

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Give us courage, Lord, that we might search the deepest and darkest corners of our being for anything that offends Your Holy Name. Give us mercy that we might stand in the brilliance of Your light. Give us grace that we might go from this assembly cleansed from our sin and refreshed for Your service. Though Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

The conversation around suicide and death can be difficult to have with our children. For most ages it isn't something we choose to talk about because of the pain that it causes. However, we can find redemption in Christ. No matter what age we are, there are people in our lives going through difficult times. We can show them love and grace by leading them to Christ. When we focus on what is good in our lives we are able to see God's promise to us. Take time as a family this week to think of ways you can reach out to those in your lives who are going through difficult moments.

MONDAY 11.8.21

1 Samuel 31:1-6

As we begin our study of "Christianity and Suicide," we read the story of one of the Bible's earliest portrayals of a suicide – that of King Saul. In a fierce battle on Mount Gilboa, King Saul was horribly wounded, and asked his armor-bearer to kill him in mercy, to avoid the torture that would undoubtedly come his way if the Philistines found him alive. The armor-bearer refused to kill his king, and King Saul fell on his own sword. The armor-bearer himself then followed suit. In 2 Samuel 1:17-27, Saul's successor, King David, laments the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, calling their deaths honorable. We should recognize that in this ancient world, prominent captives of an enemy could suffer all kinds of horrible tortures—body parts cut off or mutilated, being skinned alive, or impaled on iron hooks and dragged from the back of a chariot. On the other hand, in the honor and shame based culture of the day, to retreat, even badly wounded, would have been a source of shame and reproach from one's own people. With these as his only options, King Saul chose to end his own life by falling on his sword. His armor-bearer followed his king's lead.

- Do you believe there is ever a time when suicide is an acceptable act? What would make it so? Or, why is it never so?

TUESDAY 11.9.21

Matthew 27:1-10

The Bible's premier example of a *dishonorable* suicide is when Judas chooses to hang himself after betraying Jesus to the Jewish authorities. Theories of why, exactly, Judas chose to betray Jesus are many ... but what Matthew tells us is that "When Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse." Then, when he received no sympathy from the very authorities who he had agreed to help, Judas "went away and hanged himself." Betrayal was regarded as a highly shameful act in Jesus' day. One's "honor rating" in the community—one of the most highly valuable things someone could possess—would suffer horribly if one were publicly known as a betrayer. When Judas went to the Jewish authorities, he was hoping the power-brokers in Jewish society would have his back, and defend his honor in the community. Whatever his motives for betraying Jesus, when he realized that he would be rejected by both the followers of Jesus and Jesus' enemies, he realized he was truly an isolated man in his world. But he also realized it was his own choice that had isolated him. With nowhere to turn, and Jesus, the source of forgiveness, in custody, he took his own life.

- What options did Judas have in this moment? Where could he have turned for support and strength? Why did he not?

WEDNESDAY 11.10.21

Psalms 130

It is a well-known maxim in the world of mental health professionals that "the only people who kill themselves are those who have lost all hope." Nearly all *want* to be rescued, but have found their lives filled with an intolerable level of stress, pain, grief, anguish, alienation, anger, frustration, disappointment, guilt, or illness, from which they can see no means of escape. Psalm 130 records the personal emotions of someone who is overwhelmed by the enormity of the sin in his life. While we do not learn the specifics of what is causing this flood of guilt, we can see that it is too painful to bear. But "out of the depths," the psalmist cries out to God, knowing that "with You there is forgiveness." He turns to the promise of God's absolute, unfailing love as a source of hope. Part of God's covenant promises to the people of Israel was that even if they sinned, and broke their end of the covenant, if they repented of sin and turned to Him, He would always be there to receive them back. We are never without hope, because God promises His children that even if it feels like He has, He will never abandon them—He *wants* to rescue them.

- Does faith in God's promise provide hope for you, when things seem hopeless? What sustains this faith?

THURSDAY 11.11.21

Psalms 139:1-12

A profound sense of isolation often accompanies the prolonged depression that can be a possible warning sign of suicide. And yet, Psalm 139 proclaims that God surrounds us, and that we are completely known by God. There is nowhere we can go that God is not present with us ... even into the grave. In the New Testament, John proclaims that "God is light, in Him there is no darkness at all," and here, the Psalmist too proclaims that "darkness is the same as light" to God! The words are meant to reinforce the notion that even when life is at its darkest, God is there, ready to surround us with the comfort of His presence. But God's presence is typically made known through others, so we must be diligent in heeding the warning signs of suicide in others. We need to take every suicide threat seriously. The more specific the plan, the greater the risk of suicide. Let the individual know that their feelings can be treated. Be direct, and tell them, firmly, to seek help. Don't try to counsel, but direct them to trained professionals or a clergyperson. Be a source of hope, and not a secret confidante. Tell those who need to know. In other words, be the Light of Christ in their dark world.

- Is there someone in your life who needs you to bring the light of Christ into their darkness?

