

## My Prayer Journal

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

**Prayer of Confession:** God of grace, we confess that so many voices clamor for our attention that Your invitation is often hard to hear. Forgive us for those times You have called us to be Your witnesses or to use our gifts to serve You, and we have not heard, or have been unwilling to respond. We confess that we do not expect to meet You on the familiar roads we travel and so we fail to discern Your presence or Your call on our lives. Take from us all that hinders our hearing Your voice and empower us to joyfully respond to Jesus' call on our lives. It is in His Name that we pray. Amen.

### My Prayers this Week:

**Family Time:** How many different names for Jesus can you and your family think of? The Bible refers to Jesus in a lot of different ways, and each way points to a different truth about who Jesus is and what Jesus' purpose for coming to earth was. The very first chapter in the Gospel of John gives us some of these names for Jesus: the Christ, the Messiah, the Word of God, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Son of Man, the King of Israel, and even just "The Teacher"! Later on, Jesus would refer to Himself with even more names, like the Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the True Vine, the Gate, and the Way. Part of being a Christian includes learning all we can about Jesus, so we can really understand what all these different names for Jesus mean about Him. The more we understand exactly who Jesus is, the better we'll be able to become the people God created us to be!

### MONDAY 9.19.22

### John 1:1-5

This week, we will read through most of the first chapter of John's Gospel. While including several stories about Jesus, this chapter, as an introduction to the Gospel as a whole, is almost fully devoted to establishing the identity of Jesus. Throughout the chapter, Jesus' identity is defined in numerous ways, beginning with the phrase, "the Word of God," the One through whom all things were made. The fact that this is the very first way John presents Jesus' identity suggests that this is the most fundamental, most well-defining term John can use to help his readers understand who this Jesus, who the Gospel will describe, really is. The language harkens back to Genesis chapter 1, in which God spoke the creation into existence. It was through God's spoken Word that creation came into being, and through that spoken Word both light and life were created. For now, John is simply reminding us that it was this creative power of God, God's Word, that separated light from darkness and that was the source of all life, and that this Word is and always has been with God, and in fact *is* God, of God's essential nature. God does not now, and never has, existed separate from His own creative power, His Word.

- What language would you choose to best describe Jesus?

### TUESDAY 9.20.22

### John 1:6-18

It is in today's reading that John reveals the astonishing truth that Jesus—the subject of the remainder of John's story—was in fact the incarnation of the creative power, the Word of God, that spoke creation into existence! Revealing part of his narrative ahead of time, John informs us that, paradoxically, the world that was created through this Word did not recognize Him when He walked among them. However, one witness, a man known as John the Baptist, did recognize Him, and encouraged others to believe in Him as well. John's testimony was so powerful, and gave such evidence of Holy Spirit empowerment, that some people thought that perhaps *he* was a divine incarnation, the Light of the world. But the author of the Gospel insists that John the Baptist himself denied this identity, pointing solely to Jesus as the one human being who can make God fully known, because He truly is the human incarnation of God the One and Only, the Word of God made flesh. The establishment of Jesus' true, unique identity, here in the prologue of the Gospel, is meant to let us know from the outset that while human, Jesus is not like other people. He is the One who reveals God to humanity.

- Do you struggle to comprehend "the Word made flesh"? What about Him makes Jesus able to reveal God fully?

### WEDNESDAY 9.21.22

### John 1:19-28

Today's reading appears at first glance to be concerned with the identity of John the Baptist, not of Jesus. The priests and Levites who are leaders among the Jews ask John the Baptist whether he is "the Christ," "Elijah," or "the Prophet." Expectation was strong among the Jews that the fulfillment of ancient prophetic promises of a Messiah (Christ), a prophet "like Moses" (see Deuteronomy 18:15), and/or the return of the prophet Elijah prior to a final Judgment Day was imminent, and John's religious activity of a call to repentance of sin followed by baptism fit their expectations perfectly. John, though, applies a different prophetic text to himself—Isaiah's vision of someone "calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord'" (Isaiah 40:3). While John himself might look the part, he insists there is someone already among them who they are unable to recognize as the Christ/Elijah/Prophet they so urgently expect, someone John feels unworthy to be mentioned in the same breath with. His words point toward Jesus' identity after all, particularizing the Gospel writer's words in the prologue that "the world did not recognize Him." The Jewish leaders were looking for the wrong things in a Messiah.

- What preconceived notions do you bring to your expectations of Jesus? Where might you not recognize Him?

### THURSDAY 9.22.22

### John 1:29-34

The story in today's reading provides John the Baptist with the opportunity to point out the specific person he was referring to in yesterday's reading. Look at the wealth of descriptors of Jesus John gives in this passage! Jesus is "the Lamb of God." Jesus is the reason for John's ministry of repentance and baptism. The Holy Spirit rests and remains upon Jesus. And finally, Jesus is "the Son of God." Contextually, we need to understand that in the Jewish sacrificial system, lambs were sacrificed daily as a means of atoning for sin—for re-establishing relationship with God. By identifying Jesus with these words, John points us toward Jesus' role in fulfilling the purpose of that sacrificial system once and for all time. Anointed by and filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus is enabled to anoint others to share in that anointing, "baptizing" them with the Spirit—that is, immersing them in God's power to live the way God has always wanted them to live! As the Son of God, Jesus shares completely in the attributes of God Himself, making Him uniquely qualified to serve as a human King for Israel. Jesus is the Holy Spirit-anointed, self-sacrificing, Godly King of Israel.

- What does it imply to you that a Godly King would also willingly sacrifice Himself in order to re-unite God and God's people? What should Godly leadership look like?

