



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of September 13, 2026

Prayer for the Week

God of every generation, quiet my heart and open my ears. Help me listen today for your voice, not only in Scripture, but in the wisdom, questions, stories, and experiences of others. Give me humility to receive words that comfort me and courage to receive words that challenge me. May I listen with an open heart, trusting that you can speak through every generation. As I enter this time of devotion, help me hear you more clearly and follow where you lead. Amen.

Monday, September 14

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1–14

Now the boy Samuel was serving the Lord under Eli. The Lord's word was rare at that time, and visions weren't widely known. One day Eli, whose eyes had grown so weak he was unable to see, was lying down in his room. God's lamp hadn't gone out yet, and Samuel was lying down in the Lord's temple, where God's chest was.

The Lord called to Samuel. "I'm here," he said.

Samuel hurried to Eli and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

"I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go lie down." So he did.

Again the Lord called Samuel, so Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

"I didn't call, my son," Eli replied. "Go and lie down."

(Now Samuel didn't yet know the Lord, and the Lord's word hadn't yet been revealed to him.)

A third time the Lord called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

Then Eli realized that it was the Lord who was calling the boy. So Eli said to Samuel, "Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down where he'd been.

Then the Lord came and stood there, calling just as before, "Samuel, Samuel!"

Samuel said, "Speak. Your servant is listening."

The Lord said to Samuel, "I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of all who hear it tingle! On that day, I will bring to pass against Eli everything I said about his household—every last bit of it! I told him that I would punish his family forever because of the wrongdoing he knew about—how his sons were cursing God, but he wouldn't stop them. Because of that I swore about Eli's household that his family's wrongdoing will never be reconciled by sacrifice or by offering."

Observation

Samuel is a young boy serving in the sanctuary under Eli, an older priest whose own spiritual vision has begun to fade. The passage tells us that a word from the Lord was rare in those days. Into that silence, God calls Samuel.

The remarkable thing is that Samuel does not recognize God's voice. He assumes Eli is calling him. Three times Samuel goes to Eli, and three times Eli sends him back to bed. Finally, Eli realizes what is happening and tells Samuel how to respond: *"Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."*

Notice that Samuel needs Eli's wisdom in order to recognize God's voice. And Eli, in turn, needs Samuel's experience to realize that God is speaking in a new way. God's voice comes through a relationship between generations. The older person helps the younger person recognize what God may be doing, while the younger person becomes the one through whom God speaks.

Application

Sometimes we assume that if God is speaking, we will recognize God's voice immediately. But discernment often takes practice and community. We need people who have walked the road before us. We also need people who are walking roads we have never traveled.

Who is someone younger than you whose perspective you might need to hear? Who is someone older whose wisdom you have perhaps overlooked? Listening does not mean automatically agreeing. It means making room to discover whether God might be saying something through another person's experience.

Today, practice listening before responding, even if just for 5 seconds. You may discover that God is speaking in a voice you did not expect.

Prayer

Speak, Lord, for we are listening. Give us humility to recognize your voice, wisdom to discern what is true, and courage to listen when you speak through someone we did not expect. Amen.

Tuesday, September 15

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:24–27

When the Israelites saw Goliath, every one of them ran away terrified of him. (Now the Israelite soldiers had been saying to each other: “Do you see this man who keeps coming out? How he comes to insult Israel? The king will reward with great riches whoever kills that man. The king will give his own daughter to him and make his household exempt from taxes in Israel.”)

David asked the soldiers standing by him, “What will be done for the person who kills that Philistine over there and removes this insult from Israel? Who is that uncircumcised Philistine, anyway, that he can get away with insulting the army of the living God?”

Then the troops repeated to him what they had been saying. “So that’s what will be done for the man who kills him,” they said.

Observation

Israel’s army is terrified of Goliath, the Philistine warrior who has challenged them to send out one person to fight him. Day after day, the Israelites hear his threats but do nothing. Then David arrives. He is not a soldier. He is a young shepherd who has come to the battlefield simply to bring food to his brothers and check on them.

David hears Goliath and asks a simple question: What is going to be done about this? His question sounds almost naïve. Everyone else has already accepted the situation as impossible. David has not.

Sometimes fresh eyes allow us to see what everyone else has stopped noticing. The Bible frequently shows God working through people who occupy unexpected positions, young people, outsiders, women, foreigners, shepherds, prophets, and others whom society might not consider powerful.

Application

Familiarity can make us stop asking questions. We can become so accustomed to a problem, an injustice, a tradition, or a way of doing things that we no longer imagine anything different. But sometimes God speaks through the person who says, “Why are we doing it this way?” or “Is this really the only possibility?” Rather than dismissing those questions as inexperienced or naïve, listen carefully.

Today, think about a question someone younger or simply someone with a different perspective has asked that challenged your assumptions. Perhaps there was more wisdom in the question than you first realized.

Prayer

God of new possibilities, keep me curious. Help me listen to questions that challenge my

assumptions and give me the humility to consider that you may be speaking through someone whose perspective is different from mine. Amen.

Wednesday, September 16

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:28–30

When David's oldest brother Eliab heard him talking to the soldiers, he got very mad at David. "Why did you come down here?" he said. "Who is watching those few sheep for you in the wilderness? I know how arrogant you are and your devious plan: you came down just to see the battle!"

"What did I do wrong this time?" David replied. "It was just a question!"

So David turned to someone else and asked the same thing, and the people said the same thing in reply.

Observation

David's oldest brother, Eliab, hears David asking questions and becomes angry. Instead of engaging David's concerns, Eliab attacks his character. He assumes David is arrogant and irresponsible and tells him to return to the few sheep he is supposed to be watching. David could have responded with anger. Instead, he simply turns away and continues asking questions.

This is an important moment in the story because it reminds us that listening is difficult when another person's words threaten our sense of ourselves. Eliab sees David through the lens of his own assumptions. David is the youngest brother. He is a shepherd. He does not belong on the battlefield. Therefore, Eliab concludes that David has nothing valuable to contribute. But God is already doing something through David that Eliab cannot yet see.

Application

We all have our own versions of Eliab. Sometimes we dismiss a person's insight because of their age, experience, education, position, personality, or background. Sometimes we reject an idea because of who said it rather than considering what was said. The challenge is not simply to listen to people we like or agree with. The deeper spiritual practice is listening when someone's words make us uncomfortable.

Who is difficult for you to hear? What might change if, instead of immediately defending yourself, you asked, *"Is there something here God wants me to notice?"* Listening does not require us to accept every criticism. It does require us to remain open enough to discern whether there is truth in it.

Prayer

God, soften my defensiveness. When another person's words challenge me, help me pause

before I react. Give me wisdom to separate truth from anger and humility to hear what you may be saying through difficult voices. Amen.

Thursday, September 17

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:31–37

The things David had said were overheard and reported to Saul, who sent for him.

“Don’t let anyone lose courage because of this Philistine!” David told Saul. “I, your servant, will go out and fight him!”

“You can’t go out and fight this Philistine,” Saul answered David. “You are still a boy. But he’s been a warrior since he was a boy!”

“Your servant has kept his father’s sheep,” David replied to Saul, “and if ever a lion or a bear came and carried off one of the flock, I would go after it, strike it, and rescue the animal from its mouth. If it turned on me, I would grab it at its jaw, strike it, and kill it. Your servant has fought both lions and bears. This uncircumcised Philistine will be just like one of them because he has insulted the army of the living God.

“The Lord,” David added, “who rescued me from the power of both lions and bears, will rescue me from the power of this Philistine.”

“Go!” Saul replied to David. “And may the Lord be with you!”

Observation

When David’s words reach King Saul, David volunteers to face Goliath. Saul doubts him because David is young and inexperienced. David responds by telling stories from his own life as a shepherd. He remembers protecting his sheep from lions and bears. More importantly, David interprets those experiences through faith: the God who was with him before will be with him now. David’s testimony is not based on abstract theory. It comes from lived experience.

There is wisdom in remembering what God has done in our own lives. But there is also something important here for the generations around us: people need to hear one another’s stories. Older generations carry stories of God’s faithfulness that younger generations may not know. Younger generations carry experiences of God that older generations may never have encountered. We need both.

Application

Faith is transmitted not only through sermons and Bible studies but through stories. Tell someone a story (or sign up here - tinyurl.com/MessiahStories - to share your story at Messiah’s Storytelling Event on Sunday, Sept. 27) about a time when God sustained you. Tell them about a time when you were afraid but discovered courage. Tell them about a prayer that was answered or one that wasn’t answered in the way you expected.

And then listen to someone else's story. Don't listen merely to compare it with your own. Listen to understand what God may be doing in their life. The church becomes stronger when generations stop competing over whose experience of faith is better and begin sharing what each generation has learned about God's faithfulness.

Prayer

Faithful God, remind me of the ways you have carried me. Give me opportunities to share my stories with others and ears to receive the stories of others. May our shared experiences help me recognize your faithfulness across generations. Amen.

Friday, September 18

Scripture: Matthew 21:14–17

People who were blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and legal experts saw the amazing things he was doing and the children shouting in the temple, “*Hosanna to the Son of David!*” they were angry. They said to Jesus, “Do you hear what these children are saying?”

“Yes,” he answered. “Haven’t you ever read, *From the mouths of babies and infants you’ve arranged praise for yourself?*” Then he left them and went out of the city to Bethany and spent the night there.

Observation

Jesus is in the temple after entering Jerusalem. He heals people who are blind and lame, and children begin shouting praise: “*Hosanna to the Son of David!*” The religious leaders are indignant. They ask Jesus if he hears what the children are saying. Jesus’ response is striking. Rather than silencing the children, he points to Scripture to affirm their praise. The temple authorities, people with education, religious training, and institutional authority, miss what is happening. The children see something they do not.

This is part of the larger biblical pattern: sometimes the people we consider least significant become witnesses to God’s work. The children are not simply background characters. Their voices become part of the testimony.

Application

Who are the people whose voices you are tempted to dismiss? Children can remind adults how to wonder. Young people can challenge assumptions that have become invisible to us. Older adults can remind younger generations of the lessons learned through hardship and perseverance. The goal is not to decide which generation is wiser. The goal is to become a community where everyone has something to teach, and everyone has something to learn.

Today, listen for wisdom from someone whose voice might normally be overlooked. And if you are an adult, resist the temptation to immediately explain, correct, or fix. Sometimes the most faithful response is simply to listen.

Prayer

Jesus, you welcomed the voices others overlooked. Teach me to do the same. Help me create communities where children, young people, adults, and elders are heard, valued, and respected as people through whom your Spirit may speak. Amen.

Saturday, September 19

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:4–8

The Lord's word came to me:

"Before I created you in the womb I knew you;

before you were born I set you apart;

I made you a prophet to the nations."

"Ah, Lord God," I said, "I don't know how to speak

because I'm only a child."

The Lord responded,

"Don't say, 'I'm only a child.'

Where I send you, you must go;

what I tell you, you must say.

Don't be afraid of them,

because I'm with you to rescue you,"

declares the Lord.

Observation

Jeremiah receives God's call when he is young and immediately feels inadequate. His response is, "*I am too young. I don't know how to speak.*" God does not deny Jeremiah's youth. Instead, God tells him not to use it as a reason to believe he cannot participate in God's work. Jeremiah's calling reminds us that God's purposes are not limited by our assumptions about who is qualified.

The biblical story is filled with people who initially felt inadequate: Moses questioned his ability to speak. Gideon questioned his strength. Mary was a young woman from an insignificant town. David was the youngest son. Samuel was a boy. God repeatedly calls people who do not feel ready. And God repeatedly works through generations that others might underestimate.

Application

Perhaps you sometimes feel too young to have wisdom. Perhaps you feel too old to learn something new. Perhaps you believe your experience is too limited or perhaps you believe you have nothing left to contribute. Jeremiah reminds us that God's call is not determined by our insecurities. God asks us to listen, learn, speak, and participate. The church needs every generation, not because every generation thinks alike, but because every generation sees something the others may miss.

As this week comes to a close, consider your own role. What is God inviting you to hear? Whose voice do you need to listen to? And what might God be inviting you to say?

Prayer

God who calls every generation, help me trust that my voice matters and that I still have something to learn. Give me courage to speak when you call me and humility to listen when you speak through others. May Messiah Church become a community that hears your voice more clearly because we listen to one another. Amen.