Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of November 1, 2026

Prayer for the Week
Gracious and loving God, as I read your Word today, draw me closer to you through prayer and worship, shaping me to be more attentive to your presence and more available to your work in the world. Remind me that I do not walk alone and that my faith is meant to be lived in love and service to others. Guide me this day to be your hands and feet in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Monday, November 2

Scripture: Luke 22:14-19; John 11:35-42
When the time came, Jesus took his place at the table, and the apostles joined him. He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. I tell you, I won't eat it until it is fulfilled in God's kingdom." After taking a cup and giving thanks, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. I tell you that from now on I won't drink from the fruit of the vine until God's kingdom has come." After taking the bread and giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Jesus began to cry. The Jews said, "See how much he loved him!" But some of them said, "He healed the eyes of the man born blind. Couldn't he have kept Lazarus from dying?"
Jesus was deeply disturbed again when he came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone covered the entrance. Jesus said, "Remove the stone."
Martha, the sister of the dead man, said, "Lord, the smell will be awful! He's been dead four days."
Jesus replied, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you will see God's glory?" So they removed the stone. Jesus looked up and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. I know you always hear me. I say this for the benefit of the crowd standing here so that they will believe that you sent me."

Observation
The creator of the world, the ruler of the universe, chose to "become flesh" and live on earth as a human being (John 1:14). Would you expect such a being to have the ultimate attitude of "entitlement," to demand everything that was his by right? Well, we know Jesus didn't do that. As he gave us a model of what it means to be fully human, the gospels showed that his healthy human life included giving thanks in many different settings.

Application
The Greek root of the word "Eucharist" meant "to give thanks." As you read Luke 22:14-19, picture Jesus eating with his disciples, with the cross just ahead. On what realities do you think he focused to be able to "give thanks" at that moment? In what ways can you include the healing, strengthening power of gratitude in your prayers, even in hard times?

Do you think Jesus' reasons for praying were different from your reasons for prayer? Why do you believe Jesus prayed at all, and didn't just say, "I'm the son of God. I can handle this on my own"? If you had been one of the first disciples, what difference, if any, do you imagine you would have noticed in Jesus after he had been praying?

Prayer
Lord Jesus, at one point, praying, you said, "Thank you for hearing me. I know you always hear me." Help me share that confidence and say "thank you" for it more often in my own prayers. Amen.

Tuesday, November 3

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:15-18
Make sure no one repays a wrong with a wrong, but always pursue the good for each other and everyone else. Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in every situation because this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Observation
We often think gratitude is purely a feeling, a reaction to something outside of us. That makes "give thanks in every situation" puzzling; some situations do not trigger positive feelings. But psychology researcher Robert Emmons wrote, "It is vital to make a distinction between feeling grateful and being grateful….being grateful is a choice, a prevailing attitude that endures and is relatively immune to the gains and losses that flow in and out of our lives." *

Application
A recurring theme in gratitude research is that choosing to be a grateful person does not mean you become blind to the bad things in life, or the sad or angry feelings you may have about them. It does mean, however, that we also choose not to let the bad things blind us to the things for which we are grateful. What way(s) have you found to remember the things for which you are grateful when your life takes a difficult turn?

Prayer
O God, you are like the sun, always shining your love and mercy into my life, whatever may happen in my family, my workplace or my health. Help me learn how to keep my focus on you every day. Amen.

* Robert Emmons, "How Gratitude Can Help You Through Hard Times," syndicated from Greater Good, Sep 12, 2013 at http://www.dailygood.org/story/532/how-gratitude-can-help-you-through-hard-times-robert-emmons/.

Wednesday, November 4

Scripture: Philippians 4:6-7
Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus.

Observation
Paul did not write this counsel from some abstract ivory tower, sheltered from all trouble or conflict. He was in prison when he wrote Philippians (Philippians 1:13). When some "super apostles" scorned his ministry in Corinth, he sent the Corinthian Christians a vivid portrait of his challenging path of service (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). He knew well what it meant to "give thanks in every situation."

Application
Artists and photographers know that often how we frame a picture alters what we focus on in it. Paul urged a kind of framing in Philippians 4. When we bring the things that cause us stress into prayer, we put ourselves and our troubles inside a much bigger picture: the story of God's love for us in Jesus Christ, and that leads to thanksgiving. What helps you remember to look at life's big picture more than the unpleasant little details?

Prayer
Lord, the Psalmist wrote, "I keep your word close, in my heart" (Psalm 119:11). I ask for your help as I, too, seek to keep your teaching close in my memory and my heart. Amen.

Thursday, November 5

Scripture: Psalm 95:1-7
Come, let's sing out loud to the Lord!
  Let's raise a joyful shout to the rock of our salvation!
Let's come before him with thanks!
  Let's shout songs of joy to him!
The Lord is a great God,
  the great king over all other gods.
The earth's depths are in his hands;
  the mountain heights belong to him;
  the sea, which he made, is his
    along with the dry ground,
    which his own hands formed.
Come, let's worship and bow down!
  Let's kneel before the Lord, our maker!
He is our God,
  and we are the people of his pasture,

the sheep in his hands.
If only you would listen to his voice right now!

Observation
Israel's understanding of the one God they worshiped developed over time. At times, they adapted language from the cultures around them, as in verse 3 of today's reading. They tended to refer to all supernatural beings, who the New Testament and most Christians call "angels," as "gods." But God was the great person they worshiped and thanked, the "great king over all other gods."

Application
Verse 7 echoes many other psalms (including the beloved Psalm 23) in identifying us as sheep for whom God cares as a shepherd. The image may have been clearer to pastoral Israelites than to modern city dwellers. Sheep are utterly dependent on their shepherd to keep them fed, watered and safe. Left to their own devices, they tend to be helpless to ensure their own survival. How grateful are you that in a big, complex universe you are one of God's sheep, watched over with caring and love?

Prayer
Lord Jesus, thank you for promising to be the "good shepherd" who cares for me, who doesn't run away in the face of trouble but is always there. I gratefully worship and praise you. Amen.

Friday, November 6

Scripture: Psalm 96:1-2
Sing to the Lord a new song!
Sing to the Lord, all the earth!
Sing to the Lord! Bless his name!
Share the news of his saving work every single day!

Observation
Worship is not limited to one hour (or even one day) each week. Psalm 96 anticipated much modern psychological research as it invited us to express gratitude for God's saving work "every single day." The apostle Paul similarly urged Colossian Christians to "overflow with thanksgiving" and "be thankful people" (Colossians 2:7, 3:12-17). Each day and hour of our week can be a time of gratitude, an ongoing act of worship.

Application
Some of us are musically gifted, and we like the idea of "sing to the Lord a new song." Others, of course, suffer in silence through the singing parts of worship, whether traditional or contemporary. Regardless of our musical aptitude or tastes, what is the inner spirit of gratitude expressed by the poetic imagery of singing to the Lord a new song? How can all of us join in that spiritual experience?

Prayer
Lord of my life, continue touching and transforming me to make my everyday, ordinary life an offering of gratitude to you, an ongoing act of worship. Amen.

Saturday, November 7

Scripture: Psalm 92:1-5
It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praises to your name, Most High;
to proclaim your loyal love in the morning,
your faithfulness at nighttime
with the ten-stringed harp,
with the melody of the lyre
because you've made me happy, Lord,
by your acts.
I sing with joy because of your handiwork.
How awesome are your works, Lord!
Your thoughts are so deep!

Observation
The psalmist wrote long ago: "It is good to give thanks to the LORD." Here's some research that supports the goodness of giving thanks: "Take just a few minutes each day to jot down things that make you thankful, from the generosity of friends to the food on your table or the right to vote.... List keepers sleep better, exercise more and gain a general contentment that may counteract stress and contribute to overall health." * The ultimate source of joy in Psalm 92 was God's loyal love and faithfulness, realities that are always with us if we just recognize them.

Application
In verse 2, the psalmist spoke of expressing gratitude to God in the morning and at nighttime. In what ways have you, or will you, build recognizing and expressing gratitude into your habit patterns, so that you don't always have to try to remember to do it? Spend some time today praying about choices you can make to incorporate gratitude more fully into your daily practices as a Christ follower.

Prayer
Lord Jesus, you made me for praise and gratitude. When I'm tempted to grump my way through a day, remind me to worship you—to give you thanks for your ever-present love and faithfulness. Help me to be grateful. Amen.

* From Lauren Aaronson, "Make a Gratitude Adjustment." Psychology Today, March 1, 2006, found at www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200603/make-gratitude-adjustment.