

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we pray that You would form us into people who “correctly handle the word of truth.” Help us to know the difference between essentials and non-essentials, and to avoid foolish arguments. May we always seek to build others up in faith, and never to tear each other down. Cleanse us for Your own noble purposes, so that we can serve You in the ways You call us to serve, and open our hearts to Your word, that all of us might be led to a knowledge of the truth. We pray in the holy name of Christ our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Did you ever get into an argument with a friend over something that later on didn't seem very important? Maybe you even ended up not being friends anymore, and that made you sad. God wants to help us to turn into people who know when something is important enough to stand up for, and when something is just not that big a deal, and that we can just let drop. One of the things God says it is really important to stand up for is that Jesus died on the cross, but was resurrected so that He lives again! God doesn't want us to get in an argument about it, but God doesn't want us to let others change our minds, either!

MONDAY 8.3.20

1 Corinthians 15:1-20

Today's reading is a great place to start thinking about the difference between “essentials” and “non-essentials.” Paul begins by telling the church at Corinth what he thinks is “most important” - Christ died, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared multiple times to various individuals and groups. *That* is what is most important in all of Paul's teachings—it is essential. And yet, the second half of today's reading demonstrates that even in the earliest days of the church, in Corinth, people were saying “there is no resurrection of the dead.” Paul proceeds to insist that belief in the resurrection of the dead is an absolutely critical component of the gospel he is proclaiming, because all of it hinges on Jesus' resurrection, which would not have happened if the more general doctrine of the resurrection of the dead were not true! From the emphatic tone of his words here, it is clear that for Paul, a belief in the resurrection of the dead is an absolutely essential part of Christian faith.

- How do you decide what is worth insisting upon, and what it is okay to just let go?
- What are the “essentials” in your Christian faith? Do they align with Paul's understanding?

TUESDAY 8.4.20

Jude

The early church's understanding was that this short letter was written by Jude, the brother of Jesus. The author of the letter claims to be “the brother of James,” and the only Jude known in the early church who had a brother named James was Jesus' brother. In this letter, Jude says he wanted to simply write a note of encouragement about salvation in Christ, but instead has to write to convince his readers to “fight for their faith.” Bad teaching on God's grace has resulted in “unrestrained immorality” and denial of Christ. After numerous Biblical examples of the results of falling from faith, Jude calls upon his readers to build each other up in the traditional faith, to have mercy on those who are struggling, and to remember that restoring wayward believers to their learned faith is the same as “snatching them from the fire.” For Jude, contending for the foundations of Christian faith is the most merciful, loving thing that can be done for someone else, since that is where eternal life in Jesus Christ is found.

- Have you ever seen our belief in God's grace abused as an excuse for immorality?
- Why do you think Jude is so emphatic about this particular problem, insisting his readers “fight for the faith”?

WEDNESDAY 8.5.20

2 Peter 1:12-2:3

Isn't it amazing just how many words there are in the New Testament letters about the danger of false teachers? Whereas in 1 Corinthians, the issue was the resurrection of the dead, and in Jude, “cheap grace,” here in 2 Peter, false teachers seem to be challenging the ideas of the inspiration of Scripture, and the reliability of Old Testament prophecy. Specifically, they were arguing against the Second Coming of Jesus, and that if Judgment Day were not imminent, there was no need to be concerned about behavior in the present day. As an eyewitness to Jesus' teaching, Peter emphasizes the words of Jesus Himself relative to these issues, and insists that Scriptural prophecy is not a product of human logic or reasoning, but the revelation of God's will through human instruments. He calls the arguments of these false teachers “destructive opinions,” born out of greed and self-promotion. Like Jude, he insists that God's judgment will fall against these teachers who distort the truth of the gospel.

- What is your own understanding of the inspiration of Scripture, and the source of Old Testament prophecy?
- How can you guard yourself against being taken advantage of by such teachers?

THURSDAY 8.6.20

1 John 4:1-6

John addresses yet another issue that was pervading the early church—many were teaching that while Jesus was the divine Son of God, they denied that He had *really* taken on human flesh. It just *seemed* like He did. This became known as the heresy of “Docetism.” The ancient Jews used the word “spirits” to refer to influences that pointed us *toward* God's truth, or *away* from God's truth. John advises his readers to test which kind of a *spirit* one was facing by a basic test—does the teacher confess that Jesus had actually come “in the flesh”? The physicality of Christ's incarnation was a hugely important belief in the early church. Some were denying it altogether, while others were simply diminishing its importance while elevating His divinity. Notice how in 1 John 1:1, right at the beginning of this letter, John talks about what “we have looked at and our hands have touched.” Eventually, the argument led to a definitive statement that Jesus was one person with two natures—human and divine.

- How important is Christ's incarnation to you? Is it an “essential”? Do you think people today struggle more with His humanity or His divinity? Are you surprised that in the early church it was His *humanity* that was being challenged?

FRIDAY 8.7.20

James 3:1-12

Given our readings the rest of this week about the dangers of false teachers, perhaps it is no surprise that James insists that not many people should presume to be teachers of the faith! James goes on to talk about just how influential our words can be—they can be used to tear someone down just as easily as they can be used to build someone up. They can be used to affirm the truth of the gospel, or they can be used to lead someone astray. James witnessed many people who came to worship, praised God, and yet left the building cursing and arguing with their fellow Christians. The situation grieved James greatly. James’ point in our final two verses is to focus on “the spring” - the source of our words. If we focus on our relationship with God, the source of our beliefs and our spiritual lives, we will grow to use the tongue for good rather than harm.

- Are you convicted by James’ words regarding the same tongue praising God and cursing other people?
- What do you think leads to putdowns, arguments, curses, and slander?
- What steps can you take to tame the tongue?

SATURDAY 8.8.20

James 4:1-12

James has yet more to say about the behavior he has witnessed in his church in today’s reading. Fights and quarrels, and apparently, even murders, are happening as a result of disagreements. James insists the root of all these problems is that our internal, human desires have not yet been fully submitted to the Spirit of God. Even if we go to God, we go with selfish motives. The bottom line problem is that we live with divided loyalty—wanting to be aligned with God while at the same time wanting to be part of a world that is hostile toward God. When someone disagrees with us our tendency is to insult, criticize, and slander. James warns us that in doing so, we very easily cross the line into what is God’s prerogative, judgment of other people. James’ advice is to grow closer to God as a guard against speaking inappropriately to others, sitting in judgment of others, and becoming prideful. Humbling ourselves often means being willing, in a disagreement over matters of opinion, to say “I could be wrong.”

- Are you trying to be a friend of God and a friend of the world at the same time?
- Are you tempted to judge others based on their differing opinions? Are you ever willing to say “I could be wrong”?



Daily Study Guide

August 2-8, 2020

Sermon Series: The Fine Art of Disagreement

Week Two: “Essentials and Non-Essentials” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, August 2: 2 Timothy 2:14-26

“Remind them of these things and warn them in the sight of God not to engage in battles over words that aren’t helpful and only destroy those who hear them. Make an effort to present yourself to God as a tried-and-true worker, who doesn’t need to be ashamed but is one who interprets the message of truth correctly. Avoid their godless discussions, because they will lead many people into ungodly behavior, and their ideas will spread like an infection. ... Run away from adolescent cravings. Instead, pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace together with those who confess the Lord with a clean heart. Avoid foolish and thoughtless discussions, since you know they produce conflicts. God’s slave shouldn’t be argumentative but should be kind toward all people, able to teach, patient, and should correct opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will change their mind and give them a knowledge of the truth. They may come to their senses and escape from the devil’s trap that holds them captive to do His will.” (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Clella Malloy
- Don Novatny
- Joan Burkholder
- Monica and Howard Murray
- John Scott
- Stephen Rye
- Joan Burkholder
- Tiffany Davis
- Glenn Randolph
- George Crow
- Jerry Davis
- Nancy Davis
- Claudia McManomy
- Shirley Vaughn
- Ken Mann
- Carolyn Mann
- Doug Nash
- Charlotte Ottley
- Vicki Robinson
- Delaney Digham
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Peggy Cruse
- Bill Cruse
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider

Everyone affected by the COVID-19 outbreak

Our communities suffering from the violence

Our community, country and world

All school officials, parents, and students as the next school year is being planned and difficult decisions are being made

The Cook family on the passing of Nellie Cook

The Bannes and Nishimura families on the passing of Dorothy Rose Bannes, grandmother of Lisa Nishimura

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org