

Grace Guide



SEPTEMBER 14-20

“Praying As Jesus Prayed”

MONDAY
9/14

2 KINGS 19:14-19

When king Hezekiah receives a threatening message from the king of Assyria, he does something simple but profound: he takes the letter into the temple, spreads it out before the Lord, and prays. He doesn't pretend the situation isn't frightening, and he doesn't try to solve everything himself. He brings the problem directly into God's presence. We often carry our worries, decisions, disappointments, and fears as though everything depends on us. Hezekiah reminds us that prayer gives us a place to lay those burdens before the God who is greater than whatever we are facing. We may not know what God will do in response to our prayers, but we can know where to take what weighs heavily upon us.

1. What does Hezekiah's willingness to spread the threatening letter before God suggest about being honest with God in prayer?
2. When you pray about a difficult circumstance, are you primarily looking for a particular outcome, or are you seeking to trust God with the outcome?

TUESDAY
9/15

NEHEMIAH 1:1-11

Nehemiah's prayer begins with who God is. Before asking for help, Nehemiah praises God as great and awesome, he remembers God's covenant faithfulness, confesses the sins of his people, and then asks God to give him success as he responds to the situation before him. His prayer reminds us that prayer is more than presenting a list of requests. As we pray, we remember who God is, honestly acknowledge who we are, and seek to understand how we should respond to what is happening around us. Nehemiah doesn't pray simply for God to fix the problem, he places himself in a position to be part of God's answer. Prayer can change our circumstances, but it can also change us, giving us clearer vision, humbler hearts, and courage to follow where God leads.

1. Nehemiah begins by remembering God's character and faithfulness. What truths about God do you need to remember when you pray?
2. How might your prayers be different if you approached God not only asking, "What do I want you to do?" but also, "What do you want me to do?"

WEDNESDAY
9/16

LUKE 18:9-14

Jesus tells a parable about two men who go to the temple to pray. The Pharisee's prayer sounds religious, but his attention is focused almost entirely on himself, his accomplishments, his goodness, and how he compares with others. The tax collector, by contrast, simply acknowledges his need for God's mercy. Jesus makes clear that the tax collector, not the Pharisee, goes home justified. Prayer can become another way of trying to prove ourselves to ourselves, to others and even to God. We can become so concerned with saying the right words, sounding spiritual, or comparing our faith with someone else's that we miss the heart of prayer: coming honestly before God. Through Jesus Christ, we do not have to impress God. We can come as we are, confess our need, receive God's mercy, and trust his grace.

1. What does it mean to you personally that you can approach God without having to prove that you are worthy of God's attention?
2. How does God's mercy through Jesus Christ shape the way you approach God in prayer when you are aware of your own failures and shortcomings?

THURSDAY

9/17

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

The apostle Paul does not tell us that followers of Jesus will never have reasons to worry. Instead, he gives us a different way to respond when worry comes: bring everything to God in prayer, with thanksgiving. Prayer doesn't necessarily change the circumstances that trouble us, but it changes where we carry them. Instead of allowing anxiety to have the final word, we place our concerns in God's hands and trust him with them. Paul also reminds us to fill our minds with what is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, and commendable. What we bring to God in prayer and what we allow to occupy our minds are closely connected. As we turn our worries over to God and deliberately focus our thoughts on what is good, we can discover a peace that goes beyond what our circumstances might seem to allow.

1. What concern has been occupying more of your thoughts than it deserves, and how might you deliberately bring it to God in prayer?
2. Why do you think Paul connects prayer with thanksgiving when he tells us to bring our requests to God?

FRIDAY

9/18

PSALM 25

Psalms 25 is the prayer of someone who knows he does not have all the answers. David repeatedly asks God to teach him, lead him, remember him, forgive him, and guide him. There is a humility in this prayer that is easy to miss. David is not simply asking God to bless plans he has already made, he is asking God to show him what is right and to direct his steps. That can be difficult for us because we often come to prayer knowing what we want God to do. Yet genuine trust means being willing to listen as well as speak. Prayer becomes an opportunity to surrender our own wisdom and allow God to reshape our desires, correct our direction, and teach us how to live faithfully.

1. What does it mean to you to ask God to teach you rather than simply asking God to give you what you want?
2. Is there an area of your life where you need God's direction but may already have decided what you want God to say? How might your prayer change?

**SATURDAY/
SUNDAY
9/19-20**

MATTHEW 6:5-14

In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns us against turning prayer into a performance. The Pharisees wanted others to notice how religious they were, but Jesus tells us to pray with a different purpose and posture. Prayer is not about impressing other people or finding the perfect words. Prayer is about coming honestly into the presence of our heavenly Father. Jesus then gives us a model that begins with God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will before turning to our daily needs, our sins, and our need for forgiveness. Notice the word "our." (Also in Nehemiah's prayer from Tuesday) Jesus teaches us to pray not only for ourselves but as members of a community who depend upon the same Father. Through Jesus Christ, we are invited into a relationship with God where we can speak honestly, depend upon him daily, seek God's will, receive his forgiveness, and extend that forgiveness to others.

1. Jesus begins his prayer by focusing on God's name, kingdom, and will. What does that order suggest to you about what should come first in our relationship with God and why?
2. Why do you think Jesus includes both receiving forgiveness and extending forgiveness to others in the same prayer?

VERSE OF THE WEEK

**"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."
(Philippians 4:6)**