

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession: Lord, You have set forth the way of life through Your Son Jesus Christ, whom You love dearly. We shamefully confess that we have been slow to learn of Him and have been reluctant to follow Him. You have spoken and called to us but we have not listened. You have revealed Your beauty to us, but we have been blind. You have stretched out Your hands to us through our friends and neighbors, but we have passed by them. We have accepted Your gifts and offered little thanks. We are unworthy of Your unchanging love.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Have you ever wished you could be in charge of something? Does it sometimes feel like you are always having to follow someone else's rules, when what you really want is to be able to be the one who *makes* the rules? Well, every human being feels like that sometimes! Something inside each one of us doesn't like the idea of having to do what someone else tells us to—we want to be able to make our own decisions and choices. As we are growing up, we get more and more opportunities to be the one who makes the decisions, and that can feel really good! But the Bible teaches us that no matter what, we always need to remember that what GOD wants is most important of all, and we need to learn to accept that and to be okay with letting God make the biggest decisions about how we live and what we do. Deciding to let God be in charge of our lives is one of the most important decisions any one of us will ever make!

MONDAY 2.13.23

Jeremiah 31:31-33

This week, we turn from the prayers of the Roman Catholic saints to the most well-known prayer of the founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley. The Wesley Covenant Prayer begins, "I am no longer my own, but thine." From the very beginning of God's relationship with the people of Israel, God's intent was that "I will walk among you and be Your God, and you will be my people" (Leviticus 26:12), as part of the terms of God's original covenant with Israel. The history of Israel, though, is the history of a people who continually broke their end of God's covenant agreement, leading eventually—800 years later—to the exile of the Israelites from the Promised Land into Babylon, in the time of Jeremiah in today's reading. Through Jeremiah, God promised Israel that one day, He would make a new covenant with Israel, enabling them to do what 800 years had proven them unable to do—to really be God's people. Then, God promises, His original intent will be realized: "I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33c). In the opening words of his covenant prayer, John Wesley affirms that he submits to this new covenant—"I am no longer my own, but thine." In other words, John says, "Now, I belong to God. I am one of God's people."

- Do you truly *belong* to God? What does that imply?

TUESDAY 2.14.23

Romans 5:1-5

The implications of belonging to God are drawn out in the next lines of the Wesley Covenant Prayer: "Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering." In his letter to the church in Rome that we read today, Paul considers being counted among those who belong to God as an unimaginable grace. Being in a covenantal relationship with God, as God had wanted all along for Israel, means "we have peace with God," and this has happened through faith that Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross *does* establish the new covenant of which Jeremiah wrote. It is because of the peace this knowledge brings that Paul is able to face whatever his faith might bring, including fully accepting the reality that this might include suffering for his faith. Through a chain of cause-and-effect experiences, Paul sees redemption in suffering because it leads to hope, through perseverance and the building of character. Paul teaches Christians to view the experience of suffering for one's faith through new eyes—without the victim mentality that humans are so easily prone to. When we permit the Holy Spirit to thrive in our souls, even suffering becomes a faith-building experience. Thus, Wesley can even ask God, "put me to suffering."

- Are you truly willing to suffer, if that is what God requires?

WEDNESDAY 2.15.23

Luke 14:1-14

The Wesley Covenant prayer continues: "Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee." Today's reading from the Gospel of Luke contains one of Jesus' primary teaching about our human tendency to want to exalt ourselves even at the expense of others, versus the Kingdom value of humility. Jesus relates the general principle of being willing to be take the lowest station to what His listeners had often see happen at a wedding banquet. There, a guest might end up exalted or humiliated based on the seat they initially chose! The point of the parable is this: when we willingly serve God even in places where we might feel humiliated by others, God will see our service, and exalt us in the life to come. John Wesley's prayer takes this attitude of humility one step further—we must be willing to accept whatever "seat" God assigns to us—even if that means being set aside completely rather than being employed for grand purposes and results. We must be willing to serve, or not serve, with, or without, recognition. When we do receive recognition, and are exalted, we accept that praise with humility. But when we get no recognition, we are assured that God sees, and are blessed by that awareness.

- How much recognition do you need, or expect?

THURSDAY 2.16.23

Philippians 4:10-13

In today's reading from Paul to the church in Philippi, Paul speaks from personal experience about living in times of plenty, and in times of need. "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty." But, in one of the most astounding claims in all of his letters, he writes, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." What an amazing secret to have learned! This is also the very sentiment expressed by John Wesley in the next section of his Covenant Prayer: "Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing." The reason both Paul and Wesley are able to speak such words with confidence can be found in verse 13 of today's reading: "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." The Christian is able to persevere in life, whether full or empty, whether having an abundance or nothing, because of the absolute assurance that no matter our material circumstances, we still have God. The gift of our eternal salvation is secure in Jesus Christ, and nothing, absolutely nothing, can change that, except our own decision to return the gift. When we live in daily gratitude for that security, we can willingly endure whatever comes.

- When have you had to depend on God to persevere?

