

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession: O Lord God of mercy and compassion, Your love has encouraged us to come to You with honesty and truth. We confess that we cannot free ourselves from the grip of desire for earthly things without the work of Your Holy Spirit in our lives. We pray that You would receive and renew our hearts for building Your Kingdom in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Have you ever thought about all the different ways the people who love you, and even people you don't know, take care of you, so that your life is not as hard as it might be without them? Just think about the meals you eat—someone cooks the food, someone had to go to the grocery store to buy that food, someone had to drive a truck to deliver that food to the store, and someone had to grow the plants that made that food! What would it be like if you had to do all those things yourself, and no one *provided* them to you? In the same way, the Bible tells us that God also promises to provide us with everything we really need to live. But God also tells us that when we have plenty, we should work alongside God to make sure other people can be provided with what *they* need.

MONDAY 2.14.22

Genesis 22:1-14

After two weeks of studying the nature of God as *Creator* and as *Personal*, we now consider the Bible's understanding of God as *Provider*. The fundamental understanding of God's *providence* is that God provides us with what we truly need. Our reading today presents us with what is perhaps the most troubling Old Testament story of all—God's testing of Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. We need to understand that at the time of this very ancient story, what God expected of humanity in worship was not well understood—Abraham was, after all, the first person God called out to after Noah and the great flood! At this time, child sacrifice was common in the Ancient Near East, so Abraham may not have been as appalled by this request as we are. But the point of God's revelation of His nature here is that this God of Abraham is not like the other gods of the culture, and will *not* demand child sacrifice. In fact, to this week's point, God *provided* an acceptable sacrifice instead—a ram. Christians recognize the story as a foreshadowing of how God again *provided* an acceptable sacrifice—His own Son, Jesus, as atonement for sin.

- How do you understand God's providence? Do you trust God to provide you with what you truly need?

TUESDAY 2.15.22

Exodus 15:22-16:32

Immediately after Israel escaped from slavery in Egypt through the Red Sea, they were faced with a new problem—no water and no food in the desert. When they found water too bitter to drink, God *provided* a way for the water to be made drinkable, and guided them to an oasis with twelve springs. Of course, after water, food is the most basic human need, so God also *provided* meat in the form of quail, and a daily ration of bread in the form of manna. God refers to this daily *provision* as a test for Israel—will they follow His instructions about how to gather their food, trusting Him for it daily, or will they hoard it? They failed the test, but learned that God could be trusted to *provide* for their basic needs, even in the desert. Many scholars believe that in Jesus' model prayer, the Lord's Prayer, the phrase "give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11) is a reference to this daily provision of manna in the wilderness. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for God to provide what they needed day by day, and to be satisfied with that. Similarly, Jesus taught His disciples that they should not trust in the promises of wealth, but in the providence of God.

- Would you pass God's wilderness test? Or would you try to amass more than you needed for the day? What makes trusting God to provide *daily* sustenance so hard?

WEDNESDAY 2.16.22

Isaiah 44:24-45:6

Part of our understanding of God as *Provider* is that God even has a hand in the flow of human history. Early in Israel's history, the nation was divided by civil war into northern and southern kingdoms. Eventually, the northern kingdom was completely destroyed by Assyria, while the people of the southern kingdom were carried off into captivity in Babylon. There, the people cried out to God to be delivered from the hands of their captors. In today's reading from the prophet Isaiah, he saw the providential hand of God at work in the rise of a non-Jewish, pagan king, Cyrus of Persia. God lifted up this ruler who worshiped other gods, taking hold of Cyrus' right hand, "to subdue nations before him." Isaiah insisted, "For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you (King Cyrus) by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me" (Isaiah 45:4.) Belief in God's providence includes the belief that God can be at work even in people who are unaware that they are being used by God to accomplish God's purpose. Cyrus did, indeed, conquer Babylon, and allow the Israelites to return to their homeland.

- Try to think of modern examples of God providing for God's people through non-believers—perhaps, in your own life!

THURSDAY 2.17.22

Esther 4:1-14

The book of Esther is a short story, so it is hard to read verses from the middle of the book without the full context. If you have time, read from the beginning of the book rather than starting in chapter 4. An interesting fact about the book of Esther is that God is never mentioned ... and yet, if one were to identify the main theme of the book, it would have to be the *Providence* of God. Haman, the short story's villain, selfishly seeks the destruction of the entire Jewish people. The uncle of a young Jewish girl named Esther, a man named Mordecai, insists that Esther has risen to her position as queen (although, she is portrayed as not much more than the favorite of the king's harem) specifically so that she can save her people from Haman's plot. Mordecai's faith in God's providence is clearly seen in his statement to the fearful Esther: "if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place" (Esther 4:14.) But the point of the story is that God is at work saving Israel not only through powerful kings like Cyrus, but in young orphaned girls like Esther. As Mordecai says, "Who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" This is God's providence at work in everyday life.

- How might God want to use you to provide for others?

FRIDAY 2.18.22

Matthew 6:25-34

Without using the specific language of “providence,” Jesus addressed the issue directly in His Sermon on the Mount. Today’s reading about “worry,” from near the end of the Sermon on the Mount, is essentially a call from Jesus to trust in God’s providence. While it is easy to read Jesus’ words as a *command* to not worry, it is better to see it as an invitation to a deeper trust in God’s providence. Jesus knew that we struggle with worrying about having life’s essentials like enough to eat, drink, and wear. Yet He is confident that those who learn to focus on God, rather than on themselves, will find themselves liberated from the worries of this world. Jesus’ words clearly point out that ultimately, belief in God’s providence is a faith issue. Its foundation is an absolute belief that God is good and caring. Connecting back to our first week, when we studied God as Creator, providence includes the belief that God is not absent from His Creation, watching it from afar, but intimately involved in its everyday activity. God cared about Abraham, God cared about Israel, and God cares about us. And so, God invites us to trust in His promise to provide. As we have seen, doing so takes a deep faith.

- What do you tend to worry about most? What would it look like to grow more able to trust God with those concerns?

SATURDAY 2.19.22

Acts 2:42-47

Today’s verses from Acts follow immediately upon the story of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples at Pentecost, and portrays the very earliest church as the embodiment of the Kingdom of God. In describing these earliest church meetings, Luke writes that everyone helped each other, and provided for each other’s needs whenever a need arose. They gathered together every day, praising God, and enjoying fellowship with one another. As we remember Jesus’ teaching in yesterday’s reading about not worrying, we see that in this description of the early church, it had positively come to pass that no one had to worry about anything, because everyone really did take care of each other’s needs! Christians recognize that trusting in the Providence of God often means that God works through us, providing for each other’s needs and not simply sitting back waiting for God to act supernaturally. While the Biblical stories demonstrate that God does often act supernaturally to care for God’s people, the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit within God’s people means that in a very real sense, when we provide for one another’s needs, God is the one at work. The Holy Spirit guides us to provide for others in ways our human natures would never choose to act otherwise.

- Do you allow God’s providence working through you? How?



Daily Study Guide

February 13—19, 2022

Sermon Series: Christian Basics—Who Is God?

Week Three: “God the Provider” - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, February 13: Genesis 50:15-21 (CEB)

“When Joseph’s brothers realized that their father was now dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph bears a grudge against us, and wants to pay us back seriously for all of the terrible things we did to him?’ So they approached Joseph and said, ‘Your father gave orders before he died, telling us, “This is what you should say to Joseph. ‘Please forgive your brothers’ sins and misdeeds, for they did terrible things to you. Now, please forgive the sins of the servants of your father’s God.’” Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers wept too, fell down in front of him, and said, ‘We’re here as your slaves.’ But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I God? You planned something bad for me, but God produced something good from it, in order to save the lives of many people, just as He’s doing today. Now, don’t be afraid. I will take care of you and your children.’ So he put them at ease and spoke reassuringly to them.”

Things that really impacted me from today’s sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Jerry Primm
- Mitch Mitchell
- Josh Luter
- Charlotte Ottley
- Bob Vincent
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider
- Duke Goodwin
- Vivian Rye
- Don Novatny
- Natalie Grossenheider
- Mark Grossenheider
- Byron Norfleet
- Ken Piers
- Ellis Family
- Kyle Anderson
- Terry Palucci
- Art Schnatterly
- Michael Bolinger
- Thibault Family

The Mueller family on the passing of Klos Mueller

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org