

AWAKEN

A 21 DAY PRAYER GUIDE & JOURNAL



IT'S TIME
Phi. 4:4-8

21 Days of Prayer

As we begin 21 days of prayer, we want to keep our eyes on Jesus. Keeping our eyes and mind on Christ keeps us from focusing on the negative things around us. Worry and anxiousness cannot live in a thankful, gracious heart.

In our ever-changing world we must stay laser-focused on Jesus and not on all the chaos around us. He has this!

Our motto verses will be Phil. 4:4-8. These are great verses to know during times like these. Two verses, 6-7, are the most highlighted passage of any book on the planet, according to Amazon:

“Do not be anxious for anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

On July 26th, Pastor Roy Meadows taught us from Philippians 4 on how praying gives us peace. Not that we shouldn't pray for peace but by praying we receive a peace that passes understanding. What a great gift from God!

Begin each day with a journal or notebook and a pen. You will need it every day.

At the end of each lesson each day, use the C.A.L.M. acronym. Each day update your list of God's goodness. God is good, all the time.

C – Celebrate God's Goodness
A – Ask God for help, be specific
L – Leave your concerns with God
M – Meditate on good things

Jimmy Taylor
Minister of Spiritual Formations

Day 1
Jan. 4

Scripture reading today:
Philippians 4:4-8

A friend recently told me a story about how his family reacted when he gave his life to Jesus. There were all glad for him, but they told him he was going overboard with his newfound faith. There were glad he was excited, but he needed to realize there is more to life than his new faith. They asked him to back off his zeal he had for the Lord.

My friend was a little distraught by this to say the least. So, he met with his pastor. My friend told his pastor what his family's issues were with him.

His pastor reassured him in his faith walk. Then his pastor asked him, "Is anything about what your family asked you true? Is any of it honorable or just? Is any of it pure, lovely or commendable? Could any of it be excellent or worthy of praise?"

My friend said, "No. None of what they told me is any of those things."

His pastor said, "Then why are you wasting your time thinking about what they told you?"

Great advice from a godly pastor.

During 21 days of prayer, let's keep our minds on Jesus and let Him guide our thoughts and not waste our time thinking about stuff we can't control.

Day 1 of our 21 days of prayer will begin with putting our minds on what God wants us to think about. Paul says in Phil. 4:8, "...think on these things." Highlight or underlined Phil. 4:4-8.

Take out your notebook or journal, spend time thinking about God's goodness. Begin a list of the good things in life. Leave a couple of pages for this exercise because you will be adding to this list daily.

Max Lucado, in his book "Anxious For Nothing", encouraged his readers to use the CALM acronym during their quiet times. Let's do that each day.

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Day 2
Jan. 5

Scripture reading today: Matthew 14:22-36, Phil. 4:4-8

It was daylight when the disciples got in the boat to go to the other side of the lake. A normal ride across the lake normally took around an hour with cooperating winds. On this evening, trouble ensued on the way to the other side. The winds were strong, and waves were rough. The fourth watch happens between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. The disciples had been fighting the winds and waves for hours in the dark. While fighting the waves, they think they saw a ghost. The good news is it wasn't a ghost, the best news is that it was Jesus. Jesus showed up in the storm. Jesus said, "Take heart: it is I. Do not be afraid." Skeptical Peter said, "Lord, if it is you command me to come to you on the water." Can you imagine walking on water! What an event. Peter was doing great until he took his eyes off of Jesus. Peter's focus went from Jesus to the elements around him and he began to sink.

What a great lesson for us with all of today's troubles. Jesus is telling us the same thing he tells Peter, "Do not be afraid." He is telling us to keep our eyes on Him, don't get distracted by the elements around us. Jesus still calms chaos in our lives. He is with us.

Read the lyrics to the song, "Voice of Truth" by Casting Crowns

Oh, what I would do to have the kind of faith it takes
To climb out of this boat I'm in, onto the crashing waves.
To step out of my comfort zone, into the world of the unknown
Where Jesus is, and He's holding out his hand
But the waves are calling out my name and they laugh at me
Reminding me of all the times I've tried before and failed
The waves keep on telling me time and time again
"Boy, you'll never win, you'll never win."

But the voice of truth tells me a different story,
The voice of truth says, 'Do not be afraid'
The voice of truth says "This is for my glory"
Out of all the voices calling out to me
I will choose to listen and obey the voice of truth.

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Day 3
Jan. 6

Scripture reading today:

Mark 5:23-34,

Phil. 4:4-8

In this passage we meet a remarkable woman. For the last 12 years she struggled with a constant condition. She tried everything and spent everything she had to get help. Now, her bleeding was worse than ever. Not only did she have this disease, she would have been considered an outcast, considered ritually 'unclean', she would have been lonely, and the Gospel writer tells us that she was broke.

But even in the desperate position that she was in, she was determined to keep trying. She heard about Jesus and thought that if she could just touch Jesus, she could get reprieve.

Then, she met Jesus. What an incredible touch. She was instantly healed. Just as she had snuck in to see Jesus, she wanted to sneak back away and rejoice that she was healed. You can imagine her elation. However, that was short lived. Jesus was calling her out. What was he going to do? Would Jesus take the healing away? Would she be called out for being unclean? It took incredible courage for her to come forward and admit what she had done.

But Jesus knew what He was doing. If she had just crept away no one would have believed her. No one would have accepted her back into their family. By calling her out and making her publicly tell her story, Jesus didn't just heal her physically, He restored her in every way. Her life was never the same!

Jesus, the teacher, called her "Daughter"; she was publicly declared not just ritually clean, but fully accepted, she was called daughter by God's son!

He has done the same for us. He has healed us, paid for our sin. We are restored into a right relationship with Jesus, our Savior. Our lives are changed because of Jesus.

Take time today to add to our list of things that we are grateful for!

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Day 4
Jan. 7

Scripture reading today:
Matthew 6:25-34,
Phil. 4:4-8

Some of you may remember the slogan from an old commercial, “When E.F. Hutton talks, people listen”. The company has been gone for a while. Obviously, the broker agency didn’t always know what they were talking about. However, when you read the Bible and you see red letters or you see Jesus is talking, we should give our utmost attention. When Jesus talks, we should listen and obey without question.

Jesus, in the sermon on the mount, gave us his take on anxiety. Don’t worry, don’t be anxious. It does absolutely nothing for you. In fact, as we know today, anxiety and fear can cause loss of sleep, loss of health and loss of relationships. Yet, we still let it fill our minds. When we let worry and anxiousness fill our mind that pushes Christ out of our mind. There is no room for Jesus and worry. You must choose one or the other. How can we followers of Jesus battle this? Jesus gives us the answer in the scripture reading today.

Jesus’ answer for this is in vs. 33. “Seek **first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”

When Jesus says seek Him first, we should listen. First means before anything else. First in the morning, first in our marriage, first in our finances, and first in our calendars. Is Jesus first in your life in these areas? If not, take some time today to plan out how to begin putting Him first.

Verse 33 finishes with, “...and all these things will be added to you”. What things is our Savior adding to us? Peace, free from being anxious, free from worry, free from fear. He will free us from that if we seek Him first!

Take some time today and add to your list of God’s goodness. Ask God to show you and help you put Him first. Putting Christ first in all areas of our life isn’t easy. In fact, it’s impossible to do on your own. That’s why Jesus tells us to seek Him. Seek Him for help, ask God specifically for help. That is His specialty!

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Day 5
Jan. 8

Scripture reading today:

Luke 6:12-16,

Phil. 4:4-8

What is the longest amount of time you prayed in one setting? If you are anything like me, you will get a lot of distractions while praying and reading God's Word. I need lists and a structure to keep me focused on what I'm praying about and reading.

In our scripture reading for the day, Luke says that Jesus prayed all night. I'm sure Jesus became tired and sleepy while praying but He fought through it. Here is the big question, what do you think Jesus was praying about?

We get a clue in the following verses. The next day Jesus was revealing His inner circle. He was revealing the 12 that were going to be His disciples. He had more than 12 to choose from but He narrowed it to 12. Why 12?

By focusing on 12 Jesus was able to endure the lasting nature of His mission. Disciples cannot be mass produced but are the product of intimate and personal investment.

Just because Jesus focused much of His attention on 12 does not mean that He did not want to reach the multitudes. Just the opposite. The late pastor, scholar and author Eugene Peterson writes this, "Jesus, it must be remembered, restricted nine-tenths of His ministry to twelve Jews, because it was the only way to reach all Americans."

Jesus spent all night praying for them. It wasn't the only time He prayed all night. One other instance in John 17 He prayed for the disciples while at the same time praying for us, His future disciples. What did Jesus pray for us about? To stay close to Him. He prayed that we would get along with each so that the gospel would be made known. I love to know that Jesus prayed for me.

What can you add today to your list of God's goodness? Take extra times throughout your day to meditate on your list of God's goodness.

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Day 6
Jan. 9

Scripture reading today:
Matthew 5:13-16,
Phil. 4:4-8

Have you ever wondered what God thinks about you? Scripture clearly teaches us our value according to the Lord. In the reading today, Jesus said to his followers, "You are the salt of the earth...". In the next verse, Jesus said "you are the light of the world." Jesus tells His followers that they are salt and light.

In those times, salt was used to preserve food especially meat, which would quickly spoil in the desert environment. Salt was also used then, as now, as a flavor enhancer. In the same way that salt enhances the flavor of food it seasons, the followers of Christ stand out as those who "enhance" the flavor of life in this world. We are to be a positive influence on the world. God says you are salt in a world that so needs His flavor. We are here to be salt to a tough world.

When Jesus called His followers "light of the world", He was calling on us to do good works in His name. We live in unsettling times. Now more than ever we need to be a light to the world in the name of Jesus. Have you ever noticed that light always overcomes darkness? If you light a candle in a dark room the light radiates throughout the whole room. That's what Jesus is referring to when he calls us to be lights to the world. Darkness cannot overcome light, but light always overcomes dark. God says you are a light to the world and our light should shine bright. Light up your world!!!

How can we live as salt and light in today's world? Begin to ask God each day to allow you the opportunity to be salt and light in someone's life. As you begin your quiet time today, write someone's name down to contact and be an encourager to. Each day make an effort to write down a name and encourage them. Let them know you love them and are praying for them.

Just know, being salt and light does not happen automatically. It takes a continual effort to pray and seek Him. Ask God to put opportunities in front of you to be salt and light.

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Day 7
Jan. 10

Scripture reading today:

Matt. 5:21-26,

Phil. 4:4-8

There is some truth in the old saying, "Anger is just one letter away from danger". Our culture is easily angered. Just watch the news at any time during the day and you will see anger displayed. Anger can definitely turn to danger if left unchecked.

Jesus' words are strong. He is very serious about our anger. He talks of a harsh judgment if we insult our brothers. Jesus isn't passive about how we handle anger. He wants His followers to live differently, to be salt and light. He knows anger can ruin our witness, so He makes it clear to handle anger differently as His followers.

In Phil. 4:4, Paul says to "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice". Paul's answer to anger and anxiousness is "Rejoice". The key to rejoicing is to "Rejoice in the Lord". We will get angry and frustrated at times, it's part of life. Instead, we are called to think of the good things the Lord has done and rejoice about that instead of acting in anger.

Paul says after we are done rejoicing to rejoice again. Notice that there is no time limit on rejoicing, do it again. Paul also says to not waste time thinking about anger and things that get us worked up. We should think on good things.

Jesus tells us to settle our anger. Before you do pray, before you give a gift, settle your anger. Jesus said reconcile with your brother. Why? Because if not settled it could get out of hand. We have all "been there done that". These words of Jesus we need to take seriously. Anger really is close to danger!

What steps can you take today to reinforce Jesus' words?

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Day 8
Jan. 11

Scripture reading today:

Matt. 7:12-14,

Phil. 4:4-8

The golden rule is timeless. If the world lived this rule out, what a place it would be. It's interesting how Jesus followed the Golden Rule with words about how following Him wasn't going to be easy. The gate to follow Him is a narrow gate. How fitting for His followers even 2000 years later. In our world of hate, fear, cancel culture and riots God is calling us to rise above it all and live the Golden Rule even when it's hard.

(Following is an excerpt from Darrell Johnson, *Demands My All*, pg. 27, Discipleship Essentials)

"Life is difficult." That is the way M. Scott Peck begins his book *The Road Less Traveled*.

Most people do not see this truth. Most people believe that life should be easy. The road most traveled is the road of moaning and grumbling about life's difficulties. The road less traveled is the road of accepting life's difficulties and meeting them head on.

What Peck says about life in general is even more true about life with Jesus. Discipleship is difficult. Following Jesus can be costly. In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus made it very clear that living with Him meant walking a road less traveled. "Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction. "But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it". Matthew 7:12-14

Jesus promises to give anyone who will follow him abundant life (John 10:10), but he makes it very clear from the beginning that to follow him is difficult and costly. He calls us to follow Him on the road less traveled.

Difficulties in life are to be expected. As life happens, realize that God is at work 24/7. He is sovereign. He has everything under control. Nothing happens without His knowledge. He's got this and we can trust Him. God is good!!!

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Day 9
Jan. 12

Scripture reading today:

1 Samuel 10:9-24,
Phil. 4:4-8

When God led Samuel to appoint Saul as king, the people were thrilled to finally have a king like the other nations had. Samuel warned the people what a King would require from them. A king would take your sons and your daughters and make them serve him. A king will also take your horses and chariots. He will take the best of your cattle and flocks.

The people refused to listen to Samuel and wanted a king. So, a king they got. Sure enough, Samuel was right about everything.

The first king of Israel was named Saul. When Samuel anointed Saul, Saul was afraid and overwhelmed. In fact, the first time Saul was introduced as King, they couldn't find him. Eventually they found him "hiding in his baggage" according to verse 23 in our reading. Why was he hiding? Fear!

In our lives we have many obstacles. God wants us to face them head on. He wants us to face our fears and not hide in "our baggage".

Why do we sometimes let fear and frustration get the best of us? Is it a lack of trust in God? A lack of faith in God? Something from our past (baggage)?

God's desire is seeing us live differently. Phil. 4:6-7 says, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus". What an incredible promise from God. We give him fears, frustration and anxiety and He will give us peace that passes understanding. That my friends are a trade worth making!

Today, let God know your fears and anxieties. Be specific and watch how God works.

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Day 10
Jan. 13

Scripture reading today:

2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 119:1-16, Phil. 4:4-8

What place should the Bible have in a disciple's daily quiet time? Great question.

Because the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the uniquely inspired revelation of God and the standard of truth in all matters of faith and practice, a portion of each day should be set aside to read, study and meditate on God's Word. The Bible is to the spirit what food is to the body.

Our reading for the day says Scripture is useful in teaching, rebuking, correcting and training. That trains us for good works. These good works show how God is at work in our lives.

There are numerous ideas on studying and meditating on God's Word. You can use online tools, books, prepared Bible study from others and studying His Word as it is. None of these are wrong. However, always make sure you are studying the Bible and not other ideas.

Psalm 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible. The chapter is a celebration of God's law. The value of His law is highlighted in vs. 105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and light to my path". That is the proper way for a disciple to understand God's Word. His word shows us paths we should walk.

The first 16 verses show what our attitude should be toward God's Word and its place in our lives. Verse 11 is a verse we all should memorize, "I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you". Knowing and memorizing God's Word helps us keep His commands and not sin.

If you have ever been a part of AWANA at Westland, you know that one of the first verses that children memorize is Psalm 119:11. There is nothing like hearing children memorizing and quoting scripture. I love hearing them hide God's Word in their hearts. Those verses never leave the children. It literally helps them the rest of their lives. Studying and memorizing God's Word will have the same effect on adults as the kids.

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Day 11

Jan. 14

Scripture reading today:

Isaiah 6:1-3, Phil. 4:4-8

Isaiah was devastated after King Uzziah died. King Uzziah began his reign when he was only 16 years old and reigned 52 years. 2 Kings 15:3 says, “he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done”. 2 Chronicles 26:5 says, “he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper”.

But King Uzziah’s life ended tragically. 2 Chronicles 26:16 says, “but when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense”. God struck Uzziah with leprosy, and he was in isolation until his death.

Isaiah had great reason to be discouraged and grief stricken. A great and wise king had tragically died. Where was the Lord in all this? God showed Isaiah where He was. He was on the throne.

Where is God today? He is on the throne. If God was to allow us to see what He is doing right now, we would see the same thing Isaiah saw.

He is on the throne; He is being exalted. The train of His robe would still fill the temple with His glory. The seraphim are doing the same thing now as they were doing in Isaiah’s vision. They were and are saying “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is still being filled with His glory!”

It is so easy to get caught up with our issues and to wonder why? Know this, God is in control and we can trust Him.

During your prayer time today, pray to the God on the throne! When you close your eyes picture Him there and tell Him of praise. He wants to hear it.

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Day 12
Jan. 15

Scripture reading today:
Isaiah 6:4-7, Phil. 4:4-8

What an incredible picture of worship of God in the reading for today. Isaiah's experience brings us to the role of worship in our lives. Two factors make for vital worship of God:

- 1) The presence of God
- 2) The God who is present

Real worship is a function of our affirmation that He is here, and we understand who He is. Real worship stems from our view of God. If we think correctly about the God who is with us, then our worship will flow out from that.

We tend to form our own concepts of God. Our mind wants to make a god we wish existed or as Scripture refers to creating a god in our own image. Fortunately for us, God desires that we come to know Him as He really is. He has revealed Himself to us in creation, in the life and history of Israel, in Scripture and most completely in Jesus.

When Isaiah witnessed the angels crying 'holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, Isaiah was describing the all-encompassing attribute of God, His Holiness. Holy is what God is in his very essence.

Holiness is that which distinguishes Him from everything else. A great understanding of Holy is 'wholly other' or 'completely other'. You may not see the words 'wholly other' together often but it perfectly describes God. Holy means set apart. He is separate in His being totally other. Holy also denotes purity, having absolute perfection. He is unique, set apart, pure and other. Not in any way like us. His Holiness is a threat to our moral integrity. His Holiness makes us feel shame and guilt. We cannot live up to His Holiness.

So how can we worship when this heavy guilt separates us from God? Isaiah 6:7 says, "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." The tension is resolved by grace. The solution to Isaiah's dilemma and ours is atonement. It comes from God's side. This is a foreshadowing of the cross of Jesus. On the cross God Himself effects the final remedy for sin. What a God we have, who takes our sin away so we can have fellowship with Him.

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Day 13
Jan. 16

Scripture reading today:

Genesis 3:1-5, John 10:10, Phil. 4:4-8

Alexander Solzhenitsyn spent eight years in a Soviet gulag following World War 2. He entered prison a die-hard communist, believing that a new social order could create new people. But it was in prison that he discovered that the core issue was not the economic or government system. Solzhenitsyn writes, it was only when I lay there on rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirring of good. Gradually, it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes, not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties, but right through every human heart, and through all human hearts.

The first 5 verses of Genesis 3 reveal the core of the human problem - us. Adam and Eve turn away from their Creator, giving away their fellowship with God in a beautiful garden where all their needs and wants were met.

God has given mankind a risky gift – freedom of choice. Without the ability to choose, humans would be robots. Without choice there is no love.

In Gen. 3 we are confronted by the one who would lure away this innocent couple from their trust in God. He was crafty, appealing, a talking snake and the master of the half-truth. Jesus said that the crafty one is out to ‘steal, kill and destroy’. I love how our Lord Jesus doesn’t leave it there. He says that He has ‘come that we may have life and have it to the full’. Jesus wants us to know about the battle going on. He wants us to choose to live a full, abundant life. He wants us to live like we are saved and enjoy Him and enjoy His promises. Our battle is to remember what He has done and not get caught up in the negative of the world.

Are you living the full, abundant life? It’s an everyday battle for each of us, especially during presidential campaign years. Take time today to add to your list of good things in your life. Ask God for His help. If you use social media, post something positive about the Lord.

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Day 14
Jan. 17

Scripture reading today:

Luke 15:11-24, Romans 5:8, Phil. 4:4-8

The Bible is the love story of God's revelation of Himself in pursuit of wayward humanity. This pursuit reaches its climax in the cross with the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ. The grace offered to us from God is an incredible gift.

The story of the prodigal son is one we can all relate to in one way or another. Through the character of the younger son, Jesus puts His finger on the essence of the human problem from which almost every human misery derives. Something inside of us desires autonomy from the One who made us.

The part of the story that is mind boggling is the Father's response. He does the unprecedented. He acts in a way contrary to everything that a father in the ancient Near East was supposed to stand for: "He divided his property between them". The father chooses to remain the young man's father even though the son no longer wants to be the son. The father chooses to bear the pain of rejection. He could have cut himself off from his son, deservedly so. As the patriarch of the clan the father would be expected to uphold family honor by humiliating the son and making him bear his shame. The father could have said, "what son, I only have one son now.

Instead, the unexpected happened. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him". The father didn't give the son what he deserved, the father gave him grace and acceptance.

This is a picture of our Heavenly Father. Even when we were apart from Him by our own doing, He longed for us to be close to Him. What an incredible father to the prodigal son. What an incredible Heavenly Father we have that offers us this kind of grace. We don't deserve what God offers but He gives us grace anyway.

Spend time today celebrating God's goodness!

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Day 15
Jan. 18

Scripture reading today:
Romans 3:21-31, Phil. 4:4-8

How are the benefits of the cross transferred into our lives? It is by faith in Jesus Christ alone that we are declared right before God. God's gift of faith is the recognition of our moral bankruptcy and our inability to earn God's favor and that we must receive and rest on Jesus, who has done it all.

Our world operates on a performance-based value system. Our worth is measured by our ability to live up to certain standards. A parent rewards desirable behavior and punishes undesirable behavior. Love and worth are often seen as conditional.

Since the performance-reward system is part of our DNA, we assume that this is the way God operates as well. We think God runs the universe using the scale of justice. We expect that there will be an accounting of our deeds. All of our good deeds will be piled on one side of the scale and all of our bad deeds will be on the other side. Our only hope is that the good side outweigh the bad or else.

Yet the gospel is revolutionary because its message is contrary to all that we have been programmed to believe. Paul writes, "But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known" (Romans 3:21). Being made right before God has come to us apart from our ability to live up to God's expectations.

The gospel is the greatest news for mankind. God's plan to save us from our sin is an incredible gift. His declaration of justification is indeed something we are to be eternally grateful every day of our lives.

God's goodness is overwhelming to believers. Seek God's heart and He will remind you of His faithfulness and His love for you.

Prayer time:

C – Celebrate God's Goodness – add to your list of good things in your life.

A – Ask God for help, write your specific requests to God, he wants you to be specific.

L – Leave your concerns with God, don't stew all day about your concerns, remember you left them to God to handle.

M – Meditate on good things, do this constantly throughout your day.

Day 16
Jan. 19

Scripture reading today:
John 17, Phil. 4:4-8

CS Lewis was the author of the widely read children's books, *The Narnia Chronicles*, as well as many novels for grown-ups and books on issues surrounding the Christian faith. The movie *Shadowlands* (directed by Richard Attenborough and produced in 1993) tells Lewis' story, focusing in particular on his relationship with his wife, Joy Gresham. Gresham and Lewis meet while Lewis is at Oxford University.

After Joy is diagnosed with cancer the couple marry. The movie invites us to witness their love, their pain, their grief, their struggles with faith and God. Eventually Joy dies.

At one point in the story a friend says to Lewis, "Christopher can scoff, Jack, but I know how hard you've been praying; and now God is answering your prayers." Lewis replies "That's not why I pray, Harry. I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God, it changes me." CS Lewis

In John 17, we have a glimpse of Jesus praying. It is interesting that Jesus would pray to the Father. Jesus didn't just pray for himself, but He prayed that others would know Him and have eternal life.

He then prayed for the disciples, and then He prayed for us. He prayed that we would be one, united in zeal for our Savior. As we watch our world go crazy around us, remember that Jesus is on the throne. He is in heaven and He is at work 24/7.

C.S. Lewis found that praying for others changed him. That is big secret to living a life that God wants you to live. Praying keeps us focused on God and on others. Jesus prayed while on earth. Shouldn't we do the same?

Take time today to focus on God's goodness. Add to your list of what you see God doing.

Prayer time:

C – Celebrate God's Goodness – add to your list of good things in your life.

A – Ask God for help, write your specific requests to God, he wants you to be specific.

L – Leave your concerns with God, don't stew all day about your concerns, remember you left them to God to handle.

M – Meditate on good things, do this constantly throughout your day.

Day 17
Jan 20

Scripture reading today:

John 14:15-23, Matthew 7:21-27, Phil. 4:4-8

Hasn't Jesus made some wonderful promises to us? He has promised the Holy Spirit as our Counselor who will never leave us alone. He has promised us life in Him and in the Father. When we love Him and obey His commands, the Father will love us, and Christ will reveal Himself to us.

When we love and obey God, He takes up residence in our lives to live in us and with us! Did you notice the importance of obedience in all those promises? Those who do not obey, do not love Him. And their experience with God will be very different.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the parable about the two builders. One built his house on a rock, and the other built his on sand. When the storms came, the house on the rock stood firm and the other was destroyed. He said our lives are like those two builders. Those who obey are wise like the man who built his house on the rock. When the storms of life come, we can remain strong through the tough times. Those who do not obey are foolish like the man who built his house on the sand. People like that cannot remain strong when the storms of life rage around them.

What a great passage about how we build our lives. In these times, we see the necessity of lives built on the Rock. The Lord is good! His goodness surrounds us. Trust in it. We are called not to give into the world's system of success. Our success is based on what God's call is on our lives, and we can rest in that.

Take some time to celebrate His goodness. Think of ways to grow in your trust of the Lord.

Prayer time:

C – Celebrate God's Goodness – add to your list of good things in your life.

A – Ask God for help, write your specific requests to God, he wants you to be specific.

L – Leave your concerns with God, don't stew all day about your concerns, remember you left them to God to handle.

M – Meditate on good things, do this constantly throughout your day.

Day 18
Jan. 21

Scripture reading today:

Read Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47-48; John 20:21-22; and Acts 1:8

Final words of famous people are long remembered and often quoted. When a person knows he is on his death bed, he might even prepare a final statement of challenge to family and friends. Final words can have great significance for the next generation.

Jesus Christ came to provide salvation for all mankind. Following His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus spent forty days giving His disciples their final instructions to guide the church until His second coming. Not many of those words were recorded in the Scripture for us to read. But some were recorded, and they were perhaps His most important last words.

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He gave one final command to His disciples. He didn't want His disciples to miss this most important commission for the church. The future of His kingdom would depend on their obedience. Each of the Gospel writers records a variation of this command indicating that Jesus gave special attention to it during His final days on earth. You read those in the Scriptures above.

At Westland, we are all asked to pray for those apart from Christ and to be active in reaching out to them. Who in your circle of influence needs to know about Jesus' offer of repentance and forgiveness? Begin praying for them today and every day. Write their name down on a sticky note and put it in a place that you will be reminded to pray for them.

When we celebrate God's goodness, we need to always pray for others. Ask for God's help to reach those around you with the gospel. Without Him all things are impossible! Be specific to the Lord. Ask Him to give you wisdom and strength to be a light to those in your circle of influence.

Remember that God is at work 24/7 to seek and save the lost. It's our job to get on board with that.

Prayer time:

C – Celebrate God's Goodness – add to your list of good things in your life.

A – Ask God for help, write your specific requests to God, he wants you to be specific.

L – Leave your concerns with God, don't stew all day about your concerns, remember you left them to God to handle.

M – Meditate on good things, do this constantly throughout your day.

Day 19
Jan. 22

Scripture reading today:

1 Timothy 2:1-4, 1 Peter 2:17, Phil. 4:4-8

The Bible commands us to pray for those who are in leadership (1 Timothy 2:1-4). This includes those who are our political leaders. With the presidential election behind us, it is crucial we seek the Lord and pray for godly leaders.

Godly leaders can help slow the erosion of religious liberties in our land. This can provide an increased window of opportunity for the Church to pray and evangelize. According to Scripture, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). The selection of leaders who understand and lead according to God's righteous standards can bring great blessing to a nation. We have seen that over the year's good decisions and bad decisions by our leaders. We need to pray for them!

Scripture also says in Proverbs 11:14, "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisors make victory sure." The determination of who leads our nation will also determine who advises that leader and how we are guided. There are so many big decisions that each leader makes that shapes our present lives and our future lives and we desperately need the Lord's guidance for our leaders.

The decisions being made by our leaders are critical and must be undergirded by prayer. We just finished an election cycle. It is exactly the appropriate time for the people of God to mobilize intense prayer for the elected officials.

Paul said to Timothy to pray, intercede, and be thankful for all people and kings. We should pray and be thankful for our leaders. We must intercede to our Father on their behalf.

What can you be thankful for while praying for our government and leaders?

Prayer time:

C – Celebrate God's Goodness – add to your list of good things in your life.

A – Ask God for help, write your specific requests to God, he wants you to be specific.

L – Leave your concerns with God, don't stew all day about your concerns, remember you left them to God to handle.

M – Meditate on good things, do this constantly throughout your day.

Day 20
Jan. 23

Scripture reading today:
Matthew 6:25-34, Phil. 4:4-8

Jesus, our Master and Teacher shows us once again the brilliant simplicity with which He communicates profound truth. Isn't life of greater value than externals like food and clothes? Yes, it is. He speaks in such relatable concepts; birds of the air, lilies of the field. We stop and think, can our anxiety add a day to our life? An hour? No, it cannot. And it's foolishness. We have a heavenly Father who takes care of us. He can feed the birds and clothe the lilies (better than Solomon), and so He will take care of us as we trust in Him.

Can we trust Jesus? Of course, we know Jesus and know that He is right. Then why is it so hard to not worry and be anxious? Is it our lack of faith? Is it human nature? Is it the evil one trying to keep us apart from God?

The distress of anxiety and its companion worry is common in all of us. We all struggle with this from time to time, some more than others. Jesus says, "Rather than worry about the everyday things that, I will take care of them. Seek first my kingdom and righteousness. Leave the rest to me." How is your anxiety level today? What is worrying you? Jot down a few thoughts. Then bring them to the throne of grace in prayer.

Paul says in Philippians 4 to "not be anxious for anything, but in prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God and the peace that passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus".

Jesus calms our fears and anxiety. We just need to relax and trust Him. Remember the song He is Lord:

He is Lord,
He is Lord,
He has risen from the dead, and He is Lord.
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess,
That Jesus Christ is Lord!
Amen
Add to your list of God's goodness.

Prayer time:

C – Celebrate God's Goodness – add to your list of good things in your life.

A – Ask God for help, write your specific requests to God, he wants you to be specific.

L – Leave your concerns with God, don't stew all day about your concerns, remember you left them to God to handle.

M – Meditate on good things, do this constantly throughout your day.

Day 21
Jan. 24

Scripture reading today:

Isaiah 46:9-10, Daniel 4:17, 1 Chronicles 29:11, Phil. 4:4-8

Daily prayer is a way to acknowledge who is really in control of our lives. As Christians, we know who is really in control. God is sovereign. Nothing happens without God knowing about it (Isaiah 46:9-10; Daniel 4:17). Because He is sovereign over all, He deserves our worship and praise. "Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all" (1 Chronicles 29:11). God is our great King and as such He controls every aspect of our lives. Each day we should acknowledge His proper place in our lives humbly and with a reverence reserved for such a great and awesome King.

Whether one is a new believer or an established one, prayer should always be considered as THE best way to speak to God. Imagine not speaking to a loved one or a close friend. How long would the relationship last? Daily prayer with God is daily fellowship with our heavenly Father. It is truly amazing that God would want to have fellowship with us at all. In fact, the psalmist asks, "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:4). Daily prayer is a good way to understand this incredible truth and the marvelous privilege God has given us.

Perhaps no other verse better summarizes why we should pray on a daily basis than 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." It's God's will for His children to rejoice in Him, to pray to Him and give thanks to Him. To pray without ceasing simply means that we should make prayer a regular habit and never stop doing so. Prayer also is an act of worship because by praying to Him we are showing Him how much we adore Him. Daily prayer is also an act of obedience that brings joy to the Lord to see His children following His commands.

Prayer time:

C – Celebrate God's Goodness – add to your list of good things in your life.

A – Ask God for help, write your specific requests to God, he wants you to be specific.

L – Leave your concerns with God, don't stew all day about your concerns, remember you left them to God to handle.

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