a call to avoid those "antichrists" who deny these truths and who thereby remove themselves from fellowship with God.

- How does "the world" entice you? Have you encountered the kind of "antichrists" the letter warns us about? How do John's words encourage you to stay in fellowship with God?

## WEDNESDAY 12.30.20

## 1 John 3:1-24

Chapter three focuses on the religious and moral imperatives implied by the realities described in chapters one and two. First and foremost, those who desire fellowship with God must avoid sin. This passage should not be read to imply that God does not understand our struggle with sin. He does. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, often referred to sin "properly so called" versus sin "not properly so called." Sin "properly so called" is intentional, outward defiance of God's expectations for us, and this is what John insists children of God cannot be part of. Rather, children of God must participate in the kind of mutual love for one another most perfectly expressed in Christ's laying down His life for us. John goes so far as to say that if we hate another person, we are "murderers," who have killed our own eternal lives. When we love as God calls us to love, on the other hand, we gain peace of heart with regard to our fellowship with God, and confidence in our acts of prayer. This is the true essence of Christian faith, of which the Holy Spirit gives us internal assurance.

- Are you convicted by John's insistence that children of God do not continue to sin? Does the knowledge of God's great love overcome the condemnation of your heart?

## THURSDAY 12.31.20

## 1 John 4:1-21

Chapter four deals with two different, but very related themes. First is our need to distinguish between true and false spirits (voices or philosophies) that we are confronted by in our daily lives. The way we recognize truth is that the voice of truth confesses Jesus' origin in God. When we become children of God, we too become capable of speaking truth to the world. This leads directly to the second theme of the chapter—the truth we are empowered to speak is that God is love, and that it is only in fellowship with God that love for each other can reach its fulfillment. This can only happen when we embrace the love of God demonstrated by God's sending of His Son for our salvation. "We love because God first loved us," and that love is so powerful, it even frees us from fear. John here takes a definitive stand in an ancient rabbinical argument—what is the greater motivation for moral behavior: fear of judgment on the last day, or awareness of the depths of God's love for us? For John, it is crystal clear. Perfect love drives out fear. If we live in fear of judgment, we have not been perfected in love. Love motivates Godly actions.

- What "spirits" are you confronted by with supposed words of truth? Do you live in fear of judgment, or are you on the road to being perfected in love?

