



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of September 24, 2023

Weekly Prayer

Holy One, as I turn to you with my whole self, equip me to do the good that you give me to do. Make my words and actions compassionate and kind. Root out any fear or pride, grounding me instead in your wisdom and grace. Guide me to live, and love, with courage. Amen.

Monday, September 25

Scripture: James 3:13-14

Are any of you wise and understanding? Show that your actions are good with a humble lifestyle that comes from wisdom. However, if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, then stop bragging and living in ways that deny the truth.

Observation

This section of James begins a “mini handbook” on Christian wisdom, inviting us to reflect on the gift and presence of God’s wisdom in our lives.

Application

What is the best advice you’ve been given? One that I return to repeatedly, was given to me as a newlywed: “You can have towels folded correctly, or you can have help folding.” While at a glance, it might seem to be a snub to one’s spouse; instead, the root of this advice is that you can be uncompromising in “your way” or you can live in community. For any relationship to flourish, there must be give and take - a desire to compromise, work together, and put “us” ahead of a singular “me.” I find myself applying this lesson to all areas of life! Reflect on some areas of community in your life. Where do you experience good community? Where might God be inviting you to grow in humility and love?

Prayer

God of wisdom, thank you for inviting me to grow in my understanding of you, and for the many opportunities I find to practice humility, especially when I forget! Continue to forgive

and invite me again toward actions that are good and humble, filled with your wisdom, amen.

Tuesday, September 26

Scripture: James 3:17-18

What of the wisdom from above? First, it is pure, and then peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and good actions, fair, and genuine. Those who make peace sow the seeds of justice by their peaceful acts.

Observation

The book of James invites us to reflect on the ways that God calls us to live. God is the giver of “every perfect gift” (1:17), and here James expands on what some of these gifts are. If we are made in God’s image, then these characteristics about God are also characteristics about us.

Application

Read these verses again, in this way: *“God is pure, God is peaceful, God is gentle, God is obedient, God is filled with mercy and good actions. God is faithful and genuine. God makes peace. God sows the seeds of justice by their peaceful acts.”* Let this rest in your body and heart. How do you feel as you reflect upon God in this way? Now try this: I am pure, I am peaceful, I am gentle... (*and so forth*) How does this feel? Do some descriptors feel easier than others? Do some feel like a challenge or invitation? How might God be inviting you to live into these pieces of God’s wisdom today?

Prayer

God of wisdom, thank you for making me in your image. Expand my understanding of *who* you are and how you are at work in my life and your world. Expand, too, my perception of who I might be; help me to grow in wisdom and likeness of you. Amen.

Wednesday, September 27

Scripture: James 4:1-3

What is the source of conflict among you? What is the source of your disputes? Don’t they come from your cravings that are at war in your own lives? You long for something you don’t have, so you commit murder. You are jealous for something you can’t get, so you struggle and fight. You don’t have because you don’t ask. You ask and don’t have because you ask with evil intentions, to waste it on your own cravings.

Observation

These opening words from chapter 4 seem a harsh turn from the previous chapter. I don't know precisely what situation James is responding to here, but I wonder: how can God's wisdom influence conflict among us? God created us in community, and because we are imperfect persons, that means that any relationship will have conflict. The key, however, is how we navigate conflict with love and grace.

Application

One of the refrains in my home is, "you can be mad, you can't be mean." And what I mean by this is that every emotion is good; being angry can be good and important! However, even when we feel hurt, embarrassed, or ashamed, God calls us to respond in love. It means being careful, even when angry, to speak and act in ways that honor the other person.

Four practices we use in our home to help this: (1) Take a minute to calm down. Count to 10 and take deep breaths. It takes your nervous system about one minute for that rush to make its way through your system. Allow it to happen, then release it. (2) Remember that you are loved, and that you love the person(s) you are angry with. Name a few reasons if this helps center you. (3) Calmly discuss why you're hurt, staying to "I" statements. (I heard you say, I felt, I worry...). Assume the best in your companion, listening as they speak, too. (4) Find a resolution and forgive one another.

Prayer

God of wisdom, thank you for gifting me with a wide variety of emotions with which to experience life! When I experience anger or hurt, keep me grounded in your wisdom and grace. Help me to stay kind, to forgive easily, and to seek restoration in relationships. Be my guide. Amen.

Thursday, September 28

Scripture: James 4: 7-10

Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will run away from you. Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Cry out in sorrow, mourn, and weep! Let your laughter become mourning and your joy become sadness. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Observation

God desires relationship with us. Not only when we are good, but always. God invites us to come before God also in times of consolation, in confession, and in seeking counsel and wisdom. God will sustain and nurture you.

Application

What are the needs of your heart today? How might you come before God, and what might you seek? Take a moment of silence, hold your palms open to receive, and pray:

Prayer

God of wisdom, I offer myself to you. Receive the prayers and longings of my heart. Forgive me for the people and places I have caused harm or strayed from your goodness. Be at work again within me, receiving me as a sheep of your flock, a lamb of your own redeeming. Amen.

Friday, September 29**Scripture: Galatians 6:9-10**

Let's not get tired of doing good, because in time we'll have a harvest if we don't give up. So then, let's work for the good of all whenever we have an opportunity, and especially for those in the household of faith.

Observation

Let us not get tired of doing good. We've jumped over to the book of Galatians, and we receive encouragement of *doing good*. Our efforts of following Jesus, loving God and our neighbor *do* make an impact in the world. In big and small ways, you have been part building up the kingdom of God.

Application

Take time today and reflect upon the experience of *doing good*. First, make a list of five times when you have "done good" by loving others, fighting injustices, and making peace in our world. Then, make a list of five times you have been a recipient of another's goodness. Bring these to God in prayer and gratitude today.

Prayer

God of wisdom, help me to find rest in you. When I feel tired or discouraged, lift me up. Help me to see the ways that my words and actions have impacted others and grown your kingdom. Amen.

Saturday, September 30**Scripture: Philippians 4:1-8**

Therefore, my brothers and sisters whom I love and miss, who are my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord. Loved ones, I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to come to an

agreement in the Lord. Yes, and I'm also asking you, loyal friend, to help these women who have struggled together with me in the ministry of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the scroll of life.

Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! Let your gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The Lord is near. 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.

From now on, brothers and sisters, if anything is excellent and if anything is admirable, focus your thoughts on these things: all that is true, all that is holy, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is lovely, and all that is worthy of praise. Practice these things: whatever you learned, received, heard, or saw in us. The God of peace will be with you.

Observation

Notice how this chapter begins: Paul is asking the recipient to encourage Euodia and Syntyche in their ministry, knowing it has been a difficult time. Then, beginning in verse 4, Paul offers encouragement. Paul rejoices in the Lord, encourages prayer, and directs us to receive God's wisdom.

Application

This passage feels similar in tone and message to what we learned from James this week. God desires that we know God's wisdom, that we are grounded in what is pure, true, holy, and admirable. And God knows that it won't always be easy! Keep this passage handy today and read it whenever you need encouragement of God's presence in your life.

Prayer

God of wisdom, you are the source of all good and perfect things. Thank you for naming me among your beloved creations. Guide me today, that my eyes and ears, my mouth and hands, are directed by your wisdom and peace. Help me to release any anxiety, and to trust in you. Reveal to me what is true and holy, all that is just and pure. Be with me today and always. Amen.