

A person wearing a blue and white plaid button-down shirt with rolled-up sleeves and blue jeans is kneeling on the ground. They are holding an open book, likely a Bible, with both hands. The person is wearing a brown leather watch on their left wrist and a silver ring on their left ring finger. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with dry leaves and twigs. The overall image has a warm, golden-hour light filter.

PRAYING WITH JESUS

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

March 4

A FRAMEWORK FOR PRAYER

"And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" (Luke 18:1-5, ESV)

How should we approach prayer? What does God expect for us when we enter into conversation with Him? Jesus wants us to pray, and He wants us to pray incessantly. The Father delights when we bombard Him with prayer. The more we pray, the more we express our dependence on Him, conceding control of our lives and trusting that only He can make the path straight for us. Do you pray like the widow? Do you keep "bothering" God with your prayers to know Him more, to love more, to find a job, to find a spouse? The list could go on but the principle is the same: God delights in those dependent on Him. Never stop beating on His door until He opens it or another door that we never expected.

Prayer Points:

1. What has God laid on your heart that you need to "bother" Him with? Is it a deeper desire to know Him? Is it finding a job? Seeking a spouse? Today, every time you think about that one thing, pray to God and ask Him about it. Continue to go to Him over and over.
2. Our heart as a church is to see people transformed by the gospel. Write down the name of 2-3 people, believers or not, who you are going to "bother" God about to transform them with the gospel this week.

March 6

A FRAMEWORK FOR PRAYER

"When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God." (Daniel 6:10-11, ESV)

Daniel and the lion's den. That is the well-known context for this passage. Most people see in this passage a man rebelling against a king's order not to worship God. However, what is more striking in this passage is the phrase, *"as he has done previously."* You see, Daniel had developed a life-long rhythm of prayer. It was like breathing to him. He had to do it. He wasn't aggressively flaunting the King's decree, but just like holding your breath too long, it was impossible for him not to pray. From childhood, Daniel had developed a habit of prayer in the midst of a hostile, foreign people. It carried over into some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable. But God continued to empower him to pray no matter the cost. Our world may not be as dangerous to pray in but we still have a litany of challenges that face us in developing a habit of prayer. Start today by simply reading some of the great prayers of the Bible listed in the first prayer point below.

Prayer Points:

1. Start your prayer time today by reading one of these great biblical prayers: 1 Kings 8:22-53, John 17, Ephesians 1:15-22, Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 1:3-11, Colossians 1:9-13. When you are done, try to find one part of it that struck you and pray it to God in your own words.
2. Identify one action step that you can take today to begin forming a life-long habit of prayer. For example, set your phone alarm for 4:08 p.m. and pray James 4:8, "Lord, draw near to me as I draw near to you in prayer." Or start a prayer journal on your phone's notes program or on a piece of paper that you carry with you. When you have a moment's breather lift up a simple prayer on behalf of someone on your list.

March 8

A FRAMEWORK FOR PRAYER

"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.'" (Matthew 6:9-13, ESV)

When we begin to think about a framework for prayer, our Lord gives us a model to pray along in Matthew 6, The Lord's Prayer. He gave this prayer to His disciples to help them understand how to pray as citizen's of the new Kingdom that He was bringing into the world. Here are six categories that will help us to "frame out" the Lord's Prayer:

The Father's Character: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

The Father's Kingdom: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The Father's Provision: "Give us this day our daily bread."

The Father's Forgiveness: "and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

The Father's Guidance: "And lead us not into temptation."

The Father's Protection: "But deliver us from evil."

Use these categories or buckets to think through your prayers to God. Whether you simply focus on one that comes to mind or is immediately relevant or you pray through each in sequence, as you begin to use this framework to guide you, you get to join in on 2000 years of God's Church praying like Jesus.

Prayer Points:

1. Choose one of the six categories that the Lord's Prayer gives us and pray over it. For example: if you are having to make a difficult decision, pray for the Father's Guidance and spend time thinking with Him in prayer about what you should do.
2. Ultimately, the foundation and focus of prayer is God's glory. Whenever you pray today, spend some intentional time reflecting on the goodness, mercy, compassion, and love of God and all that He has done for us in Jesus. Then ask Him how you can make that known to those around you.

March 11

THE FATHER'S CHARACTER

*"Great is our Lord, and **abundant in power**; His understanding is beyond measure." (Psalm 147:5 ESV)*

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so." (Genesis 1:1,3,6,9, 11 ESV)

One of the great character traits of God is His power! From the creation of heaven and earth to the creation of man, that power (that abundant power) is evidenced! God is **omnipotent** (all powerful). There is no greater power in existence than the power of God and there is nothing in existence that God doesn't have power over. His power is truly without limits and He can do anything He pleases. However, God will never do anything inconsistent with His nature or character. For example, God cannot lie (even though He has the power to do anything). Worshipping an all- powerful God gives us a source for confidence. You can know that God can handle any and all of the problems and concerns that you have. So as the words of this preschool song are written, let it be a reminder to all of us -

"My God is so big, so strong and so mighty,
There's nothing my God cannot do."

Yes, God's power is unlimited.

Prayer Points:

1. Knowing that God is omnipotent and can do whatever He desires, we can trust Him to control the events in our life. How does this knowledge impact the way you pray? Does it give you the courage to pray "big" prayers knowing that God is all powerful? Read Ephesians 3:20-21 and as you ask God for help with any big problems in your life, remember that He "can do far more abundantly than all we ask or think."
2. Knowing God is most powerful, what looks impossible to us is always possible to God. What are you facing in your life that looks impossible? Today as you pray, remember to pray with expectation as you are talking to God who can make water come from a rock!

March 13

THE FATHER'S CHARACTER

*"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."
(Psalm 139:7-10 ESV)*

God's presence is everywhere! He is **omnipresent!** There's nowhere you can hide from God because everywhere you go, He is already there! Even in a game of "Hide and Seek," everyplace you hide, God is there! He sees everything, as nothing is hidden from His sight. And as we continue to grow spiritually and spend more time praying, your awareness of God's presence with you will grow.

Prayer Points:

1. How conscious have you become of God's presence? Do you sense His presence only at church or do you sense His presence in all you do? Strive to spend time today talking to God and sensing His presence in all you do and think.
2. God's omnipresence is evidenced many times in the Bible, in particular the time when Jonah ran away from God and ended up in the belly of a big fish! Have you ever tried to "run and hide" from God? Today as you pray, begin by thanking God that you can't hide from Him. Thank Him that even when you do try to "hide" or feel that you are hidden from Him, that He knows exactly where you are and is with you everywhere.

March 15

THE FATHER'S CHARACTER

"Oh Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether." (Psalm 139:1-4 ESV)

Another one of God's traits is that He is **omniscient** or all-knowing. Just as Psalm 139 tells us - God knew every inch of our being even before we were born and He knows every inch of our being right now. He knows our next move and even our thoughts before we do! Psalm 147:5 tell us that His understanding (or knowledge) is beyond measure (or limitless). However, there are times in life when you may begin to believe that God isn't aware of you or what is going on in your life. You might begin to think God is distant and unaware of your daily experiences. Be assured, this is far from the truth! God knows everything about you including the number of hairs on your head. And just as He is all-knowing, nothing is ever hidden from Him or escapes His knowledge. And God is never surprised! He has perfect knowledge of all things - past, present, and future!

Prayer Points:

1. While God is all-knowing and knows every detail about you, He longs to hear your voice. Spend time today talking to God, thanking Him for His blessings, and praying for those whom He has put in your path.
2. Knowing that God knows your needs and understands all about you should give you great confidence and comfort. As you take time each day to talk to God about your needs and the needs of those he has put in your path (and thank Him for His goodness and blessings), begin a journal in which you write down your prayer requests and then watch for His answers to those requests.

March 18

THE FATHER'S KINGDOM

"Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!' **For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.**" (Luke 17:20-21)

These very words emphatically assert the actual presence of the Kingdom of God. It was already near them at the very time when they were asking when it would appear. The reign of God is "**in the heart.**" It does not come with ceremony and splendor, like the reign of historical kings, merely to control the external "actions" that assault the senses of people with admiration, but it rules in the heart by the law of God; it sets up its dominion over the passions and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The kingdom of God could not be said to be in the hearts of those Pharisees to whom the Master was especially directing His words of reply in this text.

Prayer Points:

1. The ultimate question in life: Does God's kingdom dwell in you? How do you really know if you've entered His Kingdom? If you don't know, please ask the church staff and/or leadership. "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*" Mark 1:15. Call upon the Lord and trust in Him today. Please share this good news with others.
2. If you have entered His Kingdom in Christ, then add to your prayer list those you know who have not trusted Christ and begin praying for their salvation. Also, pray that God will reveal to you those without Christ so you can share the gospel with them, so they too will enter His kingdom.

March 20

THE FATHER'S KINGDOM

*"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness**, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."* (Matthew 6:31-34)

We are to seek the things of God as a priority over the things of the world. Principally, it means we are to seek the salvation that is inherent in the kingdom of God because it is of greater value than all the world's riches. Does this mean that we should neglect the reasonable and daily duties that help sustain our lives? Certainly not, but for the Christian, there should be a **difference in attitude toward them**. If we are taking care of God's business as a priority...trusting in His salvation, living in obedience to Him, and sharing the good news of the kingdom with others...then He will take care of our business as He promised. No need to worry. **God has promised to provide for His own**, supplying every need (Philippians 4:19), but His idea of what we need is often different from ours, and His timing will only occasionally meet our expectations.

Prayer Points:

1. Review your worries and concerns by considering the time you spend, the talent you give to others, and the treasures you possess. Are they mostly on the temporal rather than the eternal; for yourself or others; for your kingdom or God's kingdom?
2. Establish a plan of how to seek His Kingdom and His Righteousness first in your daily routines. This new routine needs: Faithful reading of God's word, Prayer for others and His Kingdom to expand. Humbly obey the Lord as He leads and provides for you. Will you attempt to seek His Kingdom first in your daily routines?

March 22

THE FATHER'S KINGDOM

*"For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. **He proclaimed the kingdom of God** and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ--with all boldness and without hindrance!" (Acts 28:30)*

Paul was a prisoner, and therefore was not allowed to go out to preach in the synagogues, or the "churches" in the houses of any local disciple or the open places of the city. His friends were allowed free access to him, and in this way, there was probably a wider and more effectual opening for his personal influence than if he had spoken publicly. He could have had a greater risk of the organized antagonism or attacks of that day. What seemed at first a hindrance to his work there, but later he declared in Philippians 1:12 - *Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually **served to advance the gospel.***).

Prayer Points:

1. When we think of God's Kingdom more than our own kingdom, we can see why we are in a specific season of our life, a certain job or with a local church. His Kingdom is greater and His plan for our lives has a purpose that is equipping and fulfilling His Will. Will you discern and discover those without Jesus that He wants you to share His glorious gospel? Will you pray for those outside His Kingdom?
2. Courage is always needed to share spiritual truth because of our fears and lack of confidence. Allow Paul to be an inspiration to you today and pray for the Holy Spirit to give you a holy boldness to proclaim God's truth to others. Will you ask God to reveal that one you need to share the gospel with this day? Pray Proverbs 3: 5-6!

March 25

THE FATHER'S PROVISION

"Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against the Lord. For what are we, that you grumble against us?" (Exodus 16:4-7)

"I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet." (Deuteronomy 29:5)

"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." (Matthew 6:26, 31-32)

Exodus is one story of God's faithfulness to a people "of little faith." God's provision - manna, clothing, shoes, are provided even in spite of the Israelites constant grumbings. And these provisions last for 40 years! Why does He continue to take care of a people who are so unfaithful? God's provision has little to do with the people receiving and everything to do with God providing. God owns everything, and He has the resources to provide for us daily. We can trust in His provision for us and know that we will have daily bread for today and every day.

Each day we wake up, we must choose to have faith in God's provision for us. We are constantly surrounded by proof that He will provide, but we still struggle. God's character lets us know that He is in the business of providing for His people. In Matthew 6:11 Jesus prayed, "give us this day our daily bread," we can trust Him to bring provision through daily bread for us.

Prayer Point:

1. Trusting that God is the ultimate provider, spend time today thanking the Lord for His constant provision in your life.
2. Do you rely on yourself for your daily needs? Pray that the Lord will grow your faith and recognition of His provision for your daily needs.

March 27

THE FATHER'S PROVISION

*"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.'" **John 6:35***

*"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." **John 6:51***

*"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—" **Ephesians 2:1-5***

To truly appreciate a gift, we must first realize the sacrifice of the giver and to truly appreciate provision we must first recognize our need. We all have needs, and those needs can vary, but we all have one ultimate need and that is our need for a Savior, "the bread of life.". Before we can truly appreciate the gift of provision offered through Jesus, we have to understand how desperate our need is. Without a Savior, we are dead. The need doesn't get any bigger than that!

We all want to feel like we are worth spending time on, worth fighting for, worth sacrificing for and God believes all of these things are true about us. We know this because God provided His son to sacrifice His life for ours. Only through His suffering, and taking our punishment, are we able to have this gift of being alive with Christ.

God is the ultimate gift-giver. By giving us Jesus, He demonstrated sacrifice, as well as providing for our ultimate need. By recognizing our sinfulness, we can appreciate this provision and by recognizing the cross, we can appreciate the ultimate sacrifice.

Prayer Points:

1. Thank God for His provision of Jesus, "the bread of life" and the ultimate sacrifice He made on your behalf. Pray for the forgiveness of sin in your life and that the Lord will help you recognize your ultimate dependence on Him.
2. God calls us to "go into all the world and share the gospel." Pray that the Lord will place people in your path to share gift of salvation with today.

March 29

THE FATHER'S PROVISION

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' He said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' Abraham said, 'God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.'" So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.'" And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, 'The Lord will provide', as it is said to this day, 'On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.'"

Genesis 22:6-14

*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. **Philippians 4:19-20***

So often in the Bible the Lord calls His people to action. When God calls Abraham to make an extremely difficult decision, there is no hesitation in Abraham's response. He doesn't know all the details, he just knows he needs to go. God's timing is perfect, even when it comes to giving us information. He gives us the information we need at the exact moment we need it. We must trust God's timing.

In addition to trusting God's timing we also must trust God provisions. When Abraham's son, Isaac, asks "where the lamb for the burnt offering?", Abraham immediately responds with "God will provide." At that moment, Abraham chose to trust God's calling. Whatever the situation called for, he knew that God will provide him with whatever he needed in order to accomplish the calling. When we chose to do what God has called us to do, we are honoring God with our obedience to Him.

Prayer Points:

1. What is God calling you to do? Pray that the Lord will help you with obedience.
2. Are you trusting God's timing or yours? Ask the Lord to help you trust his plan and timing of that plan in your life.

April 1

THE FATHER'S FORGIVENESS

"For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26, ESV)

In this passage, we see the power of God displayed through the free gift of Jesus Christ. From the beginning of time, God had a plan to have a relationship with you, to spend eternity with you. However, starting very early on in this world, sin was born. Ever since Adam and Eve's first sin in the Garden of Eden, the rest of the world has fallen into this pattern of living in disobedience to God and putting other people, places and things in His rightful place. What are some areas in your life where you know you have been disobedient to God? In recognizing these things, give them to God through prayer, recognizing your need for God. He has already promised us that if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved (Romans 10:9, ESV). He desires to forgive us of our sins and has already defeated sin and made a way for us to live in complete relationship with Him, all we have to do is accept His offer.

Prayer Points:

1. Begin your prayer time with a heart of thankfulness to God for sending His only Son down to live the perfect life, die for our sins, and rise again three days later, defeating death.
2. Pray for forgiveness of the sins that you already recognize in your life, giving those things to God and remembering that He has already won the ultimate battle. Humbly ask God to reveal any sin in your life that you have not yet recognized.

April 3

THE FATHER'S FORGIVENESS

"And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Take heart my son; your sins are forgiven.' And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, 'This man is blaspheming.' But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' - he then said to the paralytic - 'Rise, pick up your bed and go home.' And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men." (Matthew 9:1-8, ESV)

Sometimes sin in our life can be crippling. It can affect our daily lives, thoughts, and interactions with others. If you have faith in Jesus Christ, your sins have been forgiven. You can be confident of this. Just like the paralytic, once you have faith in Christ, you are able to walk with confidence, telling and showing others of the power of Christ. Accepting Christ's forgiveness does not mean that you forget the sin that you once lived in. Instead it means that you are able to walk away from it, pointing others to Christ along the journey, seeking to glorify Him.

Prayer Points:

1. Begin your prayer time with a heart of thankfulness to God for sending His only Son down to live the perfect life, die for our sins, and rise again three days later, defeating death.
2. Pray that God would give you confidence in His power to forgive. Ask Him to use you and your past experiences to glorify Him, telling others of your faith and the freedom you have found in Him.

April 5

THE FATHER'S FORGIVENESS

"And he said to his disciples, 'Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in a day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him.'" (Luke 17:1-4, ESV)

"Then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.'" (Matthew 18:21-22, ESV)

Over and over again, you see the topic of forgiveness in the Bible. Not only is God's forgiveness of our sin a major theme, but the forgiveness of those who have sinned against us. We live in a fallen and sinful world, and because of that, we are going to experience pain caused by people in our lives. God commands us to forgive those around us, not just one time, but multiple times. The number seven throughout the Bible represents spiritual perfection. In forgiving others "seventy-seven times," you are able to personally grow in relationship with Christ. Not only that, but you are also able to live out the gospel to those around you, sharing the reason you ultimately choose to forgive them, which in turn gives you the opportunity to fulfil the first and second greatest commands, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this, 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other command greater than these." (Matthew 12:30-31, ESV) Is there anyone that you need to forgive? Is there anyone that you need to ask for forgiveness from?

Prayer Points:

1. Begin your prayer time with a heart of thankfulness to God for sending His only Son down to live the perfect life, die for our sins, and rise again three days later, defeating death.
2. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to anyone that you need to forgive and/or ask for forgiveness from. Ask Him to give you a spirit of humility and to present the opportunity for you to share the love of Christ with them.

April 8

THE FATHER'S GUIDANCE

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever." (Psalm 23, ESV)

Have you ever walked through something difficult or challenging that caused you to question the Lord's guidance in your life? Sometimes in seasons of difficulty we can begin to believe the lie that we are walking alone. We may feel lost. We may look to things in this world to give us direction. However as believers, we can be confident in the Lord's guidance of our lives. We know that if we have a relationship with Christ, he is walking right alongside us. He is the one who restores us, who makes us lie down, who casts out fear, and who guides us through the difficult circumstances we face.

Prayer Points:

1. While God is all-knowing and knows every detail about you, He longs to hear your voice. Spend time today talking to God, thanking Him for His blessings, and praying for those whom He has put in your path.
2. Knowing that God knows your needs and understands all about you should give you great confidence and comfort. As you take time each day to talk to God about your needs and the needs of those he has put in your path (and thank Him for His goodness and blessings), begin a journal in which you write down your prayer requests and then watch for His answers to those requests.

April 10

THE LORD'S GUIDANCE

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13, ESV)

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one." (James 1:13, ESV)

Have you ever had a moment where you found yourself at a mental crossroads between right and wrong? A time where you really wanted to do something, but you just knew it was sin? If so, then you've experienced temptation. We can clearly see in Scripture that God does not tempt us, but that isn't to say that God does not allow testing in our lives. It is often through temptation that we are given the opportunity to grow in relationship with Christ. We are given the opportunity to choose to honor and obey him despite the desires of our flesh. We are given the chance to say, "God I trust that your way is better than mine." In moments of temptation we can be confident that God has given us the ability to choose what will honor him, that there is a way of escape.

Prayer Points:

1. Take some time to identify the ways you are most commonly tempted. Ask God for victory over temptation and the ability to choose "the way of escape" that he has promised to provide when temptation comes.
2. John Piper said, "Memorizing Scripture enables me to hit the devil in the face with a force he cannot resist, and so protect myself and my family from his assaults." What Scriptures do you have in your arsenal to battle temptation? How much of God's word have you hidden in your heart to remind you of truth when the enemy attacks?

April 12

THE LORD'S PROTECTION

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe." (Proverbs 18:10, ESV)

"You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in your word." (Psalm 119:114)

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." (Isaiah 41:10)

In the days of the Old Testament, a strong tower was a common part of a city's protection plan. It provided warning and safety for those hidden behind its walls. If a man were to run into the tower he would feel safe and secure. In the same way God's name, which stands for his character and everything that he is, is to be the strong tower in our lives. We can run to him for safety and protection. He is the one who can shield us. He has given us his Word to guide us and to give us hope.

Throughout Scripture there is a common theme of God's protection over his people. No matter where they go or the choices they make he continues to provide for and watch over them. If we are in Christ, we are his people. We do not have to be afraid of the enemy because we know who wins. We know that Christ is fighting for us. We know that we can run to him and find safety in his loving arms.

Prayer Points:

1. Our goal as followers of Christ is to constantly run to Christ no matter the circumstances in our lives. What is your "safe place" that you run to when life is hard? Do you find yourself running to Christ or do you find yourself running to things of this world to find comfort and security?
2. Whether we see it or not, God has protected each of us in unique ways. Take the time to list out and recognize some personal ways that He has covered you with protection. Thank God for his provision, for his care, and for the ways he has shielded you from harm.