

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, even though Your voice calls to us in many ways and in many places, we confess to You today that there are times when we choose to ignore Your voice. We choose instead to listen to our own needs and desires, and even to those voices from within the world that challenge our faith. Forgive us for those times, merciful God, and empower us to recognize You when You speak. Help us to recognize that in Your forgiveness, You offer once again an invitation to know Your love, and to know You. We pray in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Think about the person in your life who you think you know best of all. It might be a family member or a friend. Why do you know that person so well? If you think about it, it's because they have made the decision to share with you things about themselves that they might not share with just anyone. What kinds of things about yourself do *you* decide to share with other people? It is always our own decision how well we let other people really know us. The same thing is true for God. We can only know God as well as God wants us to know Him. But the good news is that God wants us to know Him *really well!* God wants us to know Him so much that He sent Jesus so that we could look at a human being and say, "That's what God is like!" Do you want to take God up on His offer to get to know Him?

MONDAY 1.17.22

Exodus 33:12-23

This week, we will be reading Scriptures from the Bible that demonstrate the Christian belief that God actually reveals God's self to humanity. This is called a belief in "revelation." When many Christians hear the word "revelation," they think immediately of the last book of the Bible, full of mysterious images and symbols. But "revelation" simply means that the only way we can know anything about God is because of God's decision to reveal it. But in today's reading, Moses learns something very important about God's revelation to us—as much as we may want to know everything there is to know about God, God insists, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." While God does desire for us to know Him, and the Bible assures us that God can be found when we search for Him, we cannot see Him in His fullness. Our reception of God's self-revelation will be limited by *our* limitations—we are finite, while God is infinite. We are simply not equipped to comprehend the fullness of God. Still, in God's grace, God wants us to know Him to the fullest extent we are capable of. But all that we can know of God is by *God's* doing, not our own. God's self-revelation is the *only* way we can know God.

- What does God's desire to be known tell you about God?

TUESDAY 1.18.22

Psalms 19:1-6

Once we accept the idea of God's revealing of Himself to us, we might ask, but *how* does God do this? As today's reading from Psalm 19 indicates, God reveals Himself to us, at least in a very broad sense, through the created order. The psalm begins "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands." This is called God's *natural*, or *general* revelation, and it is probably humanity's oldest, and most recognized, form of revelation. We know that primitive peoples even worshipped objects in the created order in response to their awe at the wonders of nature. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, however, creation is never mistaken for a god itself, but recognized as a *revelation* of the God who created it. A belief in nature *as God* is known as *pantheism* ... Christianity, on the other hand, holds that through the beauty of creation, something of God's majesty is revealed. Through natural phenomena like storms, earthquakes, and volcanoes, something of God's power is revealed. God's natural revelation is accessible to everyone—and, therefore, often takes on many interpretations. In fact, the picture of God we might have based on natural revelation alone could be quite distorted.

- What kind of God does nature reveal to you? What is missing from an understanding of God based on nature alone?

WEDNESDAY 1.19.22

Job 38:1-18

If natural revelation were the only way for us to know God, we could come to many mistaken conclusions about the nature of God. So Jews and Christians believe not only in natural revelation, but in the concept of *special revelation*. This is the belief that God chooses to reveal Himself more fully to very specific people, in very specific times and places. In today's reading, God reveals more about Himself, and His creative power, in a specific message to Job. But we see stories of this special revelation of God throughout Scripture—to Abraham, to Moses, to David, to the prophets, and to Paul on the road to Damascus, to name just a few. We have to acknowledge that we should be cautious in our approach to special revelation. Because it is often private, and personal, it is open to abuse and misunderstanding. Sometimes, dreams and visions that are *not* revelations of God are interpreted as such. But Scripture insists God *does* sometimes use these means of revelation, and asks us to be vigilant in their interpretation, to ensure they are consistent with the revelation of God found in Christian Scripture and tradition.

- What biblical examples of special revelation can you think of? What difficulties are there with this concept, today?

THURSDAY 1.20.22

Psalms 105

The Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible are the record of God's actions within human history. Thus, Christians also believe that God reveals Himself through the events of history. As a subset of special revelation, the Old Testament reveals God's revelation to a particular people—Israel—while the New Testament reveals God's revelation in a particular person—Jesus Christ. Psalm 105 celebrates the revelation of God through the story of God's salvation of Israel in the Exodus. The authors of both testaments see God revealed in the unfolding of history, and these revelations of God are often remembered through annual observances such as the Passover, Purim, and Hanukkah for Jews, and Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost for Christians. Part of the reason the Bible is the primary source for Christians to understand God's revelation (as we will study more fully next week) is that it is the definitive record of God's self-revealing encounters with humanity across thousands of years. Its writers had a clear sense of God's revelation in the unfolding of human history, interpreting that history through the lens of God's active participation in the human experience.

- Why were the Old Testament writers convinced their history was an expression of God's activity? Is that still true today?

