

## My Prayer Journal

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

**Prayer of Confession:** O Lord of Life, and Giver of every good gift, apart from You we have no direction. Without You we have no strength. For want of Your love, we have no hope. Yet we live our lives without Your guidance. We war against one another, with our guns and fists, but also with our words on the contemplations of our hearts. We are not the perfection You pray for. We do not live in the unity of Your design. Forgive us we pray, and free us to joyful obedience to Your “Word became flesh,” Jesus our Savior.

### My Prayers this Week:

### Family Time:

Have you ever looked at someone else—maybe a friend at school or a famous person on TV—and wished you were more like them? Sometimes, we can become unhappy with who we are, and wish our lives were more like someone else’s. But God wants you to know that you have been created in God’s image—and so, when you look in a mirror, God wants you to see a wonderful, amazing person ... because that’s who God sees! And if you’re ever worried that God might not like you because of something bad that you’ve done, God says, “It’s OK, I still love you ... and I’ll help you do better! But don’t try to become like some other person when you try to do better—I want to help you become like Jesus, my own Son!”

## MONDAY 2.28.22

## Psalm 8

Now that we have spent four weeks reading about the attributes of God presented in Scripture, we now turn to the biblical understanding of humanity. In the Creation story from yesterday’s sermon, we read that humanity was created “in the image of God.” Thus, what we have learned about God over the past four weeks should also inform our biblical understanding of humanity! The writer of Psalm 8 portrays the wonder of this reality—that while humanity seems so small under the vastness of the universe, we are, in fact, “ruler over the works of God’s hands,” only “a little lower than heavenly beings.” Theologians often speak in terms of the “natural,” “political,” and “moral” images of God. Reflecting the “natural” image of God, humanity has the capacity for reason and to exercise freedom of the will. Our share in the “political” image of God refers to God’s assigning to us the stewardship of Creation, as well as governance, and personal, social interactions. The “moral” image of God, then, refers to our capacity to love, to seek justice, to show mercy, and to achieve the righteousness and holiness God desires for us—to become Christlike beings.

- Which of these three ways of understanding God’s image resonates most deeply with you? Why might that be?

## TUESDAY 3.1.22

## Luke 7:1-10

For Christians, being made in the image of God is what gives every single human being intrinsic value. Human dignity is inherent in our very being, not connected in any way to our performance, our rationality, our self-awareness, or our usefulness. This theological belief underlies a Christian perspective on many everyday issues such as race relations, economic life, and even bioethics. Human dignity must be guarded and protected, fundamentally, because humans—all humans—bear the image of God, something that cannot be said of the rest of creation. This belief is the foundation for any Christian concept of human rights, fairness, or vision of equality. We must recognize that this perspective on the uniqueness of humanity is not shared in many purely secular worldviews, which may view humans as of no more significance than animals, or that may assign different human beings different value based on their usefulness or functionality. Are the weak as deserving as the powerful? In today’s reading, some Jewish elders want Jesus to heal a centurion’s servant, because his building of their synagogue means he “deserves” the favor. In humility, the centurion insists otherwise. And Jesus is pleased.

- Would it change the way you relate to people if in every person you recognized the image of God?

## WEDNESDAY 3.2.22

## Genesis 3:1-7

While we believe that humanity was created in the image of God, we don’t have to look too far to see that this image is somehow tarnished. Something is broken, not the way it should be, and the image of God in humanity often seems blurry, if not downright hidden. The biblical reason for this finds its basis in today’s reading—the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden, the first instance of human sin. In both the Old Testament Hebrew and the New Testament Greek, the word translated “sin” has a more fundamental meaning of “to miss,” as in, to miss a goal. When it came to morals, in the ancient world the word meant “to offend,” and it carried a range of meanings from an involuntary mistake to a serious offense against another person or a deity. In both Hebrew and Greek cultures, the word referred not only to offensive things we *do* (sins of commission,) but also to things we *should do*, but choose not to (sins of omission.) To sin, then, is fundamentally to miss the mark, to not achieve the goal for which God created humanity—the stewardship, fairness, justice, mercy, and love which God created us to embody. Today, on Ash Wednesday, Christians acknowledge our sin, and strive for repentance.

- Is it easier to identify sin in others, or in yourself? Why?

## THURSDAY 3.3.22

## Leviticus 5:14-6:7

Today’s reading from Leviticus helps us to recognize that sometimes, sin is based in inter-personal behaviors—we sin against a neighbor by how we treat them or their property, and this action is an offense against God as well. But sometimes, sin is based in our relationship with God more directly—we sin against God by how we treat God, or things set apart for God’s use. Using the Ten Commandments as an example, we sin against another person when we steal from them (offending God, in whose image they are made,) but we sin directly against God when we use His Name inappropriately. Today’s words from Leviticus also demonstrate for us the absolute nature of sin. Sin is sin whether we are aware of it, or not—notice how frequently Leviticus refers to “unintentional sin.” But the text also shows us that even in the midst of human sin, God provided a means to restore the relationships that our sin had broken. Often, this required restitution of the harm done to another person, but it also involved the payment of a penalty. Such sacrifices served to satisfy God’s wrath against sin, the neighbor who had been harmed, as well as the guilty conscience of the one who had sinned.

- Why do you think God would want to provide an acceptable means to make up for any sin that had been committed?

**FRIDAY 3.4.22**

**Ezekiel 18:1-32**

Ezekiel was a prophet during the time of the Babylonian exile, when the nation of Judah had been defeated, the Temple in Jerusalem destroyed, and the people carted off into exile. Many of the Jews who experienced this blamed their misfortune on the sins committed by the previous generations, insisting “our fathers sinned, and now we are paying the consequences.” But Ezekiel insists on a theology of personal responsibility for sin. The one who sins is the one with the responsibility to repent of or suffer the consequences of sin, and the one who is righteous is the one who reaps the rewards of righteousness. This in no way refutes the notion that often, children suffer the consequences of their parents’ sins. Children who are removed from abusive parents often suffer the effects of their parents’ behavior for years—but this is not to be understood as the children “paying for” their parents’ sins, but rather, as one reason for God’s wrath against the parents’ sin, which has resulted in difficult lives for innocent children. Such real-world problems point to the fact that sin has social consequences, some of which extend through many generations. Still, Ezekiel insists that we are held personally responsible for the actions we take today ... and those we don’t.

- Are you tempted to blame others for sins you commit?

**SATURDAY 3.5.22**

**Romans 1:18-30**

If we had any question about just how pervasive the problem of sin is, the apostle Paul answers it at the very beginning of his letter to the Romans. Throughout this foundational book for Christian theology, Paul presents a massive treatment of the subject of sin. The Greek root word for “sin” is used 59 times, “bad” 15 times, “unrighteous” 7 times, and “trespass” 9 times! This represents a concentration of words about sin and Godless behavior found nowhere else in the New Testament. Paul understands sin as an offense against God alone, which then results in hindered relationships with other people. He insists that humanity is without excuse for sin, intentionally suppressing the truth about God. The reason for the pervasiveness of sin is that “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts ... to do what ought not to be done.” In other words, God gave humanity what it wanted, with the end result that our sinful desires rule us, rather than God ruling us, even when our desires are opposed to God’s will. All of this leads Paul, in Romans 7:24, to cry out for a solution to the problem of sin. Over the next two weeks, we will find it in two places: grace and salvation.

- Have you ever felt that your desires rule you? Have you looked for a way out? What do you really want?



Daily Study Guide

February 27—March 5, 2022

**Sermon Series: Christian Basics—Who Are We?**

**Week One: “The Image of God/The Problem of Sin” - Rev. J. David Israel**

*Scripture for Sunday, February 27: Genesis 1:26-31 (CEB)*

“Then God said, ‘Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.’ God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them. God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.’ Then God said, ‘I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.’ And that’s what happened. God saw everything He had made: it was supremely good. There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.”

*Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:*

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**Prayer Requests**

- Jerry Primm
- Mitch Mitchell
- Charlotte Ottley
- Bob Vincent
- Nini Schneider
- Natalie Grossenheider
- Mark Grossenheider
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Thibault Family
- Ellis Family
- Kyle Anderson
- Sandra Lewis
- Fowler family
- Coleman family
- Jones Family
- Art Schnatterly
- Michael Bolinger

The Mueller family on the passing of Klos Mueller

The Dugger family on the passing of Jeannie Dugger

Share prayer requests online at [livingwordumc.org](http://livingwordumc.org)