

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Holy and Loving God, we seek the kind of committed and inspirational Christian community that we see portrayed in Acts. Help us to be devoted to the teaching of the apostles, to share our resources to benefit the needy, to recognize Your presence when we break bread with others, and to draw near to You in prayer. May the groups we belong to strengthen our souls, and may they draw others to You as shining examples of the kind of life You want for all of us. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

We read throughout the week the impact there is when we are in a community with others. The early church started by people connecting at the temple and inviting others into their homes for meals. Have your family think through their group of people they spend time with. Then take some time to think how your family can reach out to those that might be "lost sheep" and continue to be the feet of the church. We can honor God by showing love and compassion to those who are connected with our family.

MONDAY 10.5.20

Matthew 28:16-20

The final verses of Matthew's Gospel are called The Great Commission. After Jesus' Resurrection, and just before His Ascension into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples a commission—to go out into the world to make disciples of people everywhere. The disciples were to baptize these new Christ-followers in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and then they were to teach them the same things Jesus had previously taught the disciples, and to encourage faithful obedience to this way of life. The Great Commission sets the parameters for two of the primary expressions of Christian discipleship—evangelism (making new disciples) and growing in knowledge of and obedience to Christ. The earliest Christian gatherings, as we see in Sunday's Scripture from Acts this week, were fully devoted to learning the teaching of the original apostles together, to praising God, to demonstrating God's goodness. The result of this obedience to Jesus' Great Commission was an evangelistic awakening, as "the Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved."

- What does it mean to you to "go and make disciples"?
- Are you involved in a small community of learners where you can be taught more fully the way of Jesus?

TUESDAY 10.6.20

John 10:11-16

When Jesus identified Himself as "the good shepherd," He was representing Himself as someone who was faithful and compassionate, and who would both guide and protect His followers. But at the same time, He is identifying His followers as "His flock," which suggests an entirely different set of characteristics. The flock is vulnerable to attacks from outside, and the flock is prone to wandering away. Surprisingly to His original listeners (the Jews of the people of Israel), Jesus said that He had "other sheep not of this sheep pen" who must be gathered to Him - a way of referring to the fact that not only Jews, but Gentiles (everyone else) would be included in the Kingdom of God that Jesus came to inaugurate. Ultimately, Jesus says, there is "one flock and one shepherd." The earliest Christians recognized in this language the power of Christ, the Good Shepherd, to overcome social, ethnic, language, and racial barriers between people. Whenever Christians came together to learn, to worship, or to serve, the flock was to acknowledge and behave as if they truly were one flock.

- Why do you think Jesus wanted His followers to view themselves as "one flock"?
- Are your faith groups homogeneous or diverse? Why?

WEDNESDAY 10.7.20

Luke 15:3-7

Once again, in today's reading, Jesus makes metaphorical use of "sheep" - but the analogy is a little different from yesterday's reading where the "flock" was Jesus' followers. Now, the sheep represent *all* people, and the fact that God relentlessly seeks for every single person to follow Him. This does not mean that God abandons the other sheep! In the ancient world, it would be unusual for one shepherd to go out with 100 sheep! Rather, there would be other hired hands who could manage the flock while the lead shepherd went on a search and rescue mission. Here again, we see the Great Commission at work, with both evangelism (searching for the lost sheep) and discipleship growth (keeping the rest of the flock together) happening. In early Wesleyan practice, class meetings were small "flocks" guided by a "hired hand" whose job was to encourage the faithful, and to inform the church leaders when someone "wandered," so that together they could go to search for them, with the goal of returning them to the flock.

- What are the characteristics of a "lost sheep" today?
- Do you see the parable as simply saying that God longs for them, or as a directive for us to work to bring them back?

THURSDAY 10.8.20

John 21:15-17

Jesus sure seemed to love to refer to His followers as sheep! In His resurrection appearance to Peter, He insisted that the best way Peter could demonstrate His love for Jesus was by "feeding His lambs," "taking care of His sheep," and "feeding His sheep." Remember what we said on Tuesday about the role of a shepherd—feeding them, caring for their needs, guiding them, protecting them. Now, Jesus is telling Peter he must take on the role of shepherd for Jesus' followers. Part of God's plan for His church is that every Christ follower will be fed, cared for, guided, and protected. Again, in early Wesleyan practice, these activities happened most frequently in the context of small gatherings of believers. At these gatherings, the flock was fed with the Word of God, their personal needs were prayed for and cared for, and they were gently guided back into a Christian way of life when they wandered into sin. Being a member of the flock entails a certain amount of responsibility to make one's self present to receive the care of the shepherd.

- How do you think "feeding the sheep" expresses love for Jesus?
- How, and where, are you being fed?
- Who are you feeding, and how?

FRIDAY 10.9.20

Hebrews 10:19-25

The writer of Hebrews clearly expresses his conviction that the best way to “draw near to God” was to be sure to keep the flock together. OK, he doesn’t use that analogy! But, he insists that his readers not “give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing,” because this is the best way to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds”! The reality this points to is that Christian faith is simply not a solo effort. It was not designed to be done alone, but to be lived out with other Christians in an atmosphere of mutual accountability, learning the ways of Christ together, and mutually encouraging one another to a deeper expression of our faith. The plural language of the phrase “let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess” does not mean that each of us, individually, should do that, but that we, as a collective, must hold on to that hope. “We” profess one, unified, hope of salvation in Jesus Christ, and the only way to hold onto that hope is as a unified group. Meeting together in small gatherings is absolutely crucial to our perseverance in faith.

- Have you ever “given up meeting together”?
- How might you begin to participate in a group to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds”?

SATURDAY 10.10.20

Colossians 3:12-17

To conclude the week, we need to acknowledge that being part of a group of other human beings can be hard—even if they are followers of Christ! Paul, in writing to the church in Colossae, lets them know that to continue in this practice of meeting together, they will have to “bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another”! But notice that Paul also insist that, in these groups, they must both “teach and admonish” one another. While it may be hard to be part of a group where “admonishment” is normal practice, the fundamental characteristics of a Christian group are “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,” all bound together with love, which creates unity. The goal, as we have been looking at all year, is to grow into the mind of Christ—or, as Paul says here in Colossians, to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Where the love of Christ is truly present in a small group, even accountability and admonishment can happen without breaking the bonds of love. In Methodism, such groups are a vital component of a dynamic and growing faith.

- How hard is it for you to bear with, or forgive, others?
- What impact would a group like this have on your faith life?



Daily Study Guide

October 4-10, 2020

Sermon Series: A Method to Your Madness

Week Two: “A Classy Group” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, October 4: Acts 2:42-47

“The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God’s goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.” (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Aaron Hornbuckle
- Ermaline Balzraine
- Lance Thibault
- Sandra Lewis
- Mary Jo Cornelius
- Amanda McKee
- Bruce Bottermuller
- George Crow
- Charlotte Ottley
- Delaney Digman
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Peggy Cruse
- Bill Cruse
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider

Everyone affected by the COVID-19 outbreak

Our community, country and world

The Orf family on the loss of Herb Orf

The Moranz and Fink families on the loss of Jamie Moranz’s father, Michael Fink

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org