



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of June 11, 2023

Weekly Prayer

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. -- Prayer of Good Courage

Monday June 12

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:4-13

Samuel did what the LORD instructed. When he came to Bethlehem, the city elders came to meet him. They were shaking with fear. "Do you come in peace?" they asked. "Yes," Samuel answered. "I've come to make a sacrifice to the LORD. Now make yourselves holy, then come with me to the sacrifice." Samuel made Jesse and his sons holy and invited them to the sacrifice as well. When they arrived, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, That must be the LORD's anointed right in front. But the LORD said to Samuel, "Have no regard for his appearance or stature, because I haven't selected him. God doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the LORD sees into the heart." Next Jesse called for Abinadab, who presented himself to Samuel, but he said, "The LORD hasn't chosen this one either." So Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, "No, the LORD hasn't chosen this one." Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD hasn't picked any of these." ¹¹ Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Is that all of your boys?" "There is still the youngest one," Jesse answered, "but he's out keeping the sheep." "Send for him," Samuel told Jesse, "because we can't proceed until he gets here." So Jesse sent and brought him in. He was reddish brown, had beautiful eyes, and was good-looking. The LORD said, "That's the one. Go anoint him." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him right there in front of his brothers. The LORD's spirit came over David from that point forward.

Then Samuel left and went to Ramah.

Observation

King David's name appears over 1000 times in the Bible. Before his famous battle against Goliath, David is anointed by God to be a leader in Israel. God had instructed the prophet Samuel to seek out the one whom God would raise up as a leader. God told Samuel, "Have no regard for his appearance or stature, because I haven't selected him. God doesn't look

at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the LORD sees into the heart.” (v7)

Application

Our temptation is to look at our appearances, resumes, or other ‘outward’ evidence of our success or worth. Yet God looks at our hearts. What is the story or song of your heart? Does it beat with bravery given by the Holy Spirit? Does it long for justice and peace in our world? How is God inspiring you to grow and serve?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, teach me what you taught Samuel—to value integrity and character inside me more than an impressive appearance on the outside. Let what you see in me be pleasing to you. Amen.

Tuesday June 13

Scripture 1 Samuel 17:34-37, 45-51

“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!”

But David told the Philistine, “You are coming against me with sword, spear, and scimitar, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel’s army, the one you’ve insulted. Today the LORD will hand you over to me. I will strike you down and cut off your head! Today I will feed your dead body and the dead bodies of the entire Philistine camp to the wild birds and the wild animals. Then the whole world will know that there is a God on Israel’s side. And all those gathered here will know that the LORD doesn’t save by means of sword and spear. The LORD owns this war, and he will hand all of you over to us.” The Philistine got up and moved closer to attack David, and David ran quickly to the front line to face him. David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone. He slung it, and it hit the Philistine on his forehead. The stone penetrated his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. And that’s how David triumphed over the Philistine with just a sling and a stone, striking the Philistine down and killing him—and David didn’t even have a sword! Then David ran and stood over the Philistine. He grabbed the Philistine’s sword, drew it from its sheath, and finished him off. Then David cut off the Philistine’s head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they fled.

Observation

Do you remember learning about this story as a child in Sunday School? After my boys first learned this story of David & Goliath, it was their requested dinner time read for weeks! Not only are stories about giants captivating, but they loved learning that a young boy (like them!) was the hero.

Application

This story gave my kids 'evidence' that they could do great things, too; and I love that they have this optimism. Admittedly, as an adult, my "realism" easily takes over. It doesn't make sense, rationally, that a child could beat a giant and experienced warrior. I certainly would rather my own kids be more cautious! But I wonder: how is God inviting me to have the optimism and courage of a child? How might I set aside my own caution or "realistic" perspectives, and trust in God to be with, and work through, me?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, whenever I face a giant problem, teach me how to keep my trust in you, not in my own strength. And work through whatever gifts you've given me to help defeat life's giants. Amen.

Wednesday June 14

Scripture 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-15

In the spring, when kings go off to war, David sent Joab, along with his servants and all the Israelites, and they destroyed the Ammonites, attacking the city of Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening, David got up from his couch and was pacing back and forth on the roof of the palace. From the roof he saw a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone and inquired about the woman. The report came back: "Isn't this Eliah's daughter Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" So David sent messengers to take her. When she came to him, he had sex with her. (Now she had been purifying herself after her monthly period.) Then she returned home. The woman conceived and sent word to David.

"I'm pregnant," she said.

The next morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. He wrote in the letter, "Place Uriah at the front of the fiercest battle, and then pull back from him so that he will be struck down and die."

Observation

The story of David is also a reminder that even the "greats" among us have seasons of trouble marred by sin. David began to act in ways that were self-serving and caused harm to many others. This story of King David with Bathsheba tells a troubling story about the evils of ego and power. David, now King, had sent his army out without him. He sees Bathsheba bathing, and is overcome with desire. Ignoring her marriage (and any recognition of the dynamics between power and consent), they are intimate and she

becomes pregnant. Then David sends her husband to the front of the battle lines, all but ensuring his death.

Application

One wrong step leads to another, and David finds himself in a whirlwind of bad decisions, that not only distance his relationship with God, but cause real harm to people around him. His actions are ones to be called out and condemned – these are not the ways that God’s anointed and beloved are to act in the world. Yet, we will see that God continues to forgive and redeem David. Bringing healing to him, to Bathsheba, and to their future generations. What is your story of sin and redemption? Are there places or times where you have caused harm, and needed God’s help to bring healing?

Prayer

Gracious God, when my steps begin to veer off course, guide me to return to you. Forgive me of my sins, and the harm I have caused to those I love. Work in my heart, that I can set aside my own ego, and faithfully follow you. Amen.

Thursday June 15

Scripture Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, God, according to your faithful love!

Wipe away my wrongdoings according to your great compassion!

Wash me completely clean of my guilt;

purify me from my sin!

Because I know my wrongdoings,

my sin is always right in front of me.

I’ve sinned against you—you alone.

I’ve committed evil in your sight.

That’s why you are justified when you render your verdict,

completely correct when you issue your judgment.

Yes, I was born in guilt, in sin,

from the moment my mother conceived me.

And yes, you want truth in the most hidden places;

you teach me wisdom in the most secret space.

Purify me with hyssop and I will be clean;

wash me and I will be whiter than snow.

Let me hear joy and celebration again;

let the bones you crushed rejoice once more.

Hide your face from my sins;

wipe away all my guilty deeds!

Create a clean heart for me, God;

put a new, faithful spirit deep inside me!

Please don’t throw me out of your presence;

please don't take your holy spirit away from me.
Return the joy of your salvation to me
and sustain me with a willing spirit.
Then I will teach wrongdoers your ways,
and sinners will come back to you.
Deliver me from violence, God, God of my salvation,
so that my tongue can sing of your righteousness.
Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will proclaim your praise.
You don't want sacrifices.
If I gave an entirely burned offering,
you wouldn't be pleased.
A broken spirit is my sacrifice, God.^[b]
You won't despise a heart, God, that is broken and crushed.
Do good things for Zion by your favor.
Rebuild Jerusalem's walls.
Then you will again want sacrifices of righteousness—
entirely burned offerings and complete offerings.
Then bulls will again be sacrificed on your altar.

Observation

Eventually, David makes his way back to God. Psalm 51 reveals to us David's prayer after he had been with Bathsheba. It is a prayer of confession – where he names his wrong doings, names the harm that he has caused, and asks for forgiveness from God.

Application

The story of our sin is never the end. God continues to redeem and forgive us. If you were to write a prayer, or song, of confession to God, what would you say? Take time to reflect on David's words in Psalm 51. Be honest with God and listen carefully to the words of God for you, too: "beloved of God, your sins have been forgiven."

Prayer

Good and loving God, when my love fails, you are steadfast. When my words and actions cause harm, you continue to reveal a path of restoration. In you, I find perfect and unfailing love. Thank you for your enduring presence. Help me to not only experience your forgiveness, but also offer it freely to others. Amen.

Friday June 16

Scripture 2 Samuel 7:8-11

So then, say this to my servant David: This is what the LORD of heavenly forces says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be leader over my people Israel. I've been with you wherever you've gone, and I've eliminated all your enemies before you. Now I will make your name great—like the name of the greatest people on earth. I'm going to

provide a place for my people Israel, and plant them so that they may live there and no longer be disturbed. Cruel people will no longer trouble them, as they had been earlier, when I appointed leaders over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. And the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make a dynasty for you.

Observation

These words are from the prophet Nathan to David about God's promises for his life and descendants. It begins with a brief summary of David's call story: from pasture and flock to leader of Israel. Then David is reminded of God's faithful presence and closes with this promise: "the Lord will make a dynasty for you." (v11). Other translations say, "God will build you a house." But both give imagery that God is with David for generations to come.

Application

The people Israel would have seasons of great hardship, most significantly the Babylonian exile, and it would seem to them that God's promises had been broken. And yet, centuries later, a young woman named Mary would hear from an angel that her God-given son would be on "the throne of David" and called the "anointed one." God's promises to David found fulfillment in Jesus, even though the hearers of these original words would never know their conclusion. What is your legacy? In what ways will your story, your faith, be revealed in future generations?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have promised time and again, to be with us to "the end of the age." Give me confidence to trust in your promises, even if I cannot see the ending. May my life be one that helps build a home and dynasty for generations to come. Amen.

Saturday June 17

Scripture Psalm 23; Psalm 150

The LORD is my shepherd.

I lack nothing.

He lets me rest in grassy meadows;

he leads me to restful waters;

he keeps me alive.

He guides me in proper paths

for the sake of his good name.

Even when I walk through the darkest valley,

I fear no danger because you are with me.

Your rod and your staff—

they protect me.

You set a table for me

right in front of my enemies.

You bathe my head in oil;

my cup is so full it spills over!

Yes, goodness and faithful love
will pursue me all the days of my life,
and I will live in the LORD's house
as long as I live.

Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary!
Praise God in his fortress, the sky!
Praise God in his mighty acts!
Praise God as suits his incredible greatness!
Praise God with the blast of the ram's horn!
Praise God with lute and lyre!
Praise God with drum and dance!
Praise God with strings and pipe!
Praise God with loud cymbals!
Praise God with clashing cymbals!
Let every living thing praise the LORD!

Observation

David is perhaps most well known as a writer, a poet, a Psalmist. Let's end our week reflecting on two: Psalm 23 & 150. Psalm 23 offers a well-known image of God as our shepherd, guiding us through the hills and valleys of life. God prepares banquets and offers blessings. God is with us, now and always.

Psalm 150 offers a song of celebration and thanks for all that God has given. Its imagery is that of a worship band, bringing together drums and cymbals, strings, and dance to celebrate the goodness of God.

Application

Do you have a favorite Psalm? Why? David wrote psalms of praise, of lament, of confession, of guidance, of joy. It is the hymnal of scripture, giving words to our longings, hopes, and prayers. Spend time today in prayer, or in song, to God.

Prayer

Praise God in God's sanctuary! Let every living thing praise the Lord! God of all creation, give me fresh senses to notice you today. Make my heart, my voice, my actions bring praise to you for your faithfulness and presence. Amen.