

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

Generous and merciful God, we give thanks for the blessings we have received. Help us to respond to Your generosity toward us with our own generosity toward others. Help us to discern the level of our own giving, not according to law, but according to the transformation of our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

This week we talked about the importance of giving to your church and the impact it has. Have a conversation with the family about how when we give we are giving to the church in order for us to help others or to provide experiences within the church. Think about an organization or even an item that as a family you'd like to raise money for. Discuss how you could do that and establish a plan. Set aside time for the next month to see how much money has been saved. We can experience God by helping others.

MONDAY 10.12.20

Genesis 14:17-24

The theme of this week's Scripture is that giving is our way of partnering with God to accomplish the work of God's Kingdom. Today's passage contains the very first mention of the act of tithing (the act of giving one tenth to God) in the entire Bible. In the first sixteen verses of Genesis 14, we find that Abram's nephew Lot had been captured (along with his family and possessions) during a battle between the kings of four cities against the kings of five cities. When Abram learned of this, he took his own men and rescued Lot and his family, recovered their possessions, and routed the armies of the kings who had captured him. Picking up in today's reading, the king of Sodom (who had previously been defeated by the armies Abram routed) came out to thank Abram. But another king, the king of Salem (that is, Jerusalem), who had not been part of these battles, came out as well, carrying bread and wine. This king, Melchizedek, was also a priest who worshipped El Shaddai (God Most High), and he blessed Abram. As a way of showing his gratitude to God Most High for this victory, Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth (a tithe) of what he recovered.

- What do you think prompted Abram to give this tithe?
- How does gratitude motivate your own act of giving to God?

TUESDAY 10.13.20

Leviticus 27:30-33

When Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai, the tithe was codified as part of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. Because it was an agrarian society, the tithe was typically given in the form of crops and livestock. One tenth of "everything from the land," as well as "the herd and flock," "belongs to the LORD." The Law of Moses thereby defined the tithe in terms of ownership—giving the tithe to God was simply the act of returning the produce or livestock to its rightful owner. To hold it back was essentially understood as robbery of God, as the prophet Malachi would later proclaim (see Malachi 3:6-12). The tithe on livestock was mandatory, but the Israelites could "redeem" the tithe on crops—perhaps, in a particularly lean year where the crops were needed to survive. Even then, though, the requirement was that the priests of God in the Temple would receive the monetary value of the crops, *plus twenty percent*. This was similar to the "buying out" of other vows individuals would make to God that the law allowed, demonstrating that in Israel, the tithe was to be understood as the fulfillment of a vow before God.

- How do these ancient expectations impact your own understanding of what belongs to God, or of your own vows of membership in the church?

WEDNESDAY 10.14.20 Deuteronomy 14:28-29

Every three years, the tithes on the year's produce would be stored up for a specific purpose—to feed the Levites (who served in the Temple and had no crops of their own), foreigners, orphans, and widows. The text goes on to say that if the Israelites will care for the less fortunate in this way, "the LORD your God will bless you in all the work of your hands." Care for those in need was institutionalized within the Law of Moses, and we see in these verses the roots of not only the food pantries that serve as a resource for people in need today, but also of the practice of supporting those whose life work is to serve God through the distribution of a portion of the people's tithes among them. Deuteronomy 24:17-22 contains additional requirements for caring for the marginalized, such as protecting their legal rights and only going over the fields to reap the produce once, leaving the remainder behind for widows and orphans to "glean."

- How does knowing how the tithe is to be used impact your motivation to give?
- Why do you think these tithing rules had to be institutionalized? Do you think that helped, or hindered a typical Israelite's obedience to the tithe? Why?

THURSDAY 10.15.20

1 Chronicles 29:1-9

Many years after the Israelites had settled in the Promised Land, King David inaugurated the work of building a Temple to God in Jerusalem. David was about to die, and passed the work on to his son Solomon, who was about to become king. Before he died, David committed immense personal resources toward the work of building this Temple, and his own giving inspired everyone in a leadership role in Israel to follow his example. These freewill offerings were above and beyond the tithe, and enabled the Israelites to build a glorious Temple for God. The story sets an example for how strong leadership, that leads by example, can accomplish great things, especially when it comes to giving. The story also provides a basis for the use of the gifts people bring to God for the purpose of building or maintaining the place for worship of God. The basic message, though, is that the people were willing to express their wholehearted love for God through their giving. It was a spiritual decision made willingly, and the people rejoiced at the abundant response of the community.

- What role do the actions of leaders have on your own motivation to give?
- What would inspire you to make a spiritual, freewill decision to give abundantly?

