

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Everlasting God, from the creation of the world, You have nurtured us with Your love. And yet we acknowledge that we do not always share Your love with others. We are selective about who we choose to love. Teach us to love You more fully. For in loving You, our lives will show love to all others, even as Your love encompasses all Your creation. We pray in the Name of Your greatest gift of love, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

This week we are looking at who has impacted us throughout our lives and how their faith has inspired our own. I remember most of my childhood was spent in the pew at church surrounded by my immediate family, but also all my grandparents were there. As I got older and could drive myself, sometimes it was just me and my grandparents in church. They inspired my relationship with God and I am grateful for that. Take time this week as a family to discuss who has inspired your own faith. Who has walked in the journey with you and who you plan to pass it to in the future. How can the death of a loved one inspire our faith journey?

MONDAY 11.22.21

Genesis 49:29-50:14

This week, as we conclude our sermon series “Good Grief: Facing Death with Hope,” we are going to look at several biblical passages that demonstrate how various people in the Bible helped to prepare others for their deaths. As this week’s sermon message, “The Art of Dying Well” pointed out, helping others to prepare for our own deaths is a tremendous, final gift that we can give to our loved ones. In today’s reading from Genesis, the patriarch of Israel, Jacob (whose name had been changed to Israel), gives direction to his sons, including Joseph, regarding his impending death. Joseph, who had been sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers, had risen to a position of power in Egypt—and after forgiving his brothers he invited them and their father, Jacob, to move to Egypt in a time of famine. Jacob’s final request was that he be buried with his ancestors in Canaan, not in Egypt. With the Egyptian Pharaoh’s permission, Joseph followed Jacob’s request to the letter, and a royal caravan escorted Jacob’s body back to Canaan. Perhaps the most revealing comment is in verse 12: “Israel’s sons did for him just as he had ordered.” Jacob helped his sons with explicit direction, and they honored him with their obedience.

- How much direction have you given regarding your death?

TUESDAY 11.23.21

1 Kings 19:15-21

Today’s reading happens in the aftermath of the prophet Elijah’s flight into the wilderness after embarrassing Queen Jezebel by defeating her false prophets of Baal. During Elijah’s encounter with God there in the wilderness, God tells Elijah to anoint Elisha to succeed him as a true prophet for Israel. Immediately, Elijah was obedient to God’s command, and in the act of transferring his cloak to Elisha, began the process of training his own replacement. Chapters 2 and 3 of 2 Kings will relate the story of Elijah’s ascension into heaven in a whirlwind, as well as the onset of Elisha’s prophetic ministry. Yesterday, we saw an example of helping to prepare one’s family through explicit directions regarding one’s burial—today, we learn from Elijah the value of what is known today as “succession planning.” At God’s direction, Elijah made sure there was someone coming after him who could carry on the important work he had been doing. It is a great gift to those you work with (whether paid employment or volunteer work) to enable them to know that when you are gone, others have been trained to take your place. It means one less thing for them to worry about while they are grieving for you.

- Have you thought about who would take over for you in the event of your death, in *any* role you fill? Why or why not?

WEDNESDAY 11.24.21

Daniel 3:1-18

There is little doubt that from a biblical perspective, “The Art of Dying Well” includes a commitment to faithfulness even unto death. Today’s reading from Daniel is one of the hallmark biblical stories of such wholehearted trust in God. While the Israelites were living in exile in Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon passed a law requiring worship of an enormous gold statue, under penalty of death by fire. Three young men held on to their faith in God, and refused to obey the king’s command. Their words in verses 17 and 18 are powerful: “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to rescue us from it ... but *even if he does not* ... we will not serve your god or worship the image of gold you have set up.” While being faced with a call to martyrdom would be highly unusual in the United States, we know that Christian brothers and sisters around the world do face such circumstances. We should understand that persevering in faith until the day of our death, no matter how that death happens, can be a source of inspiration for others. Reading further in today’s story, even Nebuchadnezzar ended up praising God because of God’s power displayed through the faith of these men.

- Whose death has been a source of inspiration for your faith?

THURSDAY 11.25.21

Luke 22:7-30

Jesus had taught His disciples numerous times before the Last Supper about His coming death and resurrection. But at the Last Supper, Jesus took the familiar ritual of the Passover meal and filled it with new meaning that was drawn from the crucifixion that would soon occur. The words “Do this in remembrance of me” provided the foundation for a ritual that would remind Jesus’ followers of His eternal presence throughout history. But notice also the important words Jesus speaks near the end of today’s reading: “And I confer on you a Kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Not only did Jesus establish the sacrament of Holy Communion, but He also formally passed on the work He had been doing on God’s behalf to those who would come after Him. God gave Jesus the leadership of the inbreaking of God’s Kingdom on earth, and before His death, He let His disciples know that that leadership was now passing to them. It has been passed to every generation of Christian since. Part of dying well, then, for the Christian, includes a commitment to passing the work of leading the Kingdom to the next generation.

- Who passed the Kingdom to you? Who will you pass it to?

FRIDAY 11.26.21

John 17:1-26

According to John’s Gospel, immediately before heading out from the Last Supper to go to the olive grove where He would be arrested, Jesus offered the three-fold prayer to God that we have in today’s reading. First, Jesus prayed for Himself—that through His obedience to God’s will, Jesus might be glorified in order to bring glory to God. Second, Jesus prayed for His disciples—that God the Father would protect them in the ministry to the world that He had bequeathed to them. Third, Jesus prays for “all those who will believe in me through their message” - that we, who follow, might proclaim the love of God in the world with a unified voice. Part of Jesus’ work of preparing others for his death was to pray for them ... and to pray *with* them! While we may often think of gathering over a loved one who is dying to pray for them and for their loved ones, Jesus sets a powerful example of faith by praying for those He loved while He Himself was preparing to die. Praying with our loved ones prior to our own death can be one of the most caring things we can do for them, demonstrating our own faith in God’s providence for both us, and them, in the wake of our death.

- Have you ever been present for the prayer of a dying Christian? What characterized that prayer?

SATURDAY 11.27.21

2 Timothy 3:10-4:8

The letter we know as 2 Timothy is, essentially, the last words of the apostle Paul as he was dying. Paul knows he has come to the end of his life—“I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.” Take note of the things Paul does here that we have read about earlier this week—preparing his protégé Timothy to do the kind of work he has been doing, persevering in faith even while being persecuted, passing on the mantle of Kingdom leadership, and speaking confidently of his own faith and salvation even while facing his own death. We should not be surprised that Paul stands here as an example for all of us with regard to “The Art of Dying Well.” Rather, we should receive the gift of Paul’s words as direction not only to Timothy, but to us as well: Continue in what you have learned. Preach the Word. Be prepared at all times. Correct, rebuke, and encourage, with patience and careful instruction. Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and discharge the duties of your ministry. Then, when the time comes for our own “departure,” we can follow Paul’s model, and help those who come after us to do the same.

- Who are you preparing for your own death? What “charge,” or words of advice, would you offer to them?



Daily Study Guide

November 21-27, 2021

Sermon Series: Good Grief—Facing Death with Hope

Week Four: “The Art of Dying Well” - Rev. Gregory P. Finrock

Scripture for Sunday, November 21: Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

“There’s a season for everything and a time for every matter under the heavens: a time for giving birth and a time for dying, a time for planting and a time for uprooting what was planted, a time for killing and a time for healing, a time for tearing down and a time for building up, a time for crying and a time for laughing, a time for mourning and a time for dancing, a time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones, a time for embracing and a time for avoiding embraces, a time for searching and a time for losing, a time for keeping and a time for throwing away, a time for tearing and a time for repairing, a time for keeping silent and a time for speaking, a time for loving and a time for hating, a time for war and a time for peace. What do workers gain from all their hard work? I have observed the task God has given human beings. God has made everything fitting in its time, but has also placed eternity in their hearts, without enabling them to discover what God has done from beginning to end.” (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Trincy Cater
- George Cater
- Nancy Davis
- Jennifer Testrake
- Coleman Family
- Matti Wilson
- Eric Wiles
- Jackie Wiles
- Laura Brewer
- Stevens Family
- Jerry Primm
- Kameron Wells
- Kayden Wells
- Mitch Mitchell
- Karen Patton
- Josh Luter
- Charlotte Ottley
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider
- Thibault family

The families and friends of the high school students involved in the recent car accident

The Wert family on the loss of David Wert’s mother, Georgia Wert

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org