

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession: Spirit of the Living Lord, Tell us of God's mercy and faithfulness; Witness to us God's hope and justice. Where we have not followed Christ, direct our paths. Where we have not commanded Your praise, rebuke our hearts. Come to us in times of brokenness and defeat. Minister to us times of famine and chaos. Forgive us, O God, and remind us of Your enduring love. Breathe Your Spirit upon our lives and make us holy and one. In the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

What is the first thing you think of when you see another person for the very first time? Do you think about how old they are? Do you think about whether they might be friendly or if they are mean? Do you think about where they go to school or what they might do for a job? Did you know that when we see another person for the first time, or even if it's after a thousand times, Jesus wants the first thing we think of to be "that's someone who, just like me, is made in the image of God?" God made every single human being, and God loves every single human being! Sometimes, because people are mean, or sometimes even just because they are different, it's hard to see the image of God in someone else. But even if it's hidden, it's there! Next time you meet someone new, try to think about how much God loves them ... and see if it changes how you feel about them afterwards!

MONDAY 4.24.23

Genesis 2:1-25

As we look this week at the question, "Where Did We Come From?," we start with the two Creation accounts found at the beginning of the book of Genesis. Yesterday's Sunday Scripture reading was the familiar biblical account of the seven days of creation, which includes the creation of humanity as the apex of God's creative work on the sixth day, before His rest on the seventh day. Today, though, we encounter more of a "story" - focusing on the creation of the two humans, Adam and Eve. Adam's creation from the soil of the earth suggests a radical solidarity between humanity and the earth, a connection made clear in the original Hebrew language: *adam* (human) is created from *adamah* (fertile soil). It is the breath of God, though, that turns this sculpture of soil into a living being. When Adam's work of caring for the soil demands a helper, none suitable is found among the animals, so God creates *ishshah* (woman or wife) from the very flesh of *ish* (man or husband). In ancient Jewish thought, marriage is sacred because in its consummation, the separated two literally become physically and emotionally "one flesh," fully united ... like the *adam* that God first created.

- What does Genesis 2 add to the framework for a worldview formed by Genesis 1? What questions does it raise for you?

TUESDAY 4.25.23

Psalms 8

Many of the psalms sing the praises of God's work of creation, but Psalm 8 is one of the most beautiful and distinct, because it addresses God directly. The psalmist speaks to being amazed by God's consideration of individual human beings in the face of an immense and awe-inspiring universe. But it is not only our relative size and stature against an immense universe that gives rise to this amazement—it is the fact that God has made humanity the overseer of His creation! In spite of humanity's seeming insignificance, they are in fact "only slightly less than divine," being crowned with "glory and grandeur." The words clearly harken back to Genesis 1 and 2, reminding us that part of being made in the image of God is being representatives of our supernatural God within God's natural creation. It is with this in mind that human beings are to "rule over" creation. In fact, humanity has the responsibility of caring for God's creation as its stewards, much as the curators of an art museum care for the works of the artists whose masterpieces they oversee. How we understand what it means to have all creation "under our feet" and the role of a "steward" will strongly impact a Christian worldview regarding environmentalism and the use of the earth's resources.

- What do you think Scripture implies about our role? Why?

WEDNESDAY 4.26.23

John 1:1-13

It is no accident that the Gospel of John begins just as the Creation accounts in Genesis 1 begins—"In the beginning." John wants us to know that Jesus, the subject of his entire Gospel, is the incarnation of the eternal "Word" of God, and an active participant in the event of Creation. "Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being." Don't forget that according to Genesis 1, it was the act of God speaking that accomplished each act of creation: "God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light." To a first century Jew, the "Word of God" was completely equivalent to the creative power of God—the words spoken at creation were also the power to make creation actually come to pass. Now, John wants us to know that it was this creative power of God that "became flesh and made His home among us." The very power that created human beings in the beginning *became* human, and therefore serves as the perfect embodiment of what humanity was always meant to be. This is the foundational reason that in a Christian worldview, emulating Jesus, becoming like Jesus, is the goal of life. By following Jesus, every human being can fulfill God's original purposes for humanity.

- What do your personal life goals say about your worldview?

THURSDAY 4.27.23

Acts 17:22-34

So far this week, we have seen several Scriptures that serve as part of the foundation for the ancient Jewish worldview. After Jesus' death and resurrection, though, the apostle Paul began to take the good news about Jesus into the wider, decidedly *non-Jewish* (Gentile) world. In Paul's day, Athens was at the center of the philosophical world, and Mars Hill was the location of a popular "speaking circle," where people with a wide variety of worldviews were welcomed to share their ideas. To this audience, in a city full of temples to Greek and Roman gods, Paul makes no reference to the Jewish Scriptures, appealing to them on their own terms—even citing one of their poets! Still, Paul's words affirm his worldview that has been formed by these Scriptures. God is the Creator, of not only humanity, but of all nations and peoples. God gives life to everyone, not only the Jews. God is close to everyone, waiting for them to reach out to Him. God wants all humanity to move past the search for God in manmade objects and ideas, and to find Him in the One He raised from the dead as proof of His identity as the world's final judge. While many sneered, others were intrigued.

- What does this story suggest about how a Christian worldview should interface with the non-Christian world?

FRIDAY 4.28.23

Job 38:1-42:6

Today's long reading from Job consists primarily of God's response to Job, after Job has repeatedly demanded an audience with God so that God can explain the reason for Job's suffering to him. God's response is a lesson in the majesty and grandeur of God's creation—a creation that is beyond the scope of human imagination or ingenuity to fully comprehend. Even though the world often gives evidence of order, cause and effect, and logic, it is also a world full of wildness, unpredictability, randomness, and complexity. This is the world God has created and placed humanity in—and God essentially tells Job, "If you can't order the world better than I can, you need to drop your case against me." The story of Job plays a vital role in the Christian worldview concerning where we came from and our role and purpose in the world. The devastation of natural disasters and incurable diseases present us with a choice: blame God, decide there is no God, accuse God of atrocity ... or trust that even in the midst of pain and suffering, God is present. God created us, and God created the wild and unpredictable world He gave us to live in. Rather than finding in suffering a reason to question God, a Christian worldview finds in it a reason to exercise His love on His behalf.

- How does your worldview respond to suffering in the world?

SATURDAY 4.29.23

Psalms 139:1-16

We are wrapping up our week looking at the question "Where Did We Come From?" with a second reading from the Psalms. Psalm 139 is a beautiful testimony to the Christian understanding that this God who created us and placed us His representatives and stewards over a sometimes wild and unpredictable world is also a God who knows each and every one of us intimately and personally. The psalmist begins by poetically affirming that there is nothing about us that God does not already know: "You are familiar with all my ways." Not only that, but this intimate knowledge is not in any way constrained by our geographical location—as the God of all Creation, God is present to us everywhere and at all times. In fact, God was actively at work in the very process of our in-utero development, and each and every one of us is "fearfully and wonderfully made." In the Christian worldview, there are no second-class humans. We are meant to know, without a doubt, that when we look in the mirror, we see God's handiwork. While many forces in the world are at work telling us we are inferior for this or that reason, none of us is. God's "works are wonderful—we know that very well."

- Do you struggle with self-image? What worldviews might be impacting that? What does Psalm 139 say to you?



Daily Study Guide

April 23-29, 2023

Sermon Series: Reframing Your Worldview

Week Two: "Where Did We Come From?" - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, April 23: Genesis 1:24-31 (CEB)

"God said, 'Let the earth produce every kind of living thing; livestock, crawling things, and wildlife.' And that's what happened. God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. Then God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth.' God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground.' The God said, 'I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food.' And that's what happened. God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good. There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day."

Things that really impacted me from today's sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Mitch Mitchell
- Bill Reichter
- Art Schnatterly
- Marty Schnatterly
- Nini Schneider
- Jan Reichter

Collins and Love families on the passing of Judy Love

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org