

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession:

O God, who gave us birth, You are ever more ready to hear than we are to pray. You know our needs before we ask, and our ignorance in asking. Give to us now Your grace, that as we shrink before the mystery of death, we may see the light of eternity. Help us to live as those who are prepared to die. And when our days here are accomplished, enable us to die as those who go forth to live, so that living or dying, our life may be in You.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Sometimes we view death as a scary thing. We are not sure when we will ever see someone again once they have passed away. But Jesus us shows us that there is hope for people who die. That they are in their final resting place with God and have the best view of their loved ones down here. Holidays can be a time where we miss those who have passed away or even when those people are brought up more because the space without them is noticeable. Take time this week to remember those who have passed away this year and what made them so special. If you did not know anyone who passed this past year think back on some who are incredibly important to your family.

MONDAY 11.15.21

Psalm 23

As we continue our sermon series on facing death with hope, we turn to the subject of providing comfort for those who mourn. We begin with one of the most familiar texts in all of Scripture—the 23rd Psalm. These words can be so familiar, it can be hard to read them for meaning ... if this is true for you, consider reading the psalm in a newer, less familiar translation. Consider everything this psalm provides assurance of: having our every need cared for, having our souls restored when we feel depleted, being guided into righteous behavior, being comforted in times of danger, being pursued by goodness and love, and having a permanent dwelling in God's house! Even when we are walking in the shadow of death, whether mourning the death of a loved one or with an awareness of our own impending death, God promises His presence. The psalmist is comforted, "for you are with me." When we, by faith, live in this assurance of God's presence, it is a great source of comfort. But at the same time, when we provide a ministry of presence—literally *being* the presence of God for someone who mourns—we find ourselves blessed to participate in the strengthening of faith for the one who mourns.

- How do you experience the promise of God's presence?

TUESDAY 11.16.21

Job 19:21-27

When Job lost everything, he felt as though God had attacked him. When his friends tried to explain away his pain and suffering, he felt as though his friends were attacking him as well. But according to the beginning of this story, Job was a man of righteousness, and in the words we read today we see Job's absolute, unwavering confidence in a Redeemer—someone who will restore him to the wholeness he knew God wanted for him. In Old Testament times, to be "redeemed" meant that the senior responsible family member would risk everything, even his life, to save someone from whatever threatened them. While Job knew nothing of the role Christ would one day play as the Redeemer of all humanity, he is still confident that however bad things look now, God will restore him. Whether Job thinks that will happen in this life or after death is irrelevant—the point is Job's confidence that he will see God face to face, and that because of who God is, God will restore him. Job's words are a powerful demonstration of what faith is: being certain of something that doesn't always appear to make sense on the face of it. Job's words remind us that we, and those we mourn, also have a Redeemer, whose work restores all of us to wholeness.

- What do you think helped Job maintain his trust in God?

WEDNESDAY 11.17.21

John 11:17-37

Lazarus, and his sisters Martha and Mary, were close friends of Jesus. When Lazarus died, the first words both sisters said to Jesus were "If you had been here, my brother would not have died" (11:21 and 11:32). The implication, of course, is that somehow, Jesus is responsible for Lazarus' death—by His absence, if nothing else. Like these sisters, those who mourn the death of a loved one may also be thinking: "God, if you were really here, they would not have died." Jesus' various responses to these sisters can teach us how to convey comfort: first, Jesus says "Your brother will rise again," and second, Jesus is "deeply moved in spirit and troubled," even weeping, Himself. These actions demonstrate ways we, too, can comfort those who mourn. Even Jesus is moved to the point of tears by the reality of human death. We, too, can be open about the pain and the reality of loss with those to whom are seeking to provide comfort. But like Jesus, we can also proclaim, with confidence, "Your loved one will rise again!" As Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies." Christians live in, and share, the hope of the Resurrection, with a firm foundation in the promises of Jesus.

- Which of Jesus' approaches do you find more comforting?

THURSDAY 11.18.21

John 14:25-31

In John's version of the Last Supper, Jesus gives extensive teaching to the disciples in preparation for His coming death. Knowing the impact His death will have on these close friends, Jesus promises them "His peace." The words He speaks have been used at funerals as a source of comfort ever since: "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Jesus went to the cross in the confidence that God would raise Him from the dead, and He wanted His disciples to have that same confidence. Unlike the disciples at the Last Supper, though, we have the proof of Jesus' Resurrection—the proof that Jesus' confidence in God was not misplaced. Jesus' hope is that when we live by faith, when we live in the confidence that even death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ, that faith will enable us to live in peace, free from the troubled heart that arises from a fear of death. The goal of comforting those who mourn is to help to lead them to a similar place of peace, far away from the fear that their loss inevitably creates. This teaching of Jesus is given within the context of His promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, indicating that the comfort and peace of which Jesus speaks is a gift of the Spirit—a gift, like all gifts of the Holy Spirit, that is meant to be shared.

- With whom might you share this gift of peace today?

FRIDAY 11.19.21

1 Peter 1:3-9

Everyone will suffer grief at many times throughout their lives. Although we try not to think about it in our 21st century lives, death is a part of life. As Saint Peter wrote the letter in today’s reading, hardship and persecution among Christians was increasing. Every day, the likelihood of knowing someone who had died for their faith was greater. Just as people today often feel abandoned by God in their time of grief, these early Christians felt the same. Peter writes to provide encouragement to these believers, offering them hope in the midst of their suffering. God, he writes, has given us a *new birth*, a *living hope*, and an *inheritance that can never perish!* Because of this, Peter says, we can rejoice even while we suffer grief. In faith, we hold on to the promise of Jesus’ resurrection, and the assurance that death is not the end. God turns the trials of our grief into an opportunity to discover both our own weaknesses and the awesome, sustaining strength of the Holy Spirit. While we may not see it in the moment, our faith guides us through these trials to a deeper and more vibrant faith in their aftermath. Deeper than our grief lies the glorious joy of knowing that Jesus has won the salvation of our souls.

- Have you personally experienced a deeper faith as the outcome of a trial of grief? Who can you encourage by this?

SATURDAY 11.20.21

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

Paul begins his second letter to the church in Corinth with the promise of God’s compassion and comfort. As we read these words, we should remember the linguistic origins of our word “comfort.” The word comes from the Latin *cum fortis* ... “with strength.” The great writer of Christian commentaries, William Barclay, notes that “*Comfort* in the New Testament always means for more than soothing sympathy.... Christian comfort is the comfort which brings courage and enables us to cope with all that life can do to us.” Paul writes here that it is the comfort we receive from God that enables us to comfort others. Think about what Paul is really saying when he writes “If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer.” In other words, all experiences of the Christian life work toward providing strength to persevere in faith through trials. When we are distressed and receive comfort from others, we learn how to then give it to others in the midst of their distress. And the source of all of this comfort-giving and comfort-receiving is God our Father—the Father of compassion.

- How have your life experiences equipped you to offer comfort to others? How does comfort provide strength?



Daily Study Guide

November 14-20, 2021

Sermon Series: Good Grief—Facing Death with Hope

Week Three: “Comforting Those Who Mourn” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, November 14: John 14:27-29

“Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don’t be troubled or afraid. You have heard me tell you, “I’m going away and returning to you.” If you loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than me. I have told you before it happens so that when it happens you will believe.” (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Jennifer Testrake
- Coleman Family
- Matti Wilson
- Eric Wiles
- Jackie Wiles
- Laura Brewer
- Stevens Family
- Jerry Primm
- Kameron Wells
- Kayden Wells
- Mitch Mitchell
- Karen Patton
- Josh Luter
- Charlotte Ottley
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider
- Thibault family

The Wert family on the loss of David Wert’s mother, Georgia Wert

The Majdecki and Nishimura families on the loss of Jo Ann Majdecki

The Lind family and friends on the loss of Emmy Lind

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org