

A person wearing a dark t-shirt, jeans, and a cap stands on the edge of a high, reddish-brown cliff. The cliff face is steep and shows signs of erosion. To the left, a gnarled, leafless tree stands on the cliff top. The ocean is visible in the distance under a pale, overcast sky.

SEEK

TWENTY TWENTY-FOUR

WELCOME to SEEK || 2024

We are excited to SEEK God alongside you as we enter the new year and we're anticipating growing together in our knowledge of prayer and fasting. This guide is meant to give you a little bit of everything - teaching, illustrations, quotes, scriptures, points to think about, and example prayers. We even have sections specifically for kids. If questions should arise for any reason, feel free to email us at hello@lifewest.church.

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Seven Purposes of Prayer

Days 1-7

1. To invite God's wisdom and the Holy Spirit into our lives
 2. To help us resist temptation & to fight the enemy
 3. To grow in humility and align our will with God's will
 4. To find direction in our lives.
 5. To communicate with God!
 6. To help enable miracles in our lives!
 7. Because God says so and Jesus models it.
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Week 1 || Day 1

PURPOSE OF PRAYER: TO INVITE GOD'S WISDOM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO OUR LIVES.

We open up our 21 days of prayer and fasting with a fancy word, consecration. Consecration is simply separating ourselves from anything that would contaminate our relationship with our Perfect Father God. The focus of today is laying down anything that would hinder a greater connection to God; our sins, our distractions, our motives our ideas about our value. We are also asking God, specifically, for His wisdom as we seek Him in the next few weeks (and really, for the rest of our lives!). Likewise, we are inviting the Holy Spirit into our lives as a vehicle for God's wisdom to be made clear. We are asking the Holy Spirit to be with us and to speak to us about our situations and concerns as well as the situations and concerns in our community and world.

Illustration:

"In 2004, a painting by Anna Mary Robertson, better known as Grandma Moses, was brought to the *Antiques Roadshow* for appraisal. Born before the Civil War, Robertson did not take up painting until late in her life. Her primitive style eventually became extremely popular, and her work commanded a high price. The man who brought the painting to be evaluated had lived nearby and his mother was a friend of Grandma Moses. He said, 'She was just a wonderful friend of the family. And she would let my mother buy these paintings, which she thought had relatively little value. I guess my mother did, too. She probably bought eight or ten paintings in all, and my guess would be for perhaps under ten dollars each.'

The painting that was bought for around \$10 was appraised as being worth \$60,000! In her early days of painting, Grandma Moses did not think of her works as being very valuable, so she parted with them for next to nothing. How often do we give up that which is priceless for a little temporary pleasure or advantage? How often do we abandon that which matters most for that which matters least?

The best way to determine what matters the most to someone is not to hear what they say but to see what they do. The things we pursue and give our lives to are the things that we truly value the most. Fools do not seek wisdom because they do not place any value on it. Wise people will seek wisdom even at great expenses because they understand how important it is to successful living. When we value what God values we are on the path to wisdom." (<https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-things-we-value>)

Today, we lay down what we value and instead ask God what He values. We lay down our understanding of wisdom and seek His wisdom in all things.

Kids SEEK, too!

*** Note to caretakers:** *Be assured - there is no junior Holy Spirit! As we head into SEEK this year, take time to teach your kids to listen to the Holy Spirit. Truth be told, it is often much easier for them than it is for us. As adults, we can muddle the language surrounding the things of God whereas, for children, it can be so simple. Explain to the kids that God speaks to us through the Word, through the Holy Spirit, and through things in our world. Ask them to keep their eyes and ears open for clues that God is trying to tell them something. Perhaps share a story of God speaking to you or revealing something to you. Then let them know that we can test what we're hearing to see if it is coming from the Holy Spirit by looking at what the Bible says about it. Oh, and remember, don't be concerned if they act distracted or aren't sure how to answer questions right away. We want them to have confidence in approaching God and hearing Him, not condemnation.*

Kids' Illustration:

"There is an ancient legend of a king who loved chess. He challenged visitors to a game, and was usually victorious. One day a traveling sage visited the kingdom and was challenged to a game. To entice him to play, the king offered to give the sage whatever reward he asked if he won. When the king was defeated, to honor his word he asked the sage what prize he would like. The sage asked for one grain of rice to be placed on the first square of the chessboard, and then that it be doubled on each following square.

The request seemed modest, and the king ordered a bag of rice to be brought. One grain was placed on the first square, two on the second, four on the third, eight on the fourth and so on. But it quickly became apparent the terms of the request were impossible to meet. By the twenty-first square more than one million grains of rice would be required. By the thirty-first square the total would go over one billion—with more than half of the chessboard still left to go.

Small things have a big impact when they are added together. It is important that we seek God's wisdom for every decision we make, regardless of how small it seems to us. When we add to our wisdom and understanding, it grows stronger and stronger." (<https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-growth-of-wisdom>)

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- Gather art supplies and pray together for the Holy Spirit to assist your creativity in completing an art project. This could be a drawing, a painting, a molding clay activity, or a myriad of other things.
- WISE OR NOT WISE GAME
- WISE OR FOOLISH COLORING PAGE
- JESUS TEACHES ABOUT PRAYER WORD SEARCH

Bible:

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." (James 1:5 ESV)

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:14 ESV)

"For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."
(Proverbs 2:6 ESV)

Quote for Today:

"The chief means for attaining wisdom, and suitable gifts for the ministry, are the Holy Scriptures, and prayer." - John Newton

"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day." - Abraham Lincoln

Points to Ponder:

- We commit to devote ourselves to prayer.
- We commit to listen to the nudging of the Holy Spirit.
- We commit to lay down those things that attempt to contaminate our relationship with God.
- As we ask God for help and guidance, we must recognize that His Word, the Bible, is a vital part of how we hear from Him.

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, we come to you today and consecrate our lives to you. We lay aside anything that stands in the way of us having a relationship with You. Generous Father, you have told us to ask you for whatever we need. You said that if we ask, it will be given. If we seek, we will find. If we knock, the door will be opened to us. We ask you for guidance and direction, Lord, and pray that you would answer our request. We pray that you would grant us wisdom as we walk in line with your Word and the Holy Spirit's promptings. We set aside these next few weeks in expectation of honoring you and learning from you. We invite your Holy Spirit into our lives to work in us as You see fit and we ask for wisdom as we move throughout our days. We lay aside our own motives and we pray that you would clearly reveal things to us as we invest our time in seeking you in your Word, in your world, and by the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Week 1 || Day 2

PURPOSE OF PRAYER: TO RESIST TEMPTATION & TO FIGHT THE ENEMY

Ooh, temptation! Now, temptation is tricky...because temptation isn't sin, yet... but it's easy to give in to temptation and sin is often the result. And sin done right is appealing to our carnal nature. It's fun for a season. But its consequences are downplayed by our culture and other ungodly influences. Today we are choosing to stand with God against the temptations in our lives. In our time today, we recognize that temptation is something every person will wrestle against throughout life. It can feel yucky and messy to struggle with temptation, but the reality is that because we live in a broken world, we won't be able to turn off those pressures. However, through prayer we are able to overcome those temptations to sin. Today, we're focusing on praying for God's help to keep us from making poor decisions and giving in to temptations. We are also standing on the assurance that prayer can give us the strength to do what is right in God's eyes. We lay down our own inability to resist temptation and we focus on God's ability, asking for strength from the Holy Spirit. While temptation can feel powerful and persistent, persistent prayer is even more powerful.

Illustration:

"One of the largest freshwater turtles is the alligator snapping turtle. Found primarily in the southeastern United States, these massive turtles have been known to weigh close to 250 pounds. They are carnivorous, and while their diet is primarily fish, they have been known to eat almost anything else they can find in the water—even in a few cases small alligators! The alligator snapping turtle relies on a uniquely deceitful method of foraging for fish.

The turtle will lie completely still on the floor of a lake or river with its mouth wide open. At the end of the turtle's tongue is a small, pink, worm-shaped appendage. The turtle wiggles the end of its tongue so that it looks like a worm moving through the water. When a fish comes to eat the worm, the turtle's jaws rapidly close, trapping the fish so that it cannot escape.

Similarly to the snapping turtle's lure, temptation comes in the guise of something desirable, but it always carries destruction with it in the end. If we could see the end result rather than the tempting part, it would be far easier to resist. But Satan knows this, so he cleverly disguises what is deadly in the guise of something pleasurable." (<https://ministry127.com/resources/illustration/the-deceitfulness-of-sin>)

Kids SEEK, too!

*** Note to caretakers:** Adults can often be fooled into thinking kids aren't tempted. This couldn't be further from the truth! Feel free to share the illustration below and then ask if they may want to share a way they've been tempted. Have they been tempted to disobey? Have they been tempted to hurt someone when they were mad? Do your best to let them enter the conversation. Helping to teach kids about temptation while they are young gives them more tools to recognize those temptations as they grow. Oh, and don't be tempted into skipping this topic because you don't think it's important. (See what we did there?)

Kids' Illustration:

Alex was in class. "Put away your all of your books and take out a sheet of paper and a pencil," the teacher directed. "We are going to take our spelling test." Alex had a sick feeling deep down in his belly. He knew that they were going to have a spelling test today, but instead of studying he had stayed up playing video games last night. He was not ready for this test! The teacher called out the first word and Alex looked around the room frantically. Then he realized he had a clear view of Olivia's paper. "It won't hurt anything if I peek at Olivia's paper... just this once," Alex thought to himself. "I won't do it again. Next time I'll study. Nobody will ever know."

Every single one of us have faced temptations like these, haven't we? Did you know that Jesus faced temptations, too? The Bible teaches us that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the desert where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. When Jesus was tempted by the devil, do you know what he did? He answered him with Scripture!

The Bible is a great place to look when we are tempted. Praying about our situation, especially when we use God's Words, has so much more power than our temptation does!

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- VIDEO ON TEMPTATION (There are great questions to review with a parent underneath the video).
- WORD SEARCH (THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS)
- COLORING PAGE (THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS)

Bible:

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV)

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:13 ESV)

“When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:13-15 ESV).

“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41)

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16 ESV)

Quote for Today:

“The Gospel teaches that only by God’s grace can we truly overcome the temptations of the world, the wickedness of our own hearts, and the power of the Devil.” -Albert Mohler, *Fighting the Enemy Through Prayer*.

Points to Ponder:

- What areas are you tempted in today? (Pride?/Lust?/Lies?Greed?) What areas are you consistently tempted in? Take a moment to invite God into those specific temptations and ask for His help in overcoming them.
- Do not feel as if you are alone in your temptations. That is a lie from the enemy, who desires to isolate us from God and from other believers.
- We are not able to resist temptation by our own power. Instead, we must turn our attention away from our own strength, and focus on the strength of God.
- We must recognize that we have been given a heart of dependence; dependence on God and His grace and dependence on Jesus to save us.

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, we thank you that you do not leave us alone in our temptation. We recognize our dependence on you. We thank you that you have given us your Holy Spirit to help us and your Word to use as a weapon against the enemy. Today we lay down the things that are tempting us and we ask that you would give your strength to us so that we may overcome those temptations. We bind any tricks and schemes of the enemy and we command Satan to go, in Jesus' name. We invite your Holy Spirit into the areas of our lives that we often try to keep secret and we ask that your Word and Presence would cleanse those areas. It's in Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Week 1 || Day 3

PURPOSE OF PRAYER: WE PRAY TO GROW IN HUMILITY AND ALIGN OUR WILL WITH GOD'S WILL.

Prayer shouldn't be us attempting to tell God how we want Him to do things. Instead, prayer should be focused on gaining a better understanding of God and His ways. We should be praying in order to discern His will for our lives, bringing ourselves into alignment with Him...not bringing Him into alignment with our desires.

One way to stay committed to prayers aligned with God's will is through humility. Humility is a position of the heart that is often shown through genuine gratitude, displaying a lack of arrogance, and having a Godly view of yourself. When we recognize our own inadequacies and understand that God's will is truly better than our own, it is easier to lay down our desires. A humble attitude is required, though. God Himself came to earth in a humble manner, in order to help the poor and afflicted, to forgive us of our sins and to offer us eternal life. Jesus, too, shows a perfect depiction of someone who lived with lifelong humility. He displayed humility from the moment of His birth to His tortuous crucifixion.

Illustration:

"Sam Rayburn served as the Speaker of the House of Representatives in the United States Congress for seventeen years. As the Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn wielded incredible power and prestige. He was third in the line of succession to the presidency.

One day, he found out that the teenage daughter of a reporter friend had tragically died. Early the next morning, Sam Rayburn knocked on the door of his friend. When the door opened, Rayburn asked if there was anything he could do. His friend stammered and replied, 'I don't think there is anything you can do. We are making all the arrangements.'

'Well, have you had your coffee this morning?' Rayburn asked.

'No. We haven't had time.' said the grieving man.

'Well,' the Speaker of the House replied, 'I can at least make the coffee.'

As he watched this powerful man make him coffee, the father suddenly remembered something. 'Mr. Speaker, I thought you were supposed to be having breakfast at the White House this morning.'

'Well I was, but I called the President and told him I had a friend who was in trouble, and I couldn't come.'

Sam Rayburn turned down breakfast with the President of the United States to make coffee for a grieving friend. Great *Humility* can be exercised by people of great power."
- Dave Anderson, *Becoming a Leader of Character*.

Kids SEEK, too!

***Note to Caretakers:** *Humility can be difficult to teach to kids! If you happen to have something near you that you know none of your kids can lift alone, but you can all lift together, use that as an illustration. Ask each child to lift the object (an ottoman or some other object that doesn't have the ability to injure them). When they cannot do it on their own, assist them. Often, when we humble ourselves, we are able to do things that are much more difficult than what we can do on our own!*

Kids' Illustration:

"Perhaps we need to be more like the scientist George Washington Carver. He developed hundreds of useful products from the peanut! When he was young he asked God to tell him the mystery of the universe. But God answered: 'That knowledge is reserved for me alone.' So he said, 'God, tell me the mystery of the peanut.' Then God said, 'Well, George, that's more nearly your size.' And he told him. -Debbie Przybylski, (Przybylski, Debbie. *The Fragrance of Humility in Prayer*.

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- [VIDEO ABOUT HUMILITY](#)
 - [CROSSWORD \(A LESSON IN HUMILITY\)](#)
 - [COLORING PAGE \(A LESSON IN HUMILITY\)](#)
 - [Bible Illustrations About Humility](#)
 - [Many great resources have been collected here.](#)
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Bible:

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you." (1 Peter 5:6 ESV)

“And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8 ESV)

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14 ESV)

Luke 18:13-14: “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” - Jesus (Luke 18:14 ESV)

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...” (Mark 10:45 ESV)

Quote for Today:

“When a person first puts faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, part of what happened was a moment of humility. For a person to understand their need for salvation, they must realize that they are lost, utterly hopeless, and without any ability whatsoever to save themselves.” -Jason Hovde, *Praying Biblically Series*.

“Prayer doesn’t change God. It changes *me*.” C.S. Lewis

“The Bible does not teach that God helps those who help themselves; instead, God helps those who are at the end of themselves.” -Albert Mohler, *The Prayer that Turns the World Upside Down*.

Points to Ponder:

- When we choose to follow God, we are humbly displaying our trust in God, His infinite wisdom, and His wonderful salvation.
- When we pray, are we humbly *asking* God things, or are we *demanding* to know things?

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, In Micah 6:8 You say, “O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” Today we choose to walk humbly with You. We choose to live by Your Holy Spirit and to follow Your lead. Help us to hear You clearly, as we do not want to walk by pride, we want to walk with You. We ask you to help us to

continue to develop humility in our lives as we seek You and Your will. We look to the example that You and your son, Jesus, have set, and we ask that you would continue to mold us into your likeness by your grace. We also ask that you would help us to walk according to your will for our lives. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Week 1 || Day 4

PURPOSE OF PRAYER: WE PRAY TO FIND DIRECTION IN OUR LIVES.

Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights before He began His earthly ministry. The entire time, He communicated with God through prayer. In the same way, when we pray and fast, we can experience God in a more intimate way and we are able to better understand God's direction for our lives. As we seek God about the direction He wants us to take, we are trusting that the Holy Spirit will comfort us in prayer and guide us in decision-making. We also trust that the Holy Spirit brings things Jesus has spoken to us to our remembrance. This helps provide answers for our questions and helps us recognize and feel God's love for us. It also allows unexplainable peace and joy to rule our hearts.

Illustration:

"Between an airplane and every other form of locomotion and transportation there is one great contrast. The horse and wagon, the automobile, the bicycle, the locomotive, the speedboat, and the great battleship—all can come to a standstill without danger, and they can all reverse their engines, or their power, and go back.

But there is no reverse about the engine of an airplane. It cannot back up. It dare not stand still. If it loses its momentum and forward-drives, then it crashes. The only safety for the airplane is in its forward and upward motion. The only safe direction for the Christian to take is forward and upward. If he stops, or if he begins to slip and go backward, that moment he is in danger." - C. E. Macartney (Steven Arturburn, *The One Year Book of Devotions for Men on the Go*)

In prayer we can continue to move forward in our lives, heading the direction God has ordained for us. In ceasing to pray, we are like an airplane trying to head in reverse. It will fail.

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration:

"During the first evacuation of children from bomb-torn areas of London, a train was leaving packed with children. Many of them had never been on a train, and most of them had never been in the country. The parents of a small boy and girl had just said

good-bye to their precious children and left them standing on the platform. The little girl began to cry, and said she was afraid because she did not know where she was going. Her little brother, brushing his own tears away, put an arm around her in an effort to comfort her, and said, "I do not know where we are going either, but the king knows." Are not many of us like the little girl, fearful because we do not know where we are going in this distracted world of ours? We do not know, but our King knows! The emergencies and problems of our day will be calmly faced, if in our quiet moment we have met God and put our trust in Him." - *Day by Day*

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- God Hears our Prayers Styrofoam Cup [Activity](#)

Bible:

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26 ESV)

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." (John 16:13 ESV)

"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" (Isaiah 30:21 ESV)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:26 ESV)

"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." (Jeremiah 33:3 ESV)

Quote for today:

"As we trust God to give us wisdom for today's decisions, He will lead us a step at a time into what He wants us to be doing in the future." - Theodore Epp

"An architect complains that many of his clients come and ask him to design a house for them, only to let him very speedily discover that they have already designed it all for themselves. What they really want is his sanction of the plan and the satisfaction of

seeing him draw on paper what they have fully in mind. It is in very much the same fashion that we often go to the great Architect with our lives. We ask Him for wisdom and guidance, but we have already planned how we will build our fortunes and shape our course and it is not His way we are seeking, but His approval of our way.

-Mississippi Visitor

Points to Ponder:

- Prayer allows us to follow the peace that passes understanding that the Holy Spirit offers
 - Prayer gives us an ear to hear where God is directing us
 - Corrie Ten Boom once asked, "Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?" Being honest, how would you answer that?
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CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, help me to trust you with my decisions and my future. Allow me lean on you with all my heart and not rely on my own flawed understanding. Give me clear guidance for my life, Lord. As I continuously submit myself and my life to you, I trust that you will direct my paths and I am able to have confidence that your direction is always the best way to go. Hear my prayer, Father. In Jesus' precious name, amen.

Week 1 || Day 5

PURPOSE OF PRAYER: TO COMMUNICATE WITH GOD.

Prayer is our way of communicating with God. It strengthens the bond between God and His children. It isn't simply asking God for things; God is not a genie to be at our beck-and-call. We don't come before God in order to manipulate Him. Prayer, instead, is our asking God to bring us closer to Him. Prayer is a time to bring our trouble to Him, to confess our sins to Him and repent for them, to bring our praises to Him, to lift others up in prayer, and to spend time enjoying Him and allowing Him to enjoy us. Prayer is a two-way conversation and we do the power of prayer a disservice if all we do is talk. The best conversations that we will ever have are conversations where we listen and share. It should be a goal of prayer to quieting ourselves to listen to God. There is so much that the Father God desires to tell you.

Illustration:

In June of 2013 news broadcasts across the country featured a little boy named Grayson Clamp doing something he had never done before. The three-year-old was born without the auditory nerves that carry sound to the brain. Attempts to restore his hearing with a cochlear implant were unsuccessful, so doctors at the University of North Carolina tried an experimental procedure to implant an auditory nerve directly into Grayson's brain. This procedure proved successful, and millions of people enjoyed seeing the look of wonder and joy on the little boy's face when he heard his father's voice for the first time.

Today with the technology available communication is instant—but even then it is a delight to hear from a friend or family member who is far away. Just as we respond to those familiar voices with pleasure, God delights in hearing from His children.

Why do we pray? Certainly it is not to inform God of what we need. He already knows everything about our situation, and, far better than we could devise, He knows the answer that will be best for us. Prayer is meant in part to remind us of how dependent on God we truly are. But prayer is not just for our benefit. God enjoys hearing us pray! When we come to Him in faith and make our petitions before His throne of grace, His heart rejoices. He likes hearing our voices. Let us never go long without going to Him in prayer.

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration:

Praying is communicating with God. Sometimes we listen, and sometimes we share. God loves hearing what we have to share. Sometimes it can be serious and sometimes it can be silly. Below are some letters that kids just like you have written to God:

Dear God:

"I didn't think orange went with purple until I saw the sunset You made on Tuesday. That was cool."

"Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones, why don't You keep the ones You already have?"

"Maybe Cain and Abel would not have killed each other if they had their own rooms. That's what my Mom did for me and my brother."

"I bet it is very hard to love everyone in the whole world. There are only four people in our family and I'm having a hard time loving all of them."

"In school they told us what You do. Who does it when You are on vacation?"

"Did You mean for the giraffe to look like that or was it an accident?"

"Who draws the lines around the countries?"

"I went to this wedding and they kissed right in the church. Is that OK?"

"Thank You for the baby brother, but I think you got confused because what I prayed for was a puppy."

"I want to be just like my Daddy when I get big, but not with so much hair all over."

"I think about You sometimes, even when I'm not praying."

"Of all the people who worked for You, I like Noah and David the best."

"I would like to live 900 years just like the guy in the Bible."

"We read Thomas Edison made light. But in Sunday school they said You did it. So, I bet he stole Your idea."

"Please send a new baby for Mommy. The baby you sent last week cries too much."

"Thank you for the nice day today. You even fooled the TV weather man."

"Please help me in school. I need help in spelling, adding, history, geography, and writing. I don't need help in anything else."

- source unknown

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- VIDEO About Prayer

Bible:

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16 ESV)

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28 ESV)

"Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long." (Psalm 24:4-5 ESV)

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20 ESV)

Quotes for Today:

"Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the one who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference." - Max Lucado

"The Christian life is not a constant high. I have my moments of deep discouragement. I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, 'O God, forgive me,' or 'Help me.'" - Billy Graham

"Prayer is simply talking to God like a friend and should be the easiest thing we do each day." - Joyce Meyer

"Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty." - E.M. Bounds

"And so I urge you: carry on an ongoing conversation with God about the daily stuff of life, a little like Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof. For now, do not worry about 'proper' praying, just talk to God." - Richard J. Foster

Points to Ponder:

- If you easily get lost in your prayers, it is okay to use a prayer help. One such help is the acronym, P.R.A.Y. After each section of prayer, take some time to pause and allow God to speak to you. Often, after I've repented for confessed sins, God will gently remind me that I am His child and He loves that, even in my broken state, I want to come and spend time with Him. My prayers must look silly to anyone looking in on them because there is often a lot of silence as I listen to the Lord.
 - P- Praise and worship God
 - R - Repent as you confess sins and shortcomings
 - A - Adoration and thanksgiving
 - Y - Your needs and desires
- When it comes to prayer, we often get caught up in how awkward we can feel. Push through! Even things that don't require a great deal of effort take time to get the hang of.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for the ability to be your sons and daughters. That we are free to have a personal relationship with the Creator of the Universe is beyond our imagination. We are grateful that you are not a dictator - that you desire for us to share with you. What a gracious God you are to not only provide the sacrifice for our sins by way of your son, Jesus, but to listen to us as we bumble through our lists of transgressions. Even in our own yuck, you comfort us and help guide us back to your path. In our joys, you rejoice with us and push us to grow in humility. We are so very thankful for all that you are, and for giving us fresh revelations of your character as we seek You. It's in Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.

Week 1 || Day 6

PURPOSE OF PRAYER: TO HELP ENABLE MIRACLES IN OUR LIVES!

Prayer can work miracles! But what is a miracle? According to the 18th-century Scottish philosopher named David Hume, a miracle is a “violation of the laws of nature.” Miracles were present in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and are still present! Looking back into the Old Testament, the prophet Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den solely for his insistence on praying to God, and God alone. In the lions’ den, his prayers continued. Angels appeared to close the mouths of the ravenous lions. The priest, Elijah, prayed in I Kings 18 that God would show the people that He was the one true God by consuming a water-soaked sacrifice in fire from Heaven. Elijah called out to God and God answered! God loves to show Himself powerful! Over and over in Scripture we see examples of Jesus performing miracles as an answer to prayer as well.

When we spend time in daily prayer, it is possible to experience miracles in our lives and the lives around us. Keep your eyes, ears and hearts open to seeing miracles, though. They may often be more subtle than we think. Miracles are not limited to someone being raised from the dead or seas being parted. They come in many forms, which could include:

- Healing
- Forgiveness of sins
- Unexplainable peace in our circumstances
- Supernatural wisdom
- Altering of our circumstances
- Hindering Satan’s plans
- A needed, permanent shift in our mindset
- Provision (financial or otherwise)

There is no specific formula for how to pray for God to work miracles in your life. However, we must come with humility and boldness.

Huh? How do we do both?

The writer to the Hebrews said, “Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us . . . let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings” (Hebrews 10:19-22 CSB)

Humility isn't an "awe-shucks" smile and boldness isn't a bossy demand. Humility means we approach God with a sincere heart and boldness means we come with full assurance through our faith. Humility is recognizing God's greatness in relation to us and boldness is knowing that, in His greatness, He welcomes us as sons and daughters, by the sacrifice of Jesus' death on the cross.

Illustration:

Missionary Mary Geegh gives an account of seeking God when in need of a miracle. Mary had obeyed God when He told her to give a woman in her village an egg, despite it being an odd request. When she gave the egg to the woman the woman was excited and confused and asked aloud how Mary had come to give it to her. Mary told about "listening to God" and being obedient. The woman explained to Mary that there had not been enough food for the entire family so she had not eaten. The egg had been so satisfying! The woman was so thrilled about what God had done for her that from that day on, the woman and her family began seeking God through prayer.

"One day the youngest child, a two month old baby, became very sick with pneumonia. The doctor came for several days, but the child grew steadily worse. Finally, the doctor gave up all hope for the child's recovery. The next morning when the doctor came, he said the life was gone. At noon the father came to tell me the child had died. Would I come and offer a prayer for their comfort before the burial? I told him, 'I have promised God that I will have the "listening" prayer for people in times of sorrow and trouble, so that they may receive His direct comfort and guidance.' He consented to have a 'quiet time' of 'listening' prayer with the family. I went. The whole family sat in a circle around the coffin. As we sat there quietly, a quick thought came to me—'Get antiphlogistine and cotton.' I told the oldest son, 'Go quickly to the market. Get a large jar of antiphlogistine and a large roll of cotton.' He went and returned quickly with both. Then I told the family, 'The Lord has given this thought. He alone knows there is a spark of life in your child. Let us take him from the coffin to the kitchen, heat the clay and spread it on his chest and back, and wrap him in the cotton and in a blanket.' We did this and then waited. Yes, for nearly five hours...and then... the child opened his eyes! Great was the rejoicing of all the family and their faith in God's guidance was deeply strengthened. The child grew to be a fine young man, and he is a living witness to the wonder and blessing of the guidance of the Holy Spirit." (Mary Geegh, *God Guides*)

Kids SEEK, too!

*Note to caretakers: Encourage kids to pray for miracles! There are numerous accounts in the Bible of miracles and Jesus told us we would do even greater things than He did!

Kids are often far better at believing God at His Word than adults are. Don't feel as though you need to prove God or step in for God; He will reveal Himself. Do, however, make sure you take the prayers to God as well.

Kids' Illustration:

"Dr. Helen Roseveare, missionary to Zaire, told the following story. "A mother at our mission station died after giving birth to a premature baby. We tried to improvise an incubator to keep the infant alive, but the only hot water bottle we had was beyond repair. So we asked the children to pray for the baby and for her sister. One of the girls responded. 'Dear God, please send a hot water bottle today. Tomorrow will be too late because by then the baby will be dead. And dear Lord, send a doll for the sister so she won't feel so lonely.' That afternoon a large package arrived from England. The children watched eagerly as we opened it. Much to their surprise, under some clothing was a hot water bottle! Immediately the girl who had prayed so earnestly started to dig deeper, exclaiming, 'If God sent that, I'm sure He also sent a doll!' And she was right! The heavenly Father knew in advance of that child's sincere requests, and 5 months earlier He had led a ladies' group to include both of those specific articles." - David Dykes, *Character Out of Chaos*

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- *Sometime miracles are really obvious. Sometimes, though, we have to keep our eyes open to see them! We get to have fun searching for them! Take a minute to search for things in this Bible Story*
- *Jesus heals Coloring Sheet*

Bible:

"A vast crowd brought to Him people who were lame, blind, crippled, those who couldn't speak, and many others. They laid them before Jesus, and He healed them all." (Matthew 15:30 ESV)

"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father." (John 14:12 NLT)

"By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see." (Acts 3:16 NIV)

Quote for Today:

"Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between his will and its accomplishment on earth. Amazing things happen, and we are given the privilege of being the channels of the Holy Spirit's prayer." - Elisabeth Elliot

"The most incredible thing about miracles is that they happen." - G.K. Chesterton

Points to Ponder:

- Our prayer can initiate miracles in our lives and other peoples' lives as well!
- An issue that can be a difficult hurdle for people to overcome in regards to miracles is that it doesn't always "work". We would argue that Jesus said His followers would do even greater things than he did! It is our job to pray and obey - the outcome is God's job! Has God instructed you to pray for a miracle? Take some time today to pray for it!
- Another reason people often shy away from praying for miracles is because they don't want to be disappointed. We must be willing to come with our miracle-prayers, willing to adore and worship God even if He doesn't provide the miracles we want or need. In Daniel 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were being thrown into a furnace for praying to God. They believed God would save them (and He did!) but they didn't allow their faith to waver even if God didn't provide the miracles. In speaking to the king, who was throwing them into the blazing inferno, they said, "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. But *even if* he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up." (Daniel 3:17-18 NLT)
- Are there any miracles you are needing? Are there miracles others are needing? Pray boldly! But *even if* God doesn't answer the way you'd like, hold fast to faith in Him!
- We must pray in Jesus' name! It is in Jesus' name that we are healed.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, I thank you that you are so good. Your name is powerful and at your name, every thing on earth must bow. Mountains tremble and

oceans roar. At your name, demons flee. Your precious name commands that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that you are Lord. In your mighty name, Jesus, I lift up my prayer. I thank you that you have plans for me that are for good and your glory. Your Word says that you are the God who performs miracles! With your mighty arm, you redeemed your people and rescued them from distress. I pray that you would perform miracles in my life, Lord, to display your power and glory. Increase my faith to trust in you. You are the miracle-working God. You turned water into wine. You restored sight to the blind and made the deaf to hear. You made the lame walk and you healed the sick. You raised the dead. Everything you touch is able to be powerfully transformed. I want my life to be powerfully transformed! I want my prayers to recognize that you are a miracle-working God who loves us. And all of this I pray in the might name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Week 1 || Day 7

PURPOSE OF PRAYER: BECAUSE GOD SAYS SO AND JESUS MODELS IT.

Prayer is an act of obedience and it allows us to become more like Jesus as we follow the example he set. As believers we are commanded to pray. Matthew 6:41 (NLT) says, "Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!" Jesus reiterates this in Luke 18:1 (NLT) "One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up." In I Timothy, we are commanded to pray as well. "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them." (I Timothy 2:1 NLT)

Jesus, himself, led a life of constant prayer and connection with our Heavenly Father. He set the perfect example of a prayer life for believers. When we follow His example, we find not only the words to say, but the posture of prayer and the circumstances in which we pray (Hint - it's in ALL circumstances!).

One prayer that we are explicitly told to pray is The Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew 6:9-13 (NRSV): "Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'"

Illustration:

"In 1999 John F. Kennedy Jr. flew his small airplane from New York City to his family home in Massachusetts for a wedding. On board were his wife Carolyn and her sister. Though Kennedy was a licensed pilot, he had not yet been approved for instrument flight (using only instruments to navigate). When their takeoff was delayed until after dark, Kennedy should have waited for daylight or sought a more experienced pilot to help. Yet, Kennedy took off into the darkness. The plane never reached its destination, and all three passengers were killed in the crash.

Investigators determined that the crash was likely caused by disorientation from flying over open water at night without any landmarks or visible horizon. Kennedy's lack of experience may well have led him to trust what he thought he was seeing more than what his instrument panel was telling him.

All of us face the temptation to walk according to sight instead of faith. Faith in God will keep us from crashing. Human reason will fail us at times, but God never fails.

His Word keeps us on the right course as long as we obey it." - *Chicago Tribune*, September 26, 1999

There are many things that we are asked to do, often without full understanding. Going to God in prayer is a command we cannot long afford to disobey.

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration:

"A father and son arrived in a small western town looking for an uncle they had never seen. Suddenly, the father, pointing across the square to a man who was walking away from them, exclaimed, 'There goes my uncle!'

His son asked, 'How do you know when you've never seen him before?'

'Son, I know him because he walks exactly like my father.'

If we walk in the Spirit, the world should know us by our walk." - Lee Robertson, *The Gold Mine*

If we want our lives to reflect Jesus, we do what He does! And Jesus prayed! All the time! And Jesus told us to pray as well.

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- [Follow Jesus Maze](#) (and [ANSWER SHEET](#))

Bible:

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (I Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV)

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6 ESV)

"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you." (Jeremiah 29:12 ESV)

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22 ESV)

"But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" (Luke 11:28 ESV)

“But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.” (Luke 8:21 ESV)

“I publicly proclaim bold promises. I do not whisper obscurities in some dark corner. I would not have told the people of Israel to seek me if I could not be found. I, the LORD, speak only what is true and declare only what is right.” (Isaiah 45:19 NLT)

Quote for Today:

“Prayer makes a godly man, and puts within him the mind of Christ, the mind of humility, of self-surrender, of service, of pity, and of prayer. If we really pray, we will become more like God, or else we will quit praying.” - E.M. Bounds

“Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night.” - George Herbert

“Becoming like Christ is a long, slow process of growth. Spiritual maturity is neither instant nor automatic; it is a gradual, progressive development that will take the rest of your life.” - Rick Warren

Points to Ponder:

- Prayer doesn't always look or sound formal. In fact, in my life, it has become more of a rhythm of constant communication - as I do my chores, as I fall asleep, as I'm going for a walk. We want to make sure to seek God in all areas of our lives and make prayer a priority.
 - Take a minute and pray right now - no matter what you're doing! Invite God into your time/your work/your play and ask Him to speak to you as you go about your day.
-

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I am delighted to honor you by coming to you in prayer. I know that as I do, you will form me more and more into the image of Christ. I read in Ephesians 4:13 (CEV), “This [work] will continue until we are mature, just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him.” I am a work in progress, Father. While I recognize that my transformation into the likeness of Jesus will take my entire life, I ask that you help me to grow more like Jesus each day. I have been given a firm foundation because I have been created in your image, fearfully and wonderfully made, and I yearn to be even more like you. I recognize, Father God, that you are the potter and I am the clay and I submit to your molding and forming in my life. Please continue to guide me on your path of righteousness and shape me continually to be more like Jesus. Amen.

Seven Purposes of Fasting

Days 8-14

1. To Prepare for Ministry
2. To Humble Our Hearts
3. To Receive God's Wisdom
4. To Obtain Breakthrough/Pulling Down Strongholds
5. To Repent
6. To Develop Discipline
7. To Worship

Week 2 || Day 1

PURPOSE OF FASTING: TO PREPARE FOR MINISTRY.

If I want to be a bodybuilder, I better be lifting weights.

If I want to be a singer, I need to learn how to stay on pitch.

If I want to be a doctor, I should start by learning about the human body.

If I want to be a runner, I have to hit the trails with some running shoes.

If I want to be a painter, I should buy some paintbrushes and canvas.

No matter what we do in life, there is preparation for it. Our careers and our hobbies all take preparation. Even taking a nap requires preparation; Do I want to be lying down? Should I nap on the couch or on my bed? Should I wait until after work (Yes! The answer is yes - unless you are a sleep psychologist.)? Shall I nap after lunch? Should I rest my book on my chest or mark it with a bookmark and close it? Do I need a pillow? Should I doze off while others are in the room? Do I want the light on or off? Should I use the bathroom before I fall asleep?

See? Everything takes preparation! Ministry is no different. It takes preparation. And fasting is a large part of that preparation. If you're thinking, "Well, I'm not in ministry.", I would disagree. So would the Word of God. Paul says in Acts: "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to *equip his people for works of service*, so that the body of Christ may be built up... "(Acts 4:11-13 NIV). If you are "his people," YOU are being equipped for ministry!

Furthermore, Ephesians 4:16 (NLT) states: "He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part *does its own special work*, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." It's extremely important to realize that ministry in the Bible is never a special title or occupation - it never refers solely to pastors or preachers. Ministry refers to a special *function* - and each one of us has gifts that are meant to function as a part of the body of Christ! Romans 12:6-8 (NLT) says this: "In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly."

We are all in ministry! We are all using our gifts to build the body.

Therefore, when we read that fasting prepares for ministry - that means you!

As those in ministry, we follow Jesus' example. Before Jesus began His ministry on earth, He fasted. "After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.' Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights He fasted and became very hungry." (Matthew 3:16-4:2 ESV).

Jesus was likely still wiping the Jordan River waters from His eyes as God declared His pleasure with His son. Most of us would look at that moment and think, "This is it! This is the moment to start my ministry! God has spoken publicly about His pleasure with me! This is the perfect ministry launching pad!"

However, instead of using "God-spoke-audibly-about-my-awesomeness" as a marketing campaign, Jesus heads into the desert for an isolated 40 day fast, eating nothing and being tempted by Satan. Jesus fasted in the desert before He preached a single sermon, before He ever healed a soul, and before He called any of His disciples. When the fast was successfully completed, Jesus was prepared for the spiritual battles ahead.

No matter what you're fasting, or for how long, God's intention for fasting is to fill you up to overflow - to be fruitful in the ministry He has set aside for you! It's his intention to help you realign your life so that you can consistently receive all he has for you and allow those things to flow through you to build His Church.

Illustration: The first FULL fast I (Becca) did came at the tail end of a required Spiritual Disciplines retreat I took part in during my first year of grad school. We dove into studying aspects of the Christian faith and on retreat we focused on a few and then the day we returned home we did a 24 hour fast.

On retreat, we stayed at an active convent...and we lived side-by-side with the sisters at the convent. The first spiritual discipline that we focused on was community. Focusing on community was easy peasy for me. I love learning about people and the things they love. I am telling you, I don't care what you do....if you love it and you share that passion with me...I'll want to do it! So, with that in mind, by the end of the five days, I was convinced, no joke, that I should be a nun. I had loved preparing food with the sisters and chatting with them over shared meals. While my cohorts were sitting around a table altogether, I was trying to remember the names of all of the nuns and

gleaning all of the information I could glean about being a nun....because....well, this was obviously my future.

Another spiritual discipline we focused on was solitude. After the high of focusing on community I was certainly not prepared for SOLITUDE. I thought this portion of the retreat might actually kill me. We had to be alone for ten hours...with no music, communication, books, breathing.... honestly....I might be remembering the length of time and the restrictions incorrectly, but, it was really difficult for me.

When we came home from the retreat and it was time to do our fast, I was sure I was prepared. "I got this." No biggie. Way easier than solitude.

Nope.

24 hours without food. Come on. How hard can it be? I will tell you this....I did it. Because I knew that Jesus said, "when you fast, not IF you fast." So I knew I could. But 21 hours into the fast I remember lying on the carpet of my friend's apartment, desperately trying to fall asleep to escape my hunger pangs as my classmates stepped over me while making the meal to break our fast. It was rough. And I know that sounds melodramatic, but that was a big step for me.

That first fast was really difficult to me. Because in my life, I had subjected my body to TOO MUCH in many aspects (too much activity, too much in my schedule, too much food)....but I had never subjected my body to that LITTLE. I had grown accustomed to gluttony as a way of life.

I imagine you have had much the same issue - too much of things...but rarely have you subjected (willingly) yourself to too little! To effectively use the gifts God has given us, to enter into the ministry He has called us to, it is vital to make fasting a part of our lives.

Kids SEEK, too!

* **Note to caretakers:** *Model biblical fasting. Kids learn more from what they see than what they hear. When teaching the discipline of fasting, know that you can't lead kids to do something that you're not willing to do yourself.*

Kids' Illustration: I wanted to fast, but I had never done it before. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, we were at home. I wanted to do my part. My mom couldn't fast because she had a baby a few months ago and my little sister and brothers were too young to fast. It would be just me and my dad.

I decided I was only going to skip breakfast because this was my very first time fasting, and I didn't know how long I would last. On Saturday night I had a delicious dinner, and then my family said a prayer for my dad and me to start our fast.

The next day we had church. I was trying to distract myself from the fact that my sister was snacking during service and I was really hungry. After church, I played worship songs on the piano. Later, when I looked at the clock, it was almost lunchtime! I had no idea how fast time had gone.

I decided to say a prayer to break my fast. During the prayer, I felt the Holy Spirit more strongly than I ever had before. I felt that everything was going to be OK. It was a great experience.

Alaina, age 9

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- Fasting Word Search

Bible:

"He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part *does its own special work*, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (Ephesians 4:16 NLT)

"After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.' Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights He fasted and became very hungry." (Matthew 3:16-4:2 ESV)

Quote for Today:

Fasting detaches you from this world. Prayer reattaches you to the next world. - Fulton J. Sheen

"When the Holy Spirit calls you to fast, He is preparing you for what is ahead." - Jentezen Franklin

Points to Ponder:

- We are all called to ministry! God has given us each gifts that He wants us to use. We become more in line with His will for our lives and our gifts when we seek Him through fasting.
- If you have not thought of yourself as a minister before, you are! If you are unsure what gifts God has given you, connect with us at hello@lifewest.church. We offer Growth Track, a class that allows you to discover the unique gifts and talents God has given you and how you can use them in the body!

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we thank you for calling us to building your Kingdom. We submit our wills and desires to you and we ask that you would help reveal to us how we can rightly serve You with the gifts you have graciously given us. Open our eyes to see how we can minister to you and to those around us. Thank you for blessing us with the body of Christ! We are so grateful that we are not here representing you by ourselves but that we are ministering alongside an eternal body of believers all over the world. We love you Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.

Week 2 || Day 2

PURPOSE OF FASTING: TO HUMBLE OUR HEARTS.

Often people think we fast for God so He will hear us or love us more. However, we already have His full love and His ear! In reality, fasting is for us. It humbles us and teaches us to depend on God and not ourselves. Fasting helps us to place God at the forefront of our lives. Richard Foster comments in *Celebration of Discipline*:

“It is sobering to realize that the very first statement Jesus made about fasting dealt with the question of motive. To use good things to our own ends is always the sign of false religion...Fasting must forever center on God. It must be God-initiated and God-ordained...Fasting reminds us that we are sustained by ‘every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’ (Matt. 4:4)...Therefore, in experiences of fasting we are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting!”

But as with other disciplines, fasting can open the door to a look-at-me attitude rather than a true desire to please the Lord. In Jesus’ day the Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12). While fasting, they walked around with downcast faces and unkempt appearances so that everyone would see their piety and praise them.

Why did Jesus abhor this practice? Because He could see their hearts. He understood their true motives. He also knew that fasting had been undertaken with wrong motives by the Jewish people in the past (see Isaiah 58:1-7).

So, what about fasting today? The issue is the same. How we fast depends on who we are fasting to impress. If our fast is taken on in humility, for our spiritual benefit and God’s glory, then there is no need for any man’s approval and our fast will be honoring to God. And how does one allow fasting to help humble us? Recognizing our dependence on God is humbling. Acknowledging our weaknesses is humbling. And fasting is shown throughout the Bible to be a practical, physical way that we are able to humble ourselves

But humility doesn’t come naturally. Everything in us strives to keep our pride. We have to willingly fight against that pride in order to reorder our lives according to spiritual truths. There’s something incredibly powerful that happens when we wholeheartedly surrender pride and satisfaction in the world to make space for more of God. God loves to fill us when we hunger! In his patience he waits for us to cry out to him to bring us into the fullness of what he has for us. But in his pursuit of us he constantly whispers from his Spirit to ours, beckoning us to give up our glory in this world for His glory in both this world and eternity.

Furthermore, if we are motivated to fast by love for God and our neighbors, our humble stance will, in turn, "loose the chains of injustice... set the oppressed free... share food with the hungry... provide the wanderer with shelter... and the naked with clothing." (Isaiah 58: 6-7) When our hearts are humbled and our faith is wholly focused on the wonder and glory of our Heavenly Father, "Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard." (Isaiah 58: 8).

Illustration: *"Lenny Skutnik had no intention of being a hero that day. The staffer at the Congressional Budget Office in Washington was having an ordinary winter day when Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the 14th Street Bridge over the Potomac River shortly after takeoff. Those who survived the crash faced death as the plane sank in the icy waters.*

A helicopter dropped a rescue line to one of the survivors, but she was too weak to hold on. Lenny Skutnik saw what was happening and dove into the water. He swam out to her and pulled her back to shore, saving her life. Two weeks later, President Ronald Reagan invited Skutnik to attend the State of the Union address, and in describing the accident said: "We saw the heroism of one of our young government employees, Lenny Skutnik, who, when he saw a woman lose her grip on the helicopter line, dived into the water and dragged her to safety."

Skutnik was honored by the president of the United States, not because he tried to draw attention to himself but because he did what was right in a crisis. Satan tells us that we need to be sure everything we do is seen and praised. Yet God reminds us that attempts to promote ourselves eventually backfire." - Allan Metcalf, *Presidential Voices*

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration: This is a testimony from a 6 year-old boy:

"I wanted to tell you how some of this has been true in my life.

When my family worships together, each child in our family draws a business card out of a basket. Each card has a number on it: one through six. Those who draw numbers five, four, three, and two get to sit on the sofa. Number one and six have to sit on the chairs. Two times I traded places with someone on a chair so that they could sit on the sofa. I was able to put myself last.

One time, I was sitting in the middle seat of the van. Laura wanted to sit next to Gina and I was in the middle. So I sat somewhere else. I obeyed the Holy Spirit telling me what to do."

Kids' Activity for Today's Prayer Focus:

- [Humility Coloring Sheet](#)

Bible:

“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting; And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.” Psalm 35:13 (NASB)

“And it came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently. Then the word of the LORD came . . . saying, “Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me?” 1 Kings 21:27-29 (NASB)

“Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself?” (Isaiah 58:5 (NASB)

Quote for Today:

“A fast is not a hunger strike. Fasting submits to God's commands. A hunger strike makes God submit to our demands.” - Edwin Louis Cole

“Fasting is what prepares you for a new anointing.” - Jentezen Franklin

“When you are hungry for God; He will fill you.” - Jentezen Franklin

“Not everyone who fasts is humble. But humble people fast.” -unknown

Points to Ponder:

- Are you in a crisis, depressed, in genuine need, or facing a major decision? Fasting is an excellent place to start.

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, today I am humbling myself. I am submitting to you. I am seeking you in all things. Please surround me with your provision and protection as I seek you humbly and choose to submit my whole life to you. I pray, Jesus, that you reveal to me the places in my heart which need to be realigned as I experience all God longs to do in me through the gift of fasting. Amen.

Week 2 || Day 3

PURPOSE OF FASTING: TO RECEIVE GOD'S WISDOM

One reason we fast is for revelation, wisdom and spiritual insight. Listening for and determining the will of God for our lives helps us answer difficult questions and address challenges. Fasting also helps us receive God's wisdom for making decisions. These decisions can help orient our entire future!

The Bible also shows that leaders in the early church fasted and worshipped in order to receive God's wisdom concerning who to send as missionaries. Acts 13:2-3 says, "One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Appoint Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.' So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way." NLT

This is intentional. These men were meeting, needing to hear from God about a specific matter. They prayed and fasted and asked the Holy Spirit for direction. And I believe God gives us supernatural wisdom for matters we're concerned about. Who should I marry? Where should I live? How should I respond in this situation? As you fast, ask God to reveal things to you. Ezra tells us that in fasting and earnest prayer "our God would take care of us, and he hears our prayer." Ezra 8:23 NLT And if it isn't you, but it's someone else who is struggling, maybe God wants to shift the situation through you and YOU fasting can help the Holy Spirit give direction. What if fasting is about what God wants to do THROUGH you? You should know, without a doubt, that as you fast you are accomplishing more than the physical eye can see. As you pray, ask God for revelation and understanding for the truth of God's Word. Ask that God would allow that truth to light up every room in your heart and mind and ask for wisdom to apply this truth to your life!

Why does fasting help us find wisdom and guidance? Fasting is a means of giving ourselves wholly to the Lord. When we fast, our mind, soul, and spirit become more receptive to God's Holy Spirit. God says that He will give wisdom to those who seek it. So, the apostles and early believers showed us that we may seek wisdom through fasting. We see the early Christian leaders, Paul and Barnabas, fasting for guidance and wisdom. However, this is actually not the only time in the Bible that shows leaders fasting to seek God's guidance.

In Judges 20, we see that God gave favor to the Israelites because they chose to fast. It was then that God determined to give them wisdom and guidance on how to overcome their enemies.

Illustration: "A cowboy was riding his stallion down a dirt road when a police officer flashed his lights and pulled him over. He said, "Sir, I have been trying to pull you over for a mile. Do you know that your wife fell off the horse, a mile down the road?" The cowboy smiled and replied, "Thank God, I thought for a moment that I had become deaf." - Kory Ferree

If you're having a difficult time hearing God's voice, make sure you haven't left Him somewhere back down the road! Fasting is an element that allows us to keep God front and center in our lives!

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration: In his book *Directions*, author James Hamilton shares this insight about listening to God: Before refrigerators, people used icehouses to preserve their food. Icehouses had thick walls, no windows and a tightly fitted door. In winter, when streams and lakes were frozen, large blocks of ice were cut, hauled to the icehouses and covered with sawdust. Often the ice would last well into the summer.

One man lost a valuable watch while working in an icehouse. He searched diligently for it, carefully raking through the sawdust, but didn't find it. His fellow workers also looked, but their efforts, too, proved futile. A small boy who heard about the fruitless search slipped into the icehouse during the noon hour and soon emerged with the watch.

Amazed, the men asked him how he found it.

"I closed the door," the boy replied, "lay down in the sawdust, and kept very still. Soon I heard the watch ticking."

Often the question isn't whether God is speaking, but whether we are still enough and quiet enough to hear. Yes, Jesus assures us that our heavenly Father always listens to us, but do we really listen to Him? Do we follow the instructions of Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God? in order to receive God's wisdom?"

Kids' Activity for Today's Prayer Focus:

- [FAST TO SLOW Coloring Sheet](#)
-

Bible:

"So we fasted and implored our God for this, and he listened to our entreaty." (Ezra 8:23 ESV)

"While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off." (Acts 13:2-3 ESV)

“And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” (Acts 14:23 ESV)

“If any of [us] lacks wisdom, [we] should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to [us].” (James 1:5 NIV)

Quotes for Today:

“If you're having a difficult time making the best decision then consider fasting. Fasting is simply taking something you regularly do and replacing it with praying and seeking God. For example instead of eating a meal you can take that time to seek God and allow Him to speak to you about the decision.” - Dan Black

“Many times the rewards of fasting come after the fast, though from time to time answers come during the fast.” - Jentezen Franklin

Points to Ponder:

- Is there a decision that you are trying to make and needing guidance for? Take some time today to bring it to the Lord and ask for His wisdom.
 - “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” (I Corinthians 14:33 ESV) God loves to help us out of our confusion! Allow Him to help direct your decisions.
-

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, we come before you today and humbly ask for your wisdom. We know that you have said in James 1:5 (NIV) that “If any of [us] lacks wisdom, [we] should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to [us].” We thank you that you grant that wisdom and today, we also pray for revelation and understanding for the truth of your Word. We ask that You would allow that truth to light up every part of our hearts and minds! And we pray for the wisdom to be able to apply those insights to our lives. We pray that you would awaken the hearts and minds of the people of West Michigan. Awaken us out of our complacency, our apathy. Bring us deeper into a revelation of the love you have for us. Mark us with your glory and your truth and enable us to be the salt and light of the world. It’s in Jesus’ mighty name we pray, amen.

Week 2 || Day 4

PURPOSE OF FASTING: TO OBTAIN BREAKTHROUGH/ PULLING DOWN STRONGHOLDS

Fasting helps with deliverance from bondage, sin and circumstances we find ourselves in. Psalm 69:9 TLB "My zeal for God and his work burns hot within me." Are you burning hot today for Jesus, or are you just lukewarm? Are you coming to God to check a box, to see what He has to offer you, or to give God a grade on a scale of 1-10?

We are called to more than that! We are called to be on fire. WHITE HOT FOR GOD.

The common denominator in past revivals is that the church was white hot for God. They weren't the smartest or the most gifted. But they were passionate about the things of God, and they were passionate about seeking his presence through prayer and fasting. And praying and fasting is the avenue God's chosen to do this because those things don't discriminate. Anyone can pray. Anyone can fast.

If we keep reading in Psalm 69:9-14 TLB "And because I advocate your cause, your enemies insult me even as they insult you. How they scoff and mock me when I mourn and fast before the Lord! How they talk about me when I wear sackcloth to show my humiliation and sorrow for my sins! I am the talk of the town and the song of the drunkards. But I keep right on praying to you, Lord. For now is the time—you are bending down to hear! You are ready with a plentiful supply of love and kindness. Now answer my prayer and rescue me as you promised. Pull me out of this mire. Don't let me sink in. Rescue me from those who hate me, and from these deep waters I am in."

Today, some of you are in deep waters, and you feel like you're suffocating and you feel like your circumstance are about to pull you under. Cry out to God. If you turn and seek the lord and pray and fast he will hear your cry. He will answer. He rewards those that diligently seek him. There is nothing too hard for him to pull you out of this morning.

Some of you are caught up in addictions. No matter what your addiction is: lying, substance abuse, people-pleasing, stealing, gossiping, pornography, drunkenness. We have the ability to humble ourselves and pray and fast and break these addictions. If sin has you broken down, I want to tell you that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Jesus isn't here to make you feel bad about your situation. He is here to pull you out of it and rescue you from it. If you will submit your will and your flesh to

him, he will help you. You will be enlightened through the Holy Spirit to receive revelation from God and his Word will come alive to you.

Isaiah 58:6 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?" EVERY YOKE. Some of you have been going around in bondage for five, ten, twenty years. You've been battling the same thing. You've had the same struggle your whole life. That's not how you're called to live. The Bible says, "He who the son has set free, is free indeed."

In Matthew 17 Jesus comes into town and there's a fuss happening and Jesus steps in to see what's going on. A man runs up to him and says his son is demon-possessed. He had asked Jesus' disciples to get rid of the demon, but they couldn't. So Jesus commands the demon to leave and then later tells the disciples, who have commanded demons to flee before, that THIS kind only comes out by prayer and fasting. Matthew 17:21 NKJV

THIS kind can only come out by prayer and fasting. Are there things in your life, that you have tried everything to get rid of, that can only come out with fasting? This thing you've been battling? How long have you hung onto it? Are there things in this community, in this nation...that we have tried everything to figure out? The government, the businessmen, the military...they can't solve it for us. There are some KINDS that will only be overcome through prayer and fasting. And we have to recognize that our temptation to sin is not unique; everyone faces temptation. Maybe you, however, feel chained to it like a compulsive slave. Well, scripture promises 'a way out' in 1 Corinthians 10:13 "The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure." 1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT. Fasting can be the very way of escape for you.

Keep going. Don't lose heart. A breakthrough will come.

Illustration: "About 28 years ago, sores developed inside my mouth. At first I did not pay much attention to them as I thought the sores would pass, but still they persisted and steadily became worse.

After some time, I entered the hospital for examination and treatment. Even with the treatment my mouth was not healed. Every time I ate any food, the pain in my mouth was excruciating. I felt so sorry for those of my family who constantly had to care for me that I wanted to die. I began to wander from hospital to hospital seeking some way to cure this dreadful disease.

Many skills of medicine were tried, but no one could cure my disease. During my wandering from hospital to hospital, I spent all my money and had to sell all my property to pay the medical expenses. I gave up all hope of living and hated myself and this disease that was destroying my life. Weeping and writhing in agony and pain, I waited for death to relieve me of this misery. During this time, many of my Christian friends advised me to come to church and trust in Christ, but I doubted the power of God. How could a God that I could not see heal me of a sickness that all medical science had no cure for?

Finally, after much persuasion, because I knew I was dying I ventured out to the prayer mountain. As I stayed there, my doubts began to fade. I listened to many testimonies from different ones of how God healed them of all types of diseases. The desire to seek God with fasting and prayer became so intense that I could not resist any longer and decided to fast for nine days. As I began to fast, I confessed all my sins of the past. I came unprepared to meet the Lord but He loved me, called me, and met me as I prayed. On the third day the unhealthy flesh inside my mouth began to fall off, and the pain began to disappear. All the sores were completely healed as I fasted and prayed.

Although I did not know before that God was living, I met Him personally and experienced His power in my life. I came to the prayer mountain with unbelief, but the testimonies of those around me generated faith within me. As I fasted and prayed, God completely healed me. I know that Jesus is the Physician that is above every physician. I give all glory and praise to God.” -Myung Hee Byan

Seomyan, Sihung
Kyangido, Korea

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration: There was a story of a young girl from long ago who had never traveled. Finally, her grandparents picked her up to take a trip. She stepped onto a train to travel throughout the countryside. The journey would take them across two large rivers and numerous wide streams. From a long ways off, the view of the approaching water scared the little girl. Never having traveled before, she could not understand how the water would be safely crossed. As they got closer and closer to the river, however, a bridge appeared, and the train would safely cross the water. This same feeling was repeated in the girl two or three times until, finally, the child leaned back with a sigh of relief.

“Somebody has put bridges for us all the way!” she said in trusting content.

That is life. It can be easy to fear things, and those troubles may look dark ahead; but as we move forward in prayer and confidence we find that there is a way through them. God has built bridges for us all the way.

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- God Makes a Way Coloring Sheet

Bible:

Isaiah 58:6 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6 NLT)

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12 KJV)

"The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure." (1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT)

Quote for Today:

If a man has nothing to eat, fasting is the most intelligent thing he can do. - Hermann Hesse

"Fasting breaks the spirit of heaviness." - Jentezen Franklin

Points to Ponder:

- What spiritual battles are you experiencing in your life? Do you need breakthroughs in your personal life, your family, your finances, your church or your community? Follow Jesus' example. Pray and fast for a move of God's power in your life.

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, we come before you in the name and authority of Jesus Christ, asking you to destroy every thing, every stronghold, every Goliath, and

every mind-oppressing spirit that seeks to keep us bound. As Jericho's walls crumbled, we pray that the enemy's plans against us, in all forms, will be demolished and be shattered by your great strength. We thank you for giving us a way to overcome by the willing sacrifice of your precious son, Jesus, who paid for our sins with his life. It's in his powerful, and yet oh, so wonderful, name we pray. Amen.

Week 2 || Day 5

PURPOSE OF FASTING: TO REPENT

The book of Joel is a mysterious book of the Bible. Joel was a prophet of whom little is known, but he was charged with a major task. Joel was responsible for highlighting Israel's need for repentance in order to restore a right relationship with God. In Joel's day, the nation of Israel was guilty of playing pretend when it came to repentance. They would go through all the motions of holiness without allowing their hearts to be turned to God. However, putting on false displays of piety mean nothing if the heart is unchanged. In the second chapter of Joel, the prophet is speaking for the God of Israel when he says this:

"That is why the Lord says, 'Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.' Return to the Lord your God, for he is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love." (Joel 2:12-13 NLT)

"Tear your hearts." Other versions say "rend your hearts." To "rend your heart" in repentance is to deeply recognize your brokenness and your desperate need for God's forgiveness and restoration. In "tearing" our hearts, we discover that "the LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed" (Psalm 34:18 NLT). When we've wandered from God, and we acknowledge a need to turn back to Him, what He desires is "a broken spirit," for God "will not reject a broken and repentant heart" (Psalm 51:17 NLT). We open the door for a restored relationship with God when we tear our hearts before Him.

So fasting without repentance is futile. In typical repentance we may say a few words and ask for forgiveness before moving on with our day. But combining fasting and repentance goes one step further. While it isn't a requirement for God's forgiveness, it does help us in our repentance by forcing us to deal with our selfish desires.

Throughout the Word, God couples fasting with repentance. Look at the account of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20. He's ambushed by his enemies and they go to God and acknowledge their desperate need for Him and their powerlessness apart from Him. Jehoshaphat calls the people to fast one day. Just one day. They fast and pray and God sends them out in the morning and "the king appointed singers to walk ahead of the army, singing to the Lord and praising him for his holy splendor." (2 Chron. 20:21 NLT) What happens next is miraculous! Verse 22 says, "At the very moment they began to sing and give praise, the Lord caused the armies of Ammon, Moah, and Mount Seir to start fighting among themselves."

Then enemy killed themselves! The enemy took out the enemy. That's what happens when we pray and fast. Darkness is effectively crippled and the enemy turns on himself. Read through the account of Jonah and the pagan nation, Ninevah. God sent Jonah to tell them to repent. So Jonah walks around throughout the land, saying, "In forty days, you're going to be wiped out. In forty days, if you don't repent, you're going to be destroyed." And the people are convicted and the king is convicted as well. And he sends out a decree. "All right everybody, for one day we're going to pray and fast and put on sackcloth and 'LET EVERYONE CALL URGENTLY ON GOD!' (Jonah 3:8 NIV)

God's response to a pagan nation repenting and turning to Him is that He preserves the nation. If he will do that for them, what will he do for one of His sons or daughters?

Illustration: "Sandra Bullock won the 2010 Best Actress Academy Award for her portrayal of Leigh Ann Tuohy in *The Blind Side*. The sensational film chronicles a Christian family who took in a homeless young man and gave him the chance to reach his God-given potential. Michael Oher not only dodged the hopelessness of his dysfunctional inner city upbringing, but became the first-round NFL draft pick for the Baltimore Ravens in 2009. At a recent fund-raiser, Sean Tuohy noted that the transformation of his family and Michael all started with two words. When they spotted Michael walking along the road on a cold November morning (the movie depicts it as nighttime) in shorts and a T-shirt, Leigh Ann Tuohy uttered two words that changed their world. She told Sean, "Turn around." They turned the car around, put Michael in their warm vehicle, and ultimately adopted him into their family. Those same two words can change anyone's life. When we turn around, we change directions and begin an exciting new journey. Some may need to make an about-face concerning their disbelief in Christ, or it could be a Christian needs to turn around and reconsider the value of fervent prayer. Whatever your situation, a great story of wonderful change could be just two words away." - *In Other Words*

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration: A soap maker and a pastor were walking together down a street in a large city. The soap maker said to the pastor, "The Gospel you preach hasn't done much good, has it? Just look around. There is still a lot of wickedness in the world, and a lot of wicked people, too!"

The pastor said nothing until they passed a dirty little child playing in the mud near the road. Seizing the opportunity, the pastor replied, "I see that soap you make hasn't done much good in the world either; just look at all of this dirt, and all of the dirty people around."

The soap maker said, "Oh, well, soap is only useful when it is applied."

And the pastor said, "Exactly. The same is true of the Gospel."

God's Word says many things about saying sorry (and really meaning it!) for things we've done wrong. Forgiveness is always possible - but it is still true that our job is to do what the Word says and admit that we've done wrong and ask for that forgiveness.

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- Junk Food Cross Out

Bible:

"You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you." (Proverbs 28:13 GNT)

"Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord." (Lamentations 2:19)

Quotes for Today:

"God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." - C.S. Lewis

"Our God is a holy God and prayer is the vehicle that God has given us to approach Him. Indeed, prayer offered by a Christian harboring sin is akin to a plane without wings, a car without wheels or a boat without a rudder. Make no mistake about it—God wants to hear our prayer but flagrant disregard for the commandments of God will quickly stop His ear." - Homiletics class at West Coast Baptist College

Points to Ponder:

- As you are fasting, be sure to ask God to open your eyes to areas of your life that require repentance. When He does, confess them and seek forgiveness. You will soon discover that a repentant heart is a peaceful heart.
- It is possible to fast and not be heard by our Father God. Isaiah 58:4 says, "You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high." How were

the people fasting? Without repentance. Make sure to make repentance a part of your fasting.

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, I thank you that your name is powerful. I thank you that it is by the power and mercy in your name that I am able to approach your throne boldly. I step into your presence today, Jesus, and ask that you would reveal anything in me that is out of line with your will for my life. I repent for the things I have allowed to creep in and the things I have willingly opened the door to. I commit to turn to you and I ask for your help in staying true to you in all things. I lay my heart bare before you and ask that you would cleanse me of all unrighteousness so that I may be blameless in your sight. It's in Jesus' mighty name I pray, amen.

Week 2 || Day 6

PURPOSE OF FASTING: TO DEVELOP DISCIPLINE

Our spirits function in much the same way that the muscles in our body do; the more they are exercised, the stronger they get. Fasting gives our willpower muscle an unbeatable workout that not only builds its ability to refrain from certain foods, but also builds its ability to discipline ourselves in all areas of life.

Fasting submits our mind and body to the spirit of God. Your spirit will start to have dominion over your mind and your body. In Phil. 3:19 Paul says this, "Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things." He's saying that those who constantly appeal to the flesh, who are constantly pleasing the flesh, for them, destruction is their end.

You see, you are a spirit-being and your spirit is meant to rule over your mind and your body. But most of us are just ruled by our worldly desires.

Galatians 5:16 (NIV) says, "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." That's it? Walk by the Spirit? It has to be more complicated, right? There must be more hoops to jump through. But there aren't!

In the garden of Eden God told Adam and Eve they could feast on ANYTHING they wanted. Think of all of the things they could have eaten; Avocados, mangoes, grapes, raspberries, sweet potato... anything. Except one thing. Just one. Don't eat of THIS fruit. But what do they do? They succumb to the seduction of earthly things; power, dominion. But we aren't left in that place of brokenness. Jesus comes along and he's baptized and led by the Holy Spirit out into the wilderness and the very first thing Satan tempts him with is not money, not power, not fame, or glory.....it's food.

It's the same temptation as the one in the garden.

And Jesus Christ answers, saying, "People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4 NLT

Jesus overcame for you!

Illustration: A few years ago Samuel was working out of town and for six weeks he was gone from early Monday morning until Friday evening. This meant a lot of Monday-Fridays of me sitting at home with the kiddos, taking care of all of my usual tasks and adding those that he does to them. It was a rough stint for awhile but I found a way to comfort myself. It's called the CREAM CHEESE DANISH. And you can buy them the cheapest at Costco. But Costco doesn't sell things in packages of one or two. NOOOOOOOO..... Costco sells them in packages of eight. And they're nearly the size

of my face. Well....the kids convinced me to buy these and my intention was that only THE kids would eat them. But then they went to bed, I was alone and wanted something tasty. And their golden-brown, flaky pastry filled with the slightly sweet cream cheese filling called to me. And soon I found myself finishing multiple cream cheese danishes. I found myself committing gluttony.

Now, we don't often discuss gluttony as a sin in America. In fact, we reward it. There are eating contests for pie, hot dogs, donuts, hamburgers and any other food you can think of. We celebrate it and cheer them on and then give the winner a prize! As a culture we don't view gluttony as one of the "big offenders" when it comes to sin. But I believe that the overindulgence of things in life is what is killing this western world. We're eating ourselves to death; both physically and we're feeding on things of the world, spiritually, that are malnourishing our lives.

I read a statistic from 2013 that said that America produces 10 billion donuts a year. They say that is enough that if we put them side by side they could go around the world 19 times.

We have a deep affection for food. We have a deep desire to please the flesh on a daily, hourly basis. The Bible calls it the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. John says that this desire "comes not from the Father but from the world." 1 John 2:16 NIV

Fasting brings us to a point of telling our bodies that they are not in control of us. It allows us to build discipline for the things of God. It allows us to withstand temptation because we've done it in the most basic of human needs - our appetite!

Kids SEEK, too!

* **Note to caretakers:** *Fasting is a discipline not a punishment. It is about the heart. It's important to make sure we're not using the biblical discipline of fasting to punish poor behavior.*

Kids' Illustration: Henry was a very impatient child.

He could hardly focus on one task before jumping into another.

One day, while watching a movie, he decided that he wanted to be a rock climber. So he told his grandfather, "I want to become a rock climber! What should I do?"

His grandfather took him to a climbing gym and introduced him to the climbing instructor. The instructor trained Henry in different climbing moves. And even though the little boy was very enthusiastic, he didn't want to practice only one thing at a time. He wanted to do it all!

Days passed and Henry didn't get better at climbing. He frowned at his grandfather, "I am not getting stronger. What will I do now?"

His grandfather took him on a walk by the beach and pointed to the cliffs. "Do you know, Henry, that the water breaks down these rocks?"

Henry's eyes widened, "Really? But these rocks are so big! How can the sea break them down?"

His grandfather smiled and watched as Henry lightly splashed around in the water, "It takes many years, Henry. It doesn't happen overnight. Just like you cannot become a great rock climber overnight. You need to be disciplined in your work and be patient. Then you will one day reach your goals. Discipline is hard to find, though. Ask God to help you develop discipline for the things you'd like to grow in.

We achieve our goals through discipline. We develop discipline as we seek the Holy Spirit's help.

Kids' Activity for Today's Prayer Focus:

- FASTING CODE
-

Bible:

"People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4 NLT)

"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16 NIV)

"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things." (Philippians 3:19 NLT)

Quote for Today:

"Fasting reduces the power of self so that the Holy Spirit can do a more intense work within us. " - Bill Bright

"Fasting is not nearly so deadly as feasting." - J. Harold Smith

"More than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us." - Lynn M. Baab

Points to Ponder:

- Do you have areas you are struggling to have discipline in? Take a second to write them down. Commit to praying over each of these areas as you continue your fast.
 - Ask God to reveal how you can continue to grow in self-discipline as you seek Him through fasting. When we realize that fasting helps us in the area of food discipline, it is much easier to see other pursuits of discipline as achievable.
-

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we love you. We ask that you continue to fill us with your Holy Spirit as we submit our lives to you today. We pray that you would help us with the discipline needed to choose you above all else and to bring all areas of our lives into agreement with your will for us. Father, we thank you for your presence. It's so glorious, wonderful and available. Your eyes go to and fro throughout the earth seeking out those who are hungry and those who have faith. May we be that people. In the name of your precious son, Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Week 2 || Day 7

PURPOSE OF FASTING: TO WORSHIP

In the book of Luke, there was a prophetess, Anna, who was the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. "She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, *worshiping with fasting and prayer* night and day. "(Luke 2:36-37 ESV)

Anna was a prophetess, and she realized that she could bless God and worship Him through prayer and fasting. That prayer and fasting resulted in her being so in tune with God that He spoke prophecies to her that she shared with Jesus' parents when Jesus was dedicated at the temple. "And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem." (Luke 2:38).

Worship is one of the most overlooked elements of effective fasting. As I look through the Word, I am amazed by the idea that we can "bless" the Lord. In 1 Chronicles 29:20 (NKJV), King David commanded the people of Israel to, "*Bless the LORD your God.*" It is commonplace throughout the Bible that the person with greater standing grants the blessing to the one of lesser standing. However, there is a very real and tangible way in which we are called to be a blessing to our Heavenly Father! We can bless God through our adoration and time spent with Him. In fasting, our reliance is solely on God and cannot be placed in outside sustenance.

We don't need to worship God for Him to *be* God. Our worship doesn't change God. He is just as much God without our worship as He is with it. Yet, the Word tells us that our worship blesses Him. Our devotion moves His heart.

In the book of Acts we read about the first believers. "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they worshipped the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" These followers of Jesus fasted and prayed and just spent time worshipping the Lord. It seems they had no agenda but to love Jesus and worship the Father. Andrew Murray said, "*Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.*" The first century believers fasted to let go of the visible, natural things in order to take hold

of their High King. During our time of fasting, let's set our hearts on loving and pursuing Jesus. Reading through Acts, we see that Paul was sent out after that period of fasting and worship. God gave supernatural wisdom and practical instructions as a result of that fasting and worship! Those instructions changed the course of history! If Paul had not taken the gospel to Rome, it would not have traveled to where we are in the United States.

I wonder what could happen in our lives if we delight in God through fasting and worship? Because of who God is, I can guarantee you that when you bless the Lord, you will be blessed! Keep your focus on Jesus, and you will be able to rest peacefully in the fulfillment of His promises in you, to you, and through you.

Illustration: "Blaise Pascal observed that the people who have the greatest influence in shaping the hearts and minds of any generation are not the folks who write the laws, but those who write the songs. Plato observed, musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten." (Source unknown).

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration: "I was eating in a restaurant when Mike Croel, a linebacker for the Denver Broncos walked in. I was so excited because he played for the Nebraska Cornhuskers in college and I had followed his career closely. I happened to be wearing Huskers stuff and went and got his autograph right there at the booth where he was sitting. I used this story to describe my awe, that this amazing man was that close to me, and my joy, how excited I was that he was there. Awe and Joy are two emotions I experienced and in worship we should experience those emotions also. Awe, we are in the presence of God, and joy, we are glad to be there. - Stan Roda, *Sermon Central*

Kids' Activity for Today's Prayer Focus:

- [Worship Anywhere Coloring Page](#)
-

Bible:

"[Anna] was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, *worshiping with fasting and prayer* night and day." (Luke 2:36-37 ESV)

"Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they worshipped the Lord and

fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" (Acts 13:1-3 NIV)

Quote for Today:

"Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in Him a source of sustenance beyond food." - Dallas Willard

Points to Ponder:

- As you fast, I encourage you to set aside time to wait in His presence and minister to the Lord only.
 - On your listening platform of choice, pull up soaking worship and spend time with God today.
-

CLOSING PRAYER: Father, we worship you. We come before you humbly asking that you would receive our gift of adoration as we bring our lives to you and submit them. We thank you that you are not a God who stands far-off, making demands of us that we cannot fulfill. Instead, you are near to us and allow us to worship you and bless you with our time and devotion. We ask that today the meditations of our hearts and our lives laid down would be pleasing to you. It's in Jesus' precious name we pray, amen.

Week 3 || Day 1

PRAYER FOCUS: LEADERS

As believers, most of us understand that we are called to pray at all times. And perhaps you've heard that it is important to pray for your leaders. In some instances we chose our leaders; in others, we didn't. In either case, however, we can choose to cover them in prayer.

The Bible tells us in a few places how and why we should cover our leaders in prayer. When it comes to praying for our leaders, 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NIV) gives us direct instruction:

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity." (1 Timothy 2:1-2 NLT)

Our leaders need God's help. Each and every one of them. While flawed people in places of authority can frustrate *us*, it isn't a shock to God that leaders are imperfect. This has been the case since Adam and Eve chose their own way in the garden. God knows our presidents and kings and queens are broken. He knows our pastors are no less in need of prayer.

And even when our leaders' flaws aren't on public display, they are still there. So we pray for God to reveal areas where His will is not being fully represented to the world around us. We pray for our leaders' purity and private lives. We pray for our leaders' decisions. We pray for mercy for our leaders and we pray that God would direct them.

We recognize that we are all in need of God's mercy. When we realize just how imperfect we ourselves are, we are humbled to offer deeper prayers for the imperfect men and women who lead us.

"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 NLT

Prayer is not passive! When we pray for each of our leaders we are taking part in advancing the kingdom of God here on Earth.

Romans 13:1 acknowledges that those who are in positions of authority may have been allowed there by God for a specific purpose. When we pray for them, we are praying that God's will would be done.

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.” (Romans 13:1 ESV)

It is also important for us to remember, as we pray, that our leaders face spiritual battles that they may not be aware of.

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12 NIV)

If our leaders do not make their decisions based on the Bible, we can still pray for their minds to align with God’s Word. We don’t have to complain; we can fight with the power of prayer.

Illustration: Years ago, when Samuel was leading the youth group at a different church, he called me to ask my opinion on a matter. The youth team was wanting to include a specific, secular song in one of their programs and it didn’t sit right with me as I prayed about it. Samuel had called me on speakerphone with his team present and after I had given my opinion, he chose another direction.

I was so upset about the entire situation. I remember feeling frustrated, thinking that the Holy Spirit had been so clear with me. I confronted Samuel about the matter and attempted to get him to change his mind. It did not work, no matter how much I told him the Holy Spirit was clear with me. I kept prodding and poking and pushing and berating. (How very holy of me, I know.)

Finally, weeks later, after a rather silly outburst from me in which Samuel reiterated his stance, I chose to pray about it. I asked that God would direct Samuel and that He would allow me to step out of the matter so that Samuel could clearly hear from Him and not be manipulated by my complaining. I asked that if it was God’s will that the song not be used that He would make it clear to Samuel. I asked for forgiveness for my pride in the matter and I asked for a softened heart toward Samuel. I also asked for a heart to pray for him as a leader.

God was so faithful. As soon as I turned to Him in prayer about the situation, my heart softened and I knew that, no matter the outcome, my heart was at peace knowing God was at work in both Samuel and myself.

The funny thing is, only hours after that prayer, Samuel came home and said He had strongly felt God lead him to change the song selection. While the outcome in this situation pleased both of us, the more important thing was me humbling myself to offer prayer for a leader (even if it was also my spouse). Our prayers will not always be

answered our way (and most are not!). However, God will move in our leaders lives if we allow Him to convict and correct, instead of our berating.

Kids SEEK, too!

* **Note to caretakers:** *As you pray, ask your kids to pray as well. Do your best to use the words that they use. This helps them to feel present and heard in prayer as they are learning to seek God.*

Kids' Illustration: Lacey wanted to pray for her teachers! One day, God gave her a clever idea! With her parents's help, she opened up a webpage that showed her school from the sky. She took time to pray for safety for her teachers and principal. Then they moved the map to the town hall and Lacey and her parents prayed over their community and mayor. Lacey realized that, even though she didn't know what the outcome of her prayers were, praying them helped her heart grow toward the leaders in her life.

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- Family Praying-on-the-Go Bags
 - Coloring Sheet for Praying for Leaders
 - Each day, pray for ...
 - Monday – Teachers & Coaches (by name)
 - Tuesday – Local Government of Mayor and City Council (by name)
 - Wednesday – Pastor and Spiritual Teachers (by name)
 - Thursday – National Government of President, Congress, and Supreme Court (by name)
 - Friday – law Enforcement & Firefighters (by name)
 - EXAMPLE PRAYER: Dear Lord, I pray for _____ and _____ to lead a life that is worthy of You Lord. I pray that _____ and _____ will please You in every way, God. I pray that _____ and _____ will want to grow to know You better, God. I pray that _____ and _____ will never give up and be joyful, God (based on Colossians 1:10-11).
-

Bible:

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity." (1 Timothy 2:1-2 NLT)

"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 NLT

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God." (Romans 13:1 ESV)

"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 6:12 NIV)

Quotes for Today:

"It is a great privilege, as well as our responsibility, to pray for our government leaders." - Billy Graham

"Every great movement of God can be traced to a kneeling figure." - D. L. Moody

Points to Ponder:

- Here are some of the ways to pray for those in leadership:
 - Pray for our leaders' salvation and/or heart change.
 - Pray for wisdom in making good decisions according to God's leading.
 - Pray that leaders' decisions and influence have a positive impact on our families, cities, churches, laws, schools, and more.
 - Pray for our pastors - their leadership, their relationship with God, their families, and that they would correctly handle the Word of truth that has been entrusted to them.

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear God, All authority is Yours, but You have given authority to leaders to protect and guide us. Today, we ask that You would give all our leaders wisdom, discernment, strength, and resolve. Keep them healthy, safe, and rested so that they can guide us.

Heavenly Father, we pray that our president and leaders will honor You and respect You as the One and only True God. We ask that You give us government leaders who will pray for Your Will and guidance. Lord, we ask that You pour out Your Spirit on this nation to help each of us discern good from evil, not as the eyes of man but through spiritual eyes. Lord, we ask that You humble our hearts so that we will be a nation filled with gratitude and thankfulness.

Likewise, give our **spiritual leaders** Your discernment on how to meet people's needs as they continue to glorify Your name and encourage and build the Church.

Give our **civic leaders** inspiration, courage, joy, and strength to meet the needs of their communities.

And **help us**, as leaders in our communities, to display courage, hope, generosity, and kindness. Would the way we honor others inspire those around us.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Week 3 || Day 2

PRAYER FOCUS: FAMILIES/RELATIONSHIPS

Today we get to pray for our relationships. For some people, this is the easiest prayer focus; for others it is the most difficult. No matter where you are on that spectrum today, it is important to realize that our prayers carry weight.

It can be one of the most amazing things to grow up in a home that is filled with prayer. There are many places we can't go with the ones we love...but prayer can travel anywhere! Husbands can pray for wives and vice versa. Parents can pray over their children from before they are conceived through adulthood. Because there is no junior Holy Spirit, kids also have full access to God through prayer! Everyone in the family can pray for and with one another as they resolve conflict and build strong relationships. We can pray for extended family and we can pray together in a way that it can be a life-changing experience that not only brings family members closer to God, but closer to each other! Below are some prayers that you may wish to include for your family:

Here are simple prayers to pray for your family. Remember, simple doesn't mean they don't pack power:

Scriptures to Pray Over Your Family

Numbers 6:24-26- "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace."

Lord, bless my family and children. Give them hearts that follow after you.

Deuteronomy 31:6- "Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

Father, give my family the strength to seek you when they are afraid. Give them courage to stand up to what is right. Help them tell fear to GO!

Psalms 51:10- "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

Father God, produce in my family clean hearts and renew their Spirits as they seek You!

Luke 10:19 – "Jesus said: 'Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.'"

God, Allow my family to walk in your authority. May they understand and live each day, asserting the authority You have given them as your dear children.

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

Father, take away any spirit of fear from my loved ones. Give them a spirit of courage and surround to your will. Give them the ability to see the things in their lives they can be thankful for.

A Prayer of Blessing for Your Family (Follow [this link](#) to listen to Kari Jobe sing a blessing over your family):

Heavenly Father, in the book of Psalms, chapter 103, verse 17, You give us a wonderful promise. "From everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children." Father, there is no better promise we could receive from you than to see our children and their children blessed. We thank you that you have given us this promise as we raise our children in light of your love and righteousness. We pray that you would continue to grant us Your blessings. Bless us so that we may reach out and bless others. Bless us with strength to be there for those we love, with wisdom to know what to say to bring comfort, with encouraging words to say, and even with the ability to tenderly address difficult truths. We love you, Lord and we pray for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer of Protection for Your Family

"Lord, I pray Your emotional, physical, and spiritual protection over my family. Keep evil far from them, and help them to trust You as their refuge and strength. I pray You will guard their minds from harmful instruction, and grant them discernment to recognize truth. I pray You will make them strong and courageous in the presence of danger, recognizing that You have overcome and will set right all injustice and wrong one day. Help them to find rest in Your shadow, as they live in the spiritual shelter You provide for them. Let them know that the only safe place is in Jesus, and that their home on earth is only temporary." - by *Rebecca Barlow Jordan*

Illustration: D. L Moody used to tell the story of a man who came to him and said, "When the Mexican war began I wanted to enlist. My mother, seeing I was resolved, said if I became a Christian I might go. She pleaded and prayed that I might become a Christian, but I wouldn't. I said when the war was over I would become a Christian, but not till then.

"All her pleading was in vain, and at last, when I was going away, she took out a watch and said: My son, your father left this to me when he died. Take it, and I want you to remember that every day at 12 o'clock your mother will be praying for you. Then she gave me her Bible, and marked out passages, and put a few different references in the

fly-leaf. I took the watch and the Bible just because my mother gave them. I never intended to read the Bible.

"I went off to Mexico, and one day while on a long, weary march, I took out my watch, and it was 12 o'clock. I had been gone four months, but I remembered that my mother at that hour was praying for me. Something prompted me to ask the officer to relieve me for a little while, and I stepped behind a tree away out on those plains of Mexico, and cried to the God of my mother to save me."

God saved him, and after the Mexican war was ended, he said, "I have enlisted again to see if I can do any good for my Master's cause." - D. L. Moody, *Anecdotes and Illustrations of D.L. Moody*

[*Website with daily prayers for our children](#)

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration: It's time to plant our gardens. As you plant, may I suggest the following rules for your garden planting:

Plant three rows of squash: 1. Squash gossip; 2. Squash criticism; 3. Squash indifference

Plant three rows of peas: 1. Purity; 2. Patience; 3. Perseverance

Plant six rows of lettuce: 1. Let us be unselfish and loyal; 2. Let us be faithful to duty; 3. Let us search the scriptures; 4. Let us not be weary in well-doing; 5. Let us be obedient in all things; 6. Let us love one another

No garden is complete without turnips: 1. Turn up for church, prayer and Bible study; 2. Turn up with a smile, even when things are difficult; 3. Turn up with determination to do your best for God's cause.

After planting, may you, "Grow in Grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18". - source unknown

Kids' Activity for Today's Prayer Focus:

- [5 Finger Prayer](#)
-

Bible:

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise." (James 5:13 NLT)

"If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:11 NLT)

Quote for Today:

"There is nothing that makes us love a man so much as prayer for him." - William Law

Points to Ponder:

- Prayer is powerful! It is not a Plan B, but our Plan A, our first line of defense AND our first line of offense.
 - We can pray for our families. Take time to list each family member and ask God to show you specific ways to pray for them and for your relationship with them.
-

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, we thank you that you are a God of connection. We thank you that you have placed us on this earth and given us connections with people whom you love. We ask today that you would grant wisdom as we pray for others. We ask that you would guide us toward relationships that are honoring of you and that you would place barriers in the way of relationships that You do not want in our lives. We pray that you would strengthen us through relationships with other people. We pray that we would be able to help strengthen and encourage them, as well. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Week 3 || Day 3

PRAYER FOCUS: THE LOST

Samuel used to think that drones were pretty lame. He didn't get the appeal. While he didn't go so far as to mock people who liked drones, they just weren't his thing. He might watch some drone footage here or there, but it never piqued his interest.

Then someone bought Samuel a drone as a gift. At first he thought maybe he'd return it and use the money for something else. But then he decided to take it out and give it a try.

Less than a week later, I (Becca) knew that if I couldn't find Samuel he was probably working on or flying his drone. He would hook it up to his iPad and all the kids could stand around as Samuel flew the drone over our neighborhood, high above the trees, until he could see something interesting. He'd spy on turkeys and deer, hovering lower and lower until they would be spooked and run off. In the summer, he'd take the drone on the boat and direct it to follow the tubing kids as they flew across the wake and crashed into each other. He was hooked. He could spend hours flying the drone, and time flew. It was suddenly enjoyable. He came to the realization that it wasn't flying drones that he hated. It was just watching others fly them.

So what made the difference? Participation. The worth of activities shouldn't be judged by spectating, but by participating.

Prayer is much the same. Prayer is not meant to be a spectator event. Prayer is meant for participation. When we step into prayer, it will not take long to realize that it is an easy way to spend our time. And one way that we can pray effectively, is for those who do not yet know the love of God.

Illustration: Jim Elliot was one of the martyred missionaries in 1956. He was a passionate Christian who journaled many of his thoughts and prayers. One such entry addressed his concern about impact. He wrote, "Father, make of me a crisis man. Bring those I contact to decision. Let me not be a milepost on a single road; make me a fork, that men must turn one way or another on facing Christ in me." His impact continues on even though he died over fifty years ago at the age of twenty-nine.

- Elisabeth Elliot, *Shadow of the Almighty*

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration:

Last night I took a journey
To a land far "cross the seas;
I didn't go by boat or plane,
I trusted on my knees.
I saw so many people there
In deepest depths of sin,
And Jesus told me I should go
That there were souls to win.
But I said, "Jesus, I can't go
And work with such as these.'
He answered quickly, "Yes, you can
By traveling on your knees.'
He said, "You pray; I'll meet the need,
You call and I will hear;
Be concerned about lost souls,
Of those both far and near.'
And so I tried it, knelt in prayer,

Gave up some hours of ease;
I felt the Lord right by my side
While traveling on my knees.
As I prayed on and saw souls saved
And twisted bodies healed, And saw
God's workers? strength renewed
While laboring on the field.
I said, "Yes, Lord, I have a job
My desire Thy will to please;
I can go and heed Thy call
By traveling on my knees.'
-Sandra Goodwin

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- Have kids spin a globe and spend some time looking up "Christians in _____", "Christian Missionaries in _____", "how to pray for Christians in _____." Then spend some time praying.
- Download this [Global Prayer Guide](#) from *Voice of the Martyrs*

Bible:

“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.” (Colossians 4:3 NIV)

“For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.” (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5 NIV)

“You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.” (2 Corinthians 3:3 NIV)

Quote for Today:

“...Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons -- but they are helpless against our prayers.” - Sidlow Baxter

Points to Ponder:

- Be mindful as you pray for the lost that you not make them an item to check off your list, but see them as people that God created in His image, who are already dearly loved by Him.
- Head to our [Missions Page](#) to see how Life West supports boots-on-the-ground ministries that are working to reach the lost daily.

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, today we come before you on behalf of those who do not yet know you. We ask, Lord, that you would continue to reveal yourself to them through your world and Your Word, as those you love share it. Father, we thank you that you would place people who love you on the paths of those who have yet to know you. We ask that you would help those believers to develop relationships and give them insight and discernment as they walk alongside the lost. We pray that as the Gospel is shared, hearts may be softened to the truth of your Word and the life-saving sacrifice of Jesus. We pray for strength and integrity for the believers who share the gospel. We ask that you would allow them to walk as a guide and be beacons that

point toward you. We pray for boldness for believers to share your Word and we pray for boldness for the lost to receive it. We ask for clarity as your message is shared with unbelievers and we ask that you would help to make the soil of their heart ready for the message of your love so that the cares of the world do not choke out Your Word. We pray for conviction of sin and for open eyes. And most of all, Father, we pray that they would develop a deep walk with you that Satan cannot snatch away. In Jesus' name, amen.

Week 3 || Day 4

PRAYER FOCUS: WIDOWS/ORPHANS

When it comes to the church, God has been clear that we are called to care for the widows and orphans among us.

While the two groups (and even the individuals within each group!) are vastly different in many respects - their personalities, challenges, financial status, and demographics - many of their basic needs are the same.

Here are 6 areas of prayer for widows and orphans:

Deliverance from Shame - Many widows and orphans feel blame for their positions. They may experience deep shame that doesn't belong to them at the loss of their spouse/parents. As we're praying for widows and orphans, we pray that God would continue to show them the truth of his Word - that "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ." (Romans 8:1-2)

Provision - Often widows and orphans are more at risk financially. One aspect of the 1st century church that was so appealing to outsiders was how they cared for all of their members. While other religions were mainly expected to give to the temples of their Gods - the Christian faith commanded that the body of believers care for each other as well, so there would be no need. God has promised to meet the deepest needs of widows and orphans - and one major way He does that is through the community of saints - other Christians! As we pray for widows and orphans to find provision (through skills, careers, etc.) we also must keep our eyes and ears open to practical needs that we can fulfill, both as individuals and as the church.

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

Freedom from Rejection - Widows and orphans are often left to find a new place in their worlds. What has always been known to them slips away and there may be a void to how they sense their "belonging." Belonging is a strong longing of every heart, so as a church it is vital for us to surround our friends who have lost their dear ones and envelope them in a community that welcomes them in and cherishes them. As Hebrews 13:5 states - "I will never desert you, nor will I every forsake you." The church must act as Christ's representative here on Earth and rally around the widows and orphans in our midst. God has also promised that He "sets the lonely in families." (Psalm 68:6 NIV) One "family" that they are set in is the Church.

Peace - Fear can disguise itself as a friend to those who are hurting and have lost loved ones. It attempts to steal the future by highlighting the past. But fear is something we are to stand against. In the New Testament, we read the words "one another" 100 times. This is a powerful concept because often those who are in a thriving season of life can stand in for those who are hurting and remind "one another," encourage "one another," "pray for "one another," in ways that the mourning are unable to do on their own. As we read through the Bible, it is clear to see that God's message on the brink of any new undertaking is "Do not fear!" As we pray over the widows and orphans in our congregation - and across the world! - be sure to pray against any fear they may be facing.

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." (John 14:27)

Protection - Psalm 68:5 tells us that God is "a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows." (NIV) Those who have lost parents and husbands require protection - emotionally, physically, and spiritually. God has promised that he is a defender of widows and a father to the fatherless. What do defenders and fathers do? They protect! They wrap loving arms around those they love to keep them safe from harm. We are the hands and feet of Jesus and so we must pray for our widows and orphans and offer protection by being advocates for the needs of our most vulnerable.

Comfort - All who are mourning need to know God is with them. There are often many shattered dreams and numerous levels of disappointments when we lose someone dear to us. God has told us that He is "the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3 NIV) As those in our midst are navigating their grief, come alongside them - in prayer and action - to comfort them.

Illustration: The following account is from Nancy Guthrie, who has lost two children.

Because my husband David and I have gone through the death of two of our children, and we do a lot of speaking and interacting with grieving people, oftentimes people ask us, "What do I say to someone who has just lost someone, or what do I do?" None of us wants to be that person who says the really stupid thing, or the really insensitive thing.

The first thing I would say to someone when you're trying to figure out what to do in regard to someone who's going through grief is, "Say something." Let's face it, it's awkward sometimes to know exactly what to say, and we have the sense in which we want to say something that's meaningful, maybe even memorable, compassionate. But the truth is, when you're going through grief, you don't need people to say something that's any of those things. You just really want a sense that they're with you in it, that

they want to be with you in it. People in grief want to know that others are, in a sense, carrying some of the sorrow that they are experiencing — just by the fact that others express that they care.

So often one of the best things to say is, “I don’t know what to say.” When you say to a grieving person, “I don’t know what to say,” in a sense it shows respect for their loss, as if I don’t presume to have an easy right answer, something to say that’s going to fix this. And so that’s a good thing,

Or just to say, “I’m so sad.” Sometimes we tend to think that someone who’s going through grief, that their sadness is a problem. And we want them to get through that sadness to being happy again — or back to some sense of normal — and yet it makes sense when you’ve lost someone you love, that you be sad.

And so to interact with someone, anticipating that they would be sad, and then expressing, “I am sad with you.” I mean, grief is a very lonely experience. You know, even if all your friends are there for you in the best way possible — your spouse is there for you, all of those things — the essence of grief is a deep, pervasive loneliness. And it means so much for people around us to overcome the awkwardness — and maybe even the desire and fears that I’ll say the wrong thing — to say something. Honestly, the most painful thing is when you’ve had a loss and someone around you—because of the awkwardness — never acknowledges it. That’s what hurts the most. Because what it says to you is that person you love who died doesn’t even really merit a mention. And that’s devastating.

I think another thing that keeps us from saying something to someone who has lost someone is that we think to ourselves something like, “Well, lots of other people are saying something to that person, and so they won’t even notice if I never acknowledged it.”

But here’s the truth. When you’ve gone through the loss of a loved one, it’s almost as if there is a barrier put up between you and every person in your world. And it’s not until that person acknowledges your loss that that barrier comes down. And it doesn’t have to be anything brilliant.

And sometimes it can even be wordless. I can think of times when I was going through grief when someone just came next to me and squeezed my hand or gave me even a knowing look, with that sense of, “I know what’s going on, and I’m sad and I’m in a sense speechless.”

And then one of the really beautiful things some people did was actually weep in my presence. And I know that sounds awkward for some people — I think especially men. I

know for my husband, he wouldn't say, "Wow, I was really hoping people would come and cry with me." That wasn't the form his grief took.

But for many of us, when you're carrying this huge load of sorrow and you look up, and you see someone who is shedding tears — that they are so identifying with your loss that they are in a sense carrying some of the load of sorrow for you — that's an incredible gift to give to someone who's grieving.

Kids SEEK, too!

* **Note to caretakers:** Loss can be a difficult thing to navigate in conversations with children. Take care to use language that is considerate of the child's age. Using language with words like "sad" or "lonely" can go a long ways to explaining the hurt to a child. Also highlight that there is hope - even when things seem scary or uncertain! God is a redeemer - He loves to restore what has been lost!

Kids' Illustration: Things looked bleak for the children of George Muller's orphanage at Ashley Downs in England. It was time for breakfast, and there was no food. A small girl whose father was a close friend of Muller was visiting in the home. Muller took her hand and said, "Come and see what our Father will do." In the dining room, long tables were set with empty plates and empty mugs. Not only was there no food in the kitchen, but there was no money in the home's account. Muller prayed, "Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat." Immediately, they heard a knock at the door. When they opened it, there stood the local baker. "Mr. Muller," he said, "I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you had no bread for breakfast, so I got up at 2 o'clock and baked fresh bread. Here it is." Muller thanked him and gave praise to God. Soon, a second knock was heard. It was the milkman. His cart had broken down in front of the orphanage. He said he would like to give the children the milk so he could empty the cart and repair it. - source unknown

God knows all about things that we may be uncertain about. He knows our challenges and He wants us to be praying about them!

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- Neighborhood Drawing

Bible:

“He is a father to the fatherless and an advocate for widows. God rules from his holy palace.” (Psalm 68:5 NET)

“You must not afflict any widow or orphan. If you afflict them in any way and they cry to me, I will surely hear their cry, and my anger will burn and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives will be widows and your children will be fatherless.” (Exodus 22:22-24 NET)

“Learn to do what is right! Promote justice! Give the oppressed reason to celebrate! Take up the cause of the orphan! Defend the rights of the widow!” (Isaiah 1:17 NET)

Quote for Today:

“God is pleased with no music below so much as the thanksgiving songs of relieved widows and supported orphans; of rejoicing, comforted, and thankful persons.” -
Jeremy Taylor

“Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For, indeed, that’s all who ever have.” - Margaret Mead

Points to Ponder:

- While it may seem uncomfortable to ask about the individuals who have passed away in the lives of those we love, it is often a great comfort to talk about dear memories or times they laughed.
- Sitting with those who are hurting is a wonderful way to show you care.
- Consider sponsoring a child - or start with praying for orphans and children around the world!

CLOSING PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we thank you that you have told us that you are a “stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.” (Psalm 9:9) We ask that you would continue to be what you have said in the lives of all of the widows and orphans in our midst and in our world. Hosea 14:3 tells us that in you “the orphan finds mercy.” Father, we ask that that mercy would be evident in the lives of each orphan as

they seek You. Deuteronomy 10:18 tells us that You “execute justice for the fatherless and the widow.” Come forth and execute justice for those who are in mourning. We also know that John 14:18 offers Your promise that you “will not leave [us] as orphans; [You] will come to [us].” Father, we pray in the name of Jesus, that you would continue to be with those who are hurting at the loss of loved ones - comfort them, provide for them, wrap them in your Love - and instruct us on how to do the same. Amen.

Week 3 || Day 5

PRAYER FOCUS: THOSE WHO ARE IN NEED OF HEALING/TRIALS AND UNCERTAINTIES

As a child, I never dreamed of wanting a garden. However, when Samuel and I got married, the idea of growing our food on our property got me excited. As a lover of books, I knew right where to start. I hopped online and requested every book on gardening that the library had to offer. I read the beautiful how-tos—from amending soil to harvesting perfectly round watermelons—I studied the effects of different minerals and fertilizers. I gathered the supplies I would need. I was ready!

And then I began my garden. It was soon overtaken by cutworms and rotting roots and weeds. My watermelons looked like olives. My soil was dense and did a better job of creating perfect mini ponds than nourishing plant life.

I soon learned that reading about gardening was much, MUCH different than actually gardening. I needed to spend time in the soil, feeling it in my hands and addressing the specific pests and issues that my soil produced. I needed to try different things and then switch up my practices if they didn't work. My success in gardening has come much more in getting my hands dirty than in filling my head.

Prayer is similar. Successful prayer isn't gained by learning, but by leaning. Just as gardening became easier and more fruitful as I practiced it, so, too, does prayer become more fruitful as it is practiced. We are meant to lean on the understanding and Word of God and pray! As we pray, then, we will see things change. We will grow more accustomed to how God speaks to us and how He allows His will to be accomplished.

"Prayer is surrender--surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boathook from the boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God." - E. Stanley Jones, *Liberating Ministry From The Success Syndrome*

Today, we are praying for healing and for rescue from trials and uncertainties. When praying for these things, it is important for us to first understand God's will in the matter. In the Lord's Prayer, we see that Jesus instructed his disciples to pray, "Your will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven." We know that in Heaven there is no illness, no trials or tribulations. So we pray in accordance with that. We can boldly come before God, asking for healing and rescue from trials, knowing that it is in accordance with His Word. Again, as we discussed in the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in

week one, we must also be prepared to glorify God as Lord “even if” He doesn’t answer our prayers the way we see fit.

Illustration: “On October 15, 1997, David Huxley strapped a harness around his upper torso and attached it to a steel cable some fifteen yards long. The other end of the steel cable was attached to the front-wheel strut of a 747 jetliner that weighed 187 tons. With his tennis shoes firmly planted on the runway, Huxley leaned forward, pulled with all his might, and began moving the jetliner down the runway. In fact, he pulled the 747 one hundred yards in one minute and twenty-one seconds.

God’s work resembles that 747 jetliner. Just as it is impossible to pull a plane any real distance without using its engines, we can do nothing in our own strength. We must pray for God’s power that enables His church to fly thousands of miles on the wings of Christ. The church needs God’s strength and help to grow”. - Craig Brian Larson

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids’ Illustration: From a student in the United Arab Emirates: When I was in school, I had to take the bus to travel back and forth each day, spending several hours on the bus. No one else went to my stop so it was of least importance and was the last stop. Some days I didn’t get home until late at night. The smell on the bus made me very sick and I would get home, not wanting to eat anything because my belly ached. It was tiring and frustrating. I knew it was a privilege for me to be able to go to school, but I was losing my desire to attend due to how sick I felt. I decided to pray that God would lessen the amount of time it took me to get to school. After three weeks of constant prayer, God answered my prayers! One day, many other kids from my neighborhood enrolled at the school, which led to a new bus being needed! My new bus only had one stop and my time on the bus was cut to a very short ride! God is good and He heard and responded to my prayers.

Kids’ Activity for Today’s Prayer Focus:

- Praying for Others in Need

Bible:

“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.” (Luke 18:1)

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.” (Romans 8:26 NLT)

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

Quote for Today:

“When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do; when we really upon education, we get what education can do; when we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do, and so on. Nor am I disposed to undervalue any of these things in their proper place, but when we real upon prayer, we get what God can do.” - A. C. Dixon, *Evangelism, A Biblical Approach*.

Points to Ponder:

- It is important when we pray that we pray according to the Word. One of the best ways to pray for others is by doing just that - praying through the Bible! We have an excellent prayer tool that you can use to do that!

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear God, we thank you that one name you have revealed yourself to us by is Jehovah Rapha, the God who Heals. We thank you that you sent Jesus so that we could pray that Your will would be done here on Earth as it is in Heaven. We thank you for healing for sickness and disease. We thank you for healing aches and pains. We thank you for healing broken hearts and broken minds. Father, we ask that you would continue to reveal ways that we can pray boldly to you, according to Your Word. We love you, Father! In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Week 3 || Day 6

PRAYER FOCUS: OUR CHURCH FAMILY/MISSIONARIES

The world exists as a canvas for God's glory. One way God is expanding His Glory is through missionaries living all over the world. To some of us, it may seem exotic and exciting to live that life - and it may be! - but there can be a heaviness that goes with it. There may be loneliness or a feeling of missing out. There are still hardships and can be danger as well. There are challenges to learning new languages - or if they are local - new customs and behaviors. Our missionaries and mission partners need our prayers and encouragement. And those in our church families do as well. Often there are difficult things that people are walking through that they may only share with a few close friends. We may not know all of the circumstances - but prayer can go places we can't! All over the world - and it can even enter the hearts and minds of those we pray for. Prayers are so important to strengthen the global body of Christ. They are our roots! Roots do the hard work of grounding and strengthening the tree. They are often hidden but are not less important than other things we can do as believers.

Illustration:

"The first message at the birth of Christ was a missionary message—Luke 2:10

The first prayer Christ taught was a missionary prayer—Matt. 6:10

The first disciple, Andrew, became the first missionary—John 1:41

The first message of the Risen Lord was a missionary message—John 20:17

The first command of the Risen Lord to his disciples was a missionary command—John 20:21

The first sermon given by an apostle was a missionary sermon—Acts 2:17-39

The first reason the Lord gave for Christian love was a missionary reason—John 13:35

The first coming of Christ was for missionary work—Luke 6:13-21

The second coming of Christ is to be prompted by missionary work—Matt. 24:14

Our Savior's last wish was a missionary wish—Matt. 28:19

The last wish of the Jesus as he was leaving should be the first wish of believers.—(Mark 16:15)" - source unknown

Kids SEEK, too!

* **Note to caretakers:** Encourage kids to ask others in the congregation what they need prayer for. Then ask if you can pray right then and there!

Kids' Illustration: 97% of the world has heard of Coca-Cola. 72% of the world has seen a can of Coca-Cola. 51% of the world has tasted a can of Coca-Cola. Coke has only been around since 1886 - 135 years! If God had given the task of sharing Jesus to the Coke company it would probably be done by now! (Source unknown)

However - God gives US the opportunity to share Jesus! We can do that right where we are and we can also pray for those who are doing that around the world. Life West Church supports many missionaries right here in Grand Rapids (you can find more at the Give page on our website), in the United States (including Hawaii!), and in Japan, Guatemala, Thailand, Uganda, and TWO missionary organizations in India!

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus:

- Pray for People Around the World

Bible:

"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message..." (Colossians 4:2-3 NIV)

"Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel." (Ephesians 6:19 NIV)

"Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we ask you to pray for us. Pray that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and be honored wherever it goes, just as when it came to you." (2 Thessalonians 3:1 NLT)

"And then he told them, ' Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.'" (Mark 16:15 NLT)

Quote for Today:

“In no other way can the believer become as fully involved with God’s work, especially the work of world evangelism, as in intercessory prayer.” — Dick Eastman, president of America’s National Prayer Committee

“We can reach our world, if we will. The greatest lack today is not people or funds. The greatest need is prayer.” — Wesley Duewel, head of OMS International

“Prayer is the mighty engine that is to move the missionary work.” — A.B. Simpson, founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

“The history of missions is the history of answered prayer.” — Samuel Zwemer, missionary nicknamed “The Apostle to Islam”

“Just a word of warning. Passionate prayers not only change the world, they have a way of transforming the people who pray. ... God’s goal is to recruit every one of us for his search and rescue team.” — Debbie Meroff, author

“I never knew before how much is dependent upon a full cooperation with the Lord in prayer. He has, in some sense, limited himself to the scope of the prayers of his people, as taught them by his Spirit. What a partnership prayer is!” — Phil Armstrong, SEND International’s first director

“Prayer needs no passport, visa or work permit. There is no such thing as a ‘closed country’ as far as prayer is concerned ... much of the history of mission could be written in terms of God moving in response to persistent prayer.” — Stephan Gaukroger, British philosopher and historian

Points to Ponder:

- Below is a prayer to pray but there are many ways we can pray for our missionaries and our congregation!
 - Pray for the boldness to share Jesus
 - Pray for protection for them and their families
 - Pray for peace in the missionary organizations
 - Pray for the salvation of the missionary’s own family

- Pray for their emotional needs
 - Pray for their relationship with God - that it would be continuously strengthened
-

CLOSING PRAYER: Father God, today we pray for missionaries around the world. We ask that you would open doors for them to be able to share the truth of your Gospel. We ask that you would protect them as they do so. We also ask that the Holy Spirit would continue to soften the hearts of the people who will be hearing the Bible for the first time, so that the message may be planted in their hearts and take root to grow strong! We pray that the missionaries would have a boldness for sharing who You are and the account of Jesus! We stand against any tricks of the enemy that would stand in the way of our missionaries and that you would help to remove obstacles from the paths of those furthering the Gospel. Finally, we pray that their ministry would be effective and fully lead by the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Week 3 || Day 7

PRAYER FOCUS: OUR OWN NEEDS/WANTS

As we prepare to go before God today with our own concerns and requests, it is of utmost importance that we first remember that God's *Presence* is greater than God's *Provision*. Who He is FAR outweighs what He provides. Earlier in this study we looked at Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who made it clear that EVEN IF God didn't answer their prayers as they wanted - they wouldn't stop believing in Him!

In light of that, it is also important to know that God is a FATHER - and one who loves to bless His Children! So much so that Jesus tells us in the Bible that "whatever you ask from the Father, He will give it to you in My name." (John 16:23). This doesn't mean ponies will appear in our kitchen or we'll wake up to a barnful of cash. We should be praying according to the Word of God. If you're not sure where to start - Jesus offers a great place - Matthew 6:9-13 "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'" Following that prayer - we can ask for needs and desires. As our Father, He loves to bless us!

Illustration: "Among those in the court of Alexander the Great was a philosopher of outstanding ability but little money. He asked Alexander for financial help and was told to draw whatever he needed from the imperial treasury. But when the man requested an amount equal to \$50,000, he was refused--the treasurer needing to verify that such a large sum was authorized. When he asked Alexander, the ruler replied, 'Pay the money at once. The philosopher has done me a singular honor. By the largeness of his request he shows that he has understood both my wealth and generosity.'" - *Today in the Word*, August 1991.

Kids SEEK, too!

Kids' Illustration: A lady once took her children to a restaurant. Her six-year-old son asked if he could say grace. As he bowed his head he said, "God is good, God is great. Thank you for the food, and I would even thank you more if Mom gets us ice cream for dessert. And Liberty and justice for all! Amen!"

Along with the laughter from the other customers nearby, a woman remarked, "That's what's wrong with this country. Kids today don't even know how to pray. Asking God for ice cream! Why, I never!"

Hearing this, the boy burst into tears and asked his mother, "Did I do it wrong? Is God mad at me?"

As she held him and assured him that he had done a terrific job, and God was certainly not mad at him, an elderly gentleman approached the table. He winked at the boy and said, "I happen to know that God thought that was a great prayer."

"Really?" the boy asked.

"Cross my heart," the man replied.

Then, in a theatrical whisper, he added (indicating the woman whose remark had started this whole thing), "Too bad she never asks God for ice cream. A little ice cream is good for the soul sometimes."

The mother bought her kids ice cream at the end of the meal. Her son stared at his for a moment, and then did something unusual. He picked up his ice cream and walked over and placed it in front of the woman. With a big smile he told her, "Here, this is for you. Ice cream is good for the soul sometimes; and my soul is good already." - source unknown

Kids' Activities for Today's Prayer Focus: [Lord's Prayer Coloring Sheet](#)

Bible:

"But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness." (Psalm 69:13)

"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Mark 11:24)"

"Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 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 your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:5-7)

Quote for Today:

“If the request is wrong, God says, ‘No.’ If the timing is wrong, God says, ‘Slow.’ If you are wrong, God says, ‘Grow.’ But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, ‘Go!’” - Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not To Pray*

Points to Ponder:

- Start by praying The Lord’s Prayer.
 - List requests and needs. Think back to Day 5 of our 21 days and P.R.A.Y.
 - P- Praise and worship God
 - R - Repent as you confess sins and shortcomings
 - A - Adoration and thanksgiving
 - Y - Your needs and desires
-

CLOSING PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, we come before you and we bring our worship to you. On a world where other things try to distract us from You we choose to focus on the wonder of who You are! We thank you that you are Good. We thank you that you are Holy and magnificent. We honor you. Today we ask that You would correct our hearts and clean up any YUCK that you find in us. We ask that you would enable us to turn from anything that stands against Your will and seek you wholly! We are so thankful for your mercy and grace. We are thankful for the blessings you have placed in our lives. And today Jesus, we also pray for (your requests and concerns) _____ . In Jesus’ name, amen.
