



Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of June 28, 2026

Prayer for the Week:

Gracious God, thank you for your mercy, forgiveness, and unfailing love. Open my heart to receive your grace, help me to forgive as I have been forgiven, and shape me into a person of compassion, humility, patience, and peace. May my words and actions reflect the love of Christ in all my relationships today. Amen.

Monday, June 29

Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Should I forgive as many as seven times?”

Jesus said, “Not just seven times, but rather as many as seventy-seven times. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle accounts, they brought to him a servant who owed him ten thousand bags of gold. Because the servant didn’t have enough to pay it back, the master ordered that he should be sold, along with his wife and children and everything he had, and that the proceeds should be used as payment. But the servant fell down, kneeled before him, and said, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I’ll pay you back.’ The master had compassion on that servant, released him, and forgave the loan.

“When that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred coins. He grabbed him around the throat and said, ‘Pay me back what you owe me.’

“Then his fellow servant fell down and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I’ll pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he threw him into prison until he paid back his debt.

“When his fellow servants saw what happened, they were deeply offended. They came and told their master all that happened. His master called the first servant and said, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you appealed to me. Shouldn’t you also have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ His master was furious

and handed him over to the guard responsible for punishing prisoners, until he had paid the whole debt.

“My heavenly Father will also do the same to you if you don’t forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Observation

Some rabbis in Jesus’ day said forgiving a sin three times was enough. That’s likely why Peter thought forgiving seven times was huge. But Jesus’ story said God, not us, sets the forgiveness standard. The debt the servant in the story owed was a whopper, equivalent to 60 million days’ wages (about 170,000 years of work)! Yet the king (i.e., God) forgave even a man who owed “a gazillion dollars.” Then the freed debtor refused to forgive someone with a much smaller debt.

Application

In his book, *Forgiveness, Finding Peace Through Letting Go*, Pastor Hamilton writes, “More than any other world religion, Christianity... veritably shouts forgiveness. Yes, some of our preachers dwell too long on guilt.... a Christianity obsessed with guilt is no Christianity. Christianity is a faith whose central focus is not guilt, but grace, redemption, healing, forgiveness, and mercy.” * In what ways has God’s forgiveness set you free? How can practicing healing, forgiveness and mercy sustain and deepen your closest relationships?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, have mercy on me. And even as I ask for your mercy, which I need every day, help me be merciful to those who wrong me, so that they and I may be free. Amen.

* Adam Hamilton, *Forgiveness: Finding Peace Through Letting Go*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, p. 17.

Tuesday, June 30

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-9

All of you who are thirsty, come to the water!
Whoever has no money, come, buy food and eat!
Without money, at no cost, buy wine and milk!
Why spend money for what isn’t food,
and your earnings for what doesn’t satisfy?
Listen carefully to me and eat what is good;
enjoy the richest of feasts.
Listen and come to me;
listen, and you will live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,

my faithful loyalty to David.
Look, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a prince and commander of peoples.
Look, you will call a nation you don't know,
a nation you don't know will run to you
because of the Lord your God,
the holy one of Israel, who has glorified you.

Seek the Lord when he can still be found;
call him while he is yet near.
Let the wicked abandon their ways
and the sinful their schemes.
Let them return to the Lord so that he may have mercy on them,
to our God, because he is generous with forgiveness.
My plans aren't your plans,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
Just as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my plans than your plans.

Observation

When we begin thinking about the process of forgiving in families (and all human relationships), it's easy to see it as simply a "mind game." But forgiveness is much more than just a sociological way for people to get along. The prophet we'd call "second" Isaiah suggested that it is not "natural" at all. The prophet's thinking began with God, not humans. Our God, he said, is "generous with forgiveness," which makes God's ways and plans "higher" than ours.

Application

Forgiveness takes faith and we want to decide what is right and wrong for ourselves but neither do we wish to be told that something is good for us when it looks as though it is going to take a lot of effort and may bring us some pain. We want God to serve us, supplying our needs as we dictate. Faith always involves letting go of secure footholds and (apparent) certainties to do things God's way. What makes faith that God knows best vital as we wrestle with forgiveness?

Prayer

O Jesus, I'm not God, but you can shape me to be more and more like you. I offer my life to your re-shaping hand, because in the end your forgiving way of life is the best way to live. Amen.

Wednesday, July 1

Scripture: Ephesians 4:26-27, 29-32

Be angry without sinning. Don't let the sun set on your anger. Don't provide an opportunity for the devil.

Don't let any foul words come out of your mouth. Only say what is helpful when it is needed for building up the community so that it benefits those who hear what you say. Don't make the Holy Spirit of God unhappy—you were sealed by him for the day of redemption. Put aside all bitterness, losing your temper, anger, shouting, and slander, along with every other evil. Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ.

Observation

"Be angry without sinning" might feel a little vague for real life ("How do I do that?"), so Ephesians added timeless wisdom: "Don't let the sun set on your anger." Your words can hurt or heal, and you get to choose which words you speak. Since we are not likely to always get the words just right, the passage reminded readers of God's model of forgiveness: "Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to each other, in the same way God forgave you in Christ."

Application

Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, "People who are enslaved to anger and malice may think they are 'free' to 'be themselves', but they are in bondage. If we are marked out by the spirit's personal presence living in us, think how sad it makes that spirit if we behave in ways which don't reflect the life and love of God." * Before firing off angry words (in person or electronically), are you willing to ask, "Does this give grace? Does it build up? Can I picture Jesus saying this?"

Prayer

Loving Jesus, help me to speak and live so that words like "peace," "unity," "humility" and "love" will be the main qualities I show others, especially those closest to me. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 55)

Thursday, July 2

Scripture: Ephesians 5:18-31

Don't get drunk on wine, which produces depravity. Instead, be filled with the Spirit in the following ways: speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts; always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; and submit to each other out of respect for Christ. For example, wives should submit to their husbands as if to the Lord. A husband is the head of his wife like Christ is head of the church, that is, the savior of the body. So wives submit to their husbands in everything like the church submits to Christ. As for husbands, love your wives just like Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. He did this to make her holy by washing her in a bath of water with the word. He did this to present himself with a splendid church, one without any sort of stain or wrinkle on her clothes, but rather one that is holy and blameless. That's how husbands ought to love their wives—in the same way as they do their own bodies. Anyone who loves his wife loves himself. No one ever hates his own body, but feeds it and takes care of it just like Christ does for the church because we are parts of his body. *This is why a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two of them will be one body.*

Observation:

Too often, families need forgiveness because men (and sometimes women) have isolated verse 22 without reading the whole passage. It used a common Greco/Roman way of discussing family relations called a "Household Code." But Christian adaptations strikingly shifted its message. Scholar N. T. Wright wrote, "Paul... insists that the husband should take as his role model, not the typical bossy or bullying male of the modern, or indeed the ancient, stereotype, but Jesus himself." *

Application:

There are certain practices that seem to help me become more loving. I feel closest to God when I've been praying, worshiping, and studying Scripture, and when I am doing these things I'm also a far better wife, mother, and grandmother. What helps you move from practices like "I don't have time for this religious stuff" to "these choices allow God to make me more loving, especially toward those I care about most"?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you walked among us as genuine love incarnate. Let your love be a robust force, making every life I touch better, not just the sentimentalism my culture often confuses with love. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, pp. 67-68.

Friday, July 3

Scripture: 1 John 1:7-2:2

But if we live in the light in the same way as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin. If we claim, "We don't have any sin," we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we've done wrong. If we claim, "We have never sinned," we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you don't sin. But if you do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is God's way of dealing with our sins, not only ours but the sins of the whole world.

Observation

Willingness to forgive matters in relationships, but so does a willingness to honestly face your own failures and to seek forgiveness. You can't accept even God's forgiveness and power to live more like Jesus, and not ask another person to forgive you, if you stubbornly deny that what you've done needs forgiveness. Honesty and an awareness of the need for forgiveness begins inside you before it shows itself to others.

Application

John knew we are all too good at fooling ourselves: "If we claim, 'We don't have any sin,' we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Are you ignoring any God-given inner convictions that you need to face some issue honestly? If so, talk seriously with God about it. When have you honestly faced a flaw or struggle, and found that it opened you to the freedom John described: "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we've done wrong"?

Prayer

Lord God, help me clearly see the times when I am wrong. Help me be honest with myself and with you. Thank you for offering me your grace and transformation at those times. Amen.

Saturday, July 4

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-15

Therefore, as God's choice, holy and loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and, if someone has a complaint against anyone, forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. And over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. The peace of Christ

must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people.

Observation

In Colossians 3, the apostle Paul listed six positive qualities we can “put on” (verses 12, 14), with love as the crowning quality in the list. That kind of inner change is seldom as quick and easy, of course, as swapping a soiled garment for a clean one. If it were, we’d need verse 12’s inclusion of “patience” or verse 13’s about forgiveness a whole lot less! And the worse you’ve been hurt the longer it takes to forgive. Ultimately, neither patience nor forgiveness are things we do on our own. God offers you these qualities. But God never forces positive change on you—it is up to you to decide to open your life to what God offers and “put them on” to make your life better.

Application

Colossians offered all of Christ’s followers “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.” Think of situations when you have shown those qualities toward a family member or other person close to you or had someone like that show those qualities toward you. What other responses might you or they have chosen? Would those alternatives have made things better or worse? What changes can you make, in God’s power, to more fully let Christ’s peace be the reality around which you order your life?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, please keep shaping me into a person of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Give me the grace to forgive as you’ve forgiven me. Amen.