

## My Prayer Journal

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

**Prayer of Confession:** Dear Heavenly Father, we lower our heads before You and we confess that we have too often forgotten that we are Yours. Sometimes we carry on our lives as if there was no God and we fall short of being a credible witness to You. For these things we ask Your forgiveness, and we also ask for Your strength. Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to You in our world. Remind us to be who You would have us to be regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Hold us to You and build our relationship with You and with those You have given us on earth.

### My Prayers this Week:

### Family Time:

What is the earliest time you can think of when your parents told you absolutely not to do something, and it made you want to do it even more? Maybe it was something as simple as telling you “it’s bedtime, you can’t stay up any later,” and you insisting on staying awake—maybe even throwing a tantrum about having to go to bed. How old were you then? Maybe an easier question is, what is the most recent time that has happened? Something inside of us really doesn’t like it when we are told we can’t make a decision for ourselves. The Bible says this “something” inside us is what makes people decide to turn away from God, too. God asks us to do things that are good for us, and not do things that are bad for us, but sometimes we do them anyway. The Bible calls this “sin,” and says that “sin” is the reason so many bad things happen in our world. But don’t worry—God also gives us a way to choose what is right!

### MONDAY 5.1.23

### Genesis 3:1-24

This week, we are looking at the question, “How Did the World Get So Messed Up?” This is a question that human beings have been asking for thousands and thousands of years. It makes sense, then, that this question is one of the very first issues the biblical narrative addresses—immediately following the account of Creation itself. Today’s reading demonstrates that in a Christian worldview, the blame lies squarely on the shoulders of the human beings that God created. In the framework of the story, within the garden that God first created for the humans to live in and enjoy, there was a single tree that would mean death for the humans if they ate from it. That presented God with a decision: inform Adam and Eve about the danger, or don’t. If God were not to warn them, there would be no temptation, since there were innumerable trees to choose from. But at the same time, if they happened upon that one tree, and ate from it, they would die. God had to tell them not to eat from it. But because God had also created the humans with the freedom to make moral choices, in order to live, they would have to trust God’s word, rather than find out for themselves. They chose to find out for themselves, and humanity has continued on their messed-up path ever since.

- Why was it so hard for the humans to trust God’s warning?

### TUESDAY 5.2.23

### Genesis 4:1-16

The biblical answer to the question “How Did the World Get So Messed Up?” does not end with the story of Adam and Eve’s failure. Rather, in the stories that follow at the beginning of Genesis, we see the spiral of humanity’s messed-up state going deeper and deeper. The second generation of humanity, in fact, is marked by self-doubt leading to jealousy and murder. Cain and Abel are prototypes of the two main ways people in the ancient world could make a living—by farming (Cain), or by raising livestock (Abel). Those who made their livings in these two ways were often in conflict with each other, and Cain and Abel are prototypes for them in this way as well. Somehow, Cain’s offering to God was inferior to Abel’s, such that God encouraged Cain to “do what is right” instead of yielding to the sin that tempted him to make an inferior sacrifice. In a rage of envy, instead of following through on God’s offer of a second chance, Cain killed Abel. Even though God had warned Cain that he needed to master the sin that tempted him, Cain succumbed to it, just as his parents had done. A human being, made in the image of the life-giving God, had betrayed that image and become a death-giver instead. The extent of what sin was capable of was deepening.

- When have you seen jealousy destroy a relationship?

### WEDNESDAY 5.3.23

### Genesis 4:17-24

The story of the increase of sin after God’s act of Creation continues in today’s reading. Here, we see the beginnings of civilization—Cain is building a city, and among his descendants are musicians and metalworkers. But along with civilization comes violence. We are not told the circumstances, but at some point, Cain’s descendant Lamech was wounded by another man. Whether that injury was intentional or accidental, we know that Lamech’s response was purposeful. In an act of violent retaliation, Lamech gets his revenge. Not only that, Lamech also boasts about his actions: “I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me.” Sin in the world is spiraling out of control—Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, Cain murdered Abel out of envy, and now, five generations later, murder has become commonplace, and personal acts of vengeance something to boast about. The stories here at the beginning of Genesis prepare us for the rather staggering statement in Genesis 6:5—“The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.” It only took ten generations for the world to become so messed up that God decided on a do-over, starting with Noah.

- When have you been tempted toward acts of revenge?

### THURSDAY 5.4.23

### Isaiah 30:1-5

In today’s reading, we jump far forward in the biblical narrative, to the seventh century before Christ. Many things have happened, but most importantly, God had established a covenant with the people of Israel—an agreement in which God had proclaimed that “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” Whereas God had given Adam and Eve a single guideline to help them to live in relationship with Him, God gave the nation of Israel “the Law,” consisting of hundreds upon hundreds of specific regulations meant to help Israel understand God’s expectations of humanity, regulations summarized in the Ten Commandments. In today’s reading, the prophet Isaiah rails against the fact that even so, even after seven hundred years of practicing living according to God’s expectations, the people were still “heaping sin upon sin.” At this time, Isaiah says, the people are proving this by seeking the advice and alliance of foreign superpower nations rather than consulting with God. Just as with Adam and Eve, God longs to have the human beings He created trust Him and turn to Him to find the way to their best life. But just like with Adam and Eve, the people in Isaiah’s day preferred to try things their own way.

- From whom do human beings seek advice today?

**FRIDAY 5.5.23**

**Romans 1:18-32**

In Paul's letter to the Romans, he provides one long, continuous argument for how God is reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Before he gets there, though, Paul must first establish that the root of the problem of alienation from God, as we have seen all week, is human sin. In fact, Romans 1:18 sounds almost like Genesis 6:5 with its reference to "all the godlessness and wickedness of men"! Paul elaborates on how humanity has rejected their Creator God, and chosen to make their own choices, essentially following gods of their own making instead of acknowledging the one true God in obedience. Perhaps one of the most astounding comments Paul makes, though, is his assertion that the world is so messed up because "God gave them over" to the sinful desires of their hearts. In other words, Paul is saying, God gives us what we want. The result, though, is that our desires rule us, rather than God ruling us ... even if our desires are opposed to God's best will for us. Having rejected God, God "gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done." The world, Paul says, is so messed up because this is the kind of world we have demonstrated by our actions that we want. The consequences are on us.

- Why would God "give us over" to what we say we want?

**SATURDAY 5.6.23**

**James 1:12-15**

Throughout the biblical narrative, we see that the root of human sin—the very definition of sin—is the human insistence upon defining right and wrong for ourselves, rather than allowing a third party (God) to define right and wrong for us. Adam and Eve were explicitly told to avoid the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—and they said "we'll decide for ourselves." The nation of Israel was given the Law, with explicit guidance for how to choose in every conceivable area of life—and Israel said "we'll decide for ourselves." In today's reading, James, the brother of Jesus, calls this human inclination "evil desire." It is evil desire that gives rise to temptation, it is temptation that gives rise to actual sin, and it is sin that leads to death. Temptation does not arise from God, James insists. Temptation is an attempt to get someone to do something wrong, which God will never do. Yes, God sends trials, and even tests ... but trials and tests are always opportunities for people to grow in faith and dependence on God by choosing to do something *right*. Our world is broken, though, fallen to the extent that often what seems right is in fact wrong and what seems wrong is in fact right. Fortunately, in Jesus Christ, God has acted to provide a solution ... as we'll see next week.

- What evil desires are most at work tempting you to sin?



Daily Study Guide

April 30-May 6, 2023

**Sermon Series: Reframing Your Worldview**

**Week Three: "How Did the World Get So Messed Up?" - Rev. J. David Israel**

*Scripture for Sunday, April 30: Philippians 2:12-15 (CEB)*

"Therefore, my loved ones, just as you always obey me, not just when I am present but now even more while I am away, carry out your own salvation with fear and trembling. God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out His good purposes. Do everything without grumbling and arguing so that you may be blameless and pure, innocent children of God surrounded by people who are crooked and corrupt. Among these people you shine like stars in the world."

*Things that really impacted me from today's sermon:*

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**Prayer Requests**

- Mitch Mitchell
- Bill Reichter
- Art Schnatterly
- Marty Schnatterly
- Nini Schneider
- Jane Leimkuehler
- Bev Hampton

Collins and Love families on the passing of Judy Love

**Share prayer requests online at [livingwordumc.org](http://livingwordumc.org)**