



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of August 4, 2024

Weekly Prayer

God of all creation, be with me today. From the rising of the sun to its setting, help me to be aware of your presence, guidance, and grace. Amen.

Monday, August 5

Scripture: Job 38:4-7

Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations?

Tell me if you know.

Who set its measurements? Surely you know.

Who stretched a measuring tape on it?

On what were its footings sunk;

who laid its cornerstone,

while the morning stars sang in unison

and all the divine beings shouted?

Observation

The book of Job described a righteous person who faced great suffering. It depicted Job as wishing God would let him make his case in person. In the end, Job got his wish, but it was God who asked Job tough questions like today's, showing that running this complex world was beyond Job's (or our) abilities. Ironically (or maybe mercifully) God used ancient people's words and ideas, not modern meteorology or astronomy.

Application

Verses 6-7 had the "morning stars" singing as God laid Earth's foundation, although in [Genesis 1:16](#) God made the stars later, as part of lighting of the dome of the heavens. While the Bible writers didn't give "scientific" details about the stars, it offers a poetic image to how creation's beauty leads us to praise the Creator. When has the night sky's beauty moved you to praise God? How does God remind you of God's faithful presence in your life?

Prayer

Thank you, God, for being the God of all creation. Help me to pay attention to your presence around me, that all creation might give me reason to praise you. Amen.

Tuesday, August 6

Scripture: John 14:25-29

"I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. The Companion, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you. "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid. You have heard me tell you, 'I'm going away and returning to you.' If you loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than me. I have told you before it happens so that when it happens you will believe.

Observation

In some of Jesus' final words to his disciples, he offers hope and a promise. We will not be alone. Not only does Jesus promise to leave us peace, but to give us a companion and advocate in the Holy Spirit.

Application

How do you notice, or feel, Jesus with you? Especially in times or seasons of grief or pain, how have you experienced this promised peace? Consider today how you might be a sign of companionship and peace to another.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, fill me with your peace. Open my eyes to see you at work in and around me, draw me nearer to you. Amen.

Wednesday, August 7

Scripture: Psalm 30:1-5

I exalt you, LORD, because you pulled me up;
you didn't let my enemies celebrate over me.
LORD, my God, I cried out to you for help,
and you healed me.
LORD, you brought me up from the grave,
brought me back to life from among those going down to the pit.
You who are faithful to the LORD,
sing praises to him;
give thanks to his holy name!
His anger lasts for only a second,
but his favor lasts a lifetime.
Weeping may stay all night,
but by morning, joy!

Observation

Verses 2 and 3 indicate that the writer of this psalm had faced a serious illness. Poor health (our own or that of someone we love) often tests our faith as nothing else can. But

out of his personal hardship, the psalmist drew a lesson that has echoed through the ages: "Weeping may stay all night, but by morning, joy!" (verse 5). Or as we like to say around Messiah, "The worst thing is never the last thing."

Application

The immediacy of physical illness forces us to pay attention, but it is only one of the ways that we can find ourselves in need of God's comforting, restoring presence. What are some ways God has brought you "back to life from among those going down to the pit"? In what ways can you share that comfort and restoration with others?

Prayer

Lord God, when the night seems darkest around me or those I love, I ask for your comforting presence. Remind me that joy comes in the morning. Amen.

Thursday, August 8

Scripture: Isaiah 49:8-16

The LORD said:

At the right time, I answered you;
on a day of salvation, I helped you.
I have guarded you,
and given you as a covenant to the people, to restore the land,
and to reassign deserted properties,
saying to the prisoners, "Come out,"
and to those in darkness, "Show yourselves."

Along the roads animals^[a] will graze;
their pasture will be on every treeless hilltop.

They won't hunger or thirst;
the burning heat and sun won't strike them,
because one who has compassion for them will lead them
and will guide them by springs of water.

I will turn all my mountains into roads;
my highways will be built up.

Look! These will come from far away.
Look! These from the north and west,
and these from the southland.^[b]

Sing, heavens! Rejoice, earth!
Break out, mountains, with a song.

The LORD has comforted his people,
and taken pity on those who suffer.

But Zion says, "The LORD has abandoned me;
my Lord has forgotten me."

Can a woman forget her nursing child,
fail to pity the child of her womb?

Even these may forget,

but I won't forget you.
Look, on my palms I've inscribed you;
your walls are before me continually.

Observation

Israel's exile in Babylon was a national near-death experience. Babylon utterly destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and most Israelites thought hope was gone. But Isaiah 49 promised those exiles a new start. To people inclined to say, "Yeah, right. God's forgotten us," verse 15 replied, "Can a woman forget her nursing child? Even these may forget, but I won't forget you."

Application

What are some of the times when you've felt most keenly, as verse 14 puts it, that "the Lord has abandoned me; my Lord has forgotten me"? In what ways has God's promise in verse 13 come true for you: "The Lord has comforted his people, and taken pity on those who suffer"? What people played a role in extending God's comfort to you?

Prayer

Lord, I praise you for being, not only a God who watches over us with the strength of the best fathers, but one who loves us with the tenderness of the best mothers. Amen.

Friday, August 9

Scripture: Luke 4:16-21

Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

Observation

In his hometown synagogue, Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1-3 as what we might call his personal "mission statement." If this was Jesus' mission statement, what do those words suggest about our calling as Jesus' followers?

Application

After Jesus spoke, the people of his hometown tried to kill him. Why? Scholar N. T. Wright wrote that Jesus “speaks of Israel being called to be the light of the nations The servant- Messiah has not come to inflict punishment, but to bring the nations God’s love and mercy ... Jesus’ claim to be reaching out with healing to all people ... was not what most first-century Jews wanted or expected.” Who, in your personal life or in wider international or national settings, do you find it hard to wish comforted? How can you join in Jesus’ mission even where it’s hard?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, when I read about wiping tears from our eyes, I often think that’s about the distant future. Thank you for wiping away my tears even now. Steady my hand as I wipe away others’ tears. Amen.

Saturday, August 10

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be blessed! He is the compassionate Father and God of all comfort. He’s the one who comforts us in all our trouble so that we can comfort other people who are in every kind of trouble. We offer the same comfort that we ourselves received from God. That is because we receive so much comfort through Christ in the same way that we share so many of Christ’s sufferings. So if we have trouble, it is to bring you comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is to bring you comfort from the experience of endurance while you go through the same sufferings that we also suffer. Our hope for you is certain, because we know that as you are partners in suffering, so also you are partners in comfort.

Observation

2 Corinthians is one of the most personal of all the apostle Paul’s letters. We don’t know many details, but we know he’d been through a very trying experience. What’s more, the Corinthians had been at odds with him for a time (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:7-13). So it makes sense that in the just five verses of today’s reading the word “comfort” occurred nine times. Paul says that God comforts us, and because of that we can comfort one another.

Application

In Latin, the word comfort has the same root as brave. In what ways do comfort and courage connect to one another? How has the unique life experience you’ve had given you a special ability, or courage, to offer comfort to another?

Prayer

Compassionate God, thank you for the times you have strengthened me and given me new courage. Make me the kind of person whose caring strengthens others. Amen.