



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

## **Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of July 21, 2024**

### **Weekly Prayer**

Lord of all, open my heart to your presence. Fill me with your Spirit of peace. Guide me today, that my words, actions, and behaviors give glory to you. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.

### **Monday July 22**

#### **Scripture: Exodus 33:18-23, 34:6-9**

Moses said, "Please show me your glorious presence."

The LORD said, "I'll make all my goodness pass in front of you, and I'll proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD.' I will be kind to whomever I wish to be kind, and I will have compassion to whomever I wish to be compassionate. But," the LORD said, "you can't see my face because no one can see me and live." The LORD said, "Here is a place near me where you will stand beside the rock. As my glorious presence passes by, I'll set you in a gap in the rock, and I'll cover you with my hand until I've passed by. Then I'll take away my hand, and you will see my back, but my face won't be visible."

The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed:

"The LORD! The LORD!  
a God who is compassionate and merciful,  
very patient,  
full of great loyalty and faithfulness,  
showing great loyalty to a thousand generations,  
forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion,  
yet by no means clearing the guilty,  
punishing for their parents' sins  
their children and their grandchildren,  
as well as the third and the fourth generation."

At once Moses bowed to the ground and worshipped. He said, "If you approve of me, my Lord, please go along with us. Although these are stubborn people, forgive our guilt and our sin and take us as your own possession."

### **Observation**

God reveals God's self to Moses, and while Moses asked God to show him God's "glorious Presence," God did not dazzle with a cosmic light show. Rather, God passed by simply and quietly, allowing Moses to see God's back. Then, a few verses later, God's essence is more fully revealed as one who is compassionate, merciful, and patient (34:7).

### **Application**

This passage reminds me that while God provides and is present to us, we do not know (or see) all of God. Yet, through scripture – and especially through Jesus – we can come to know the most important parts of who God is, and how God cares for us. What is it that you know about the essence of God? How is it that you are shaped by God's character?

### **Prayer**

Holy God, thank you for coming to us in compassion, mercy, and love. Shape my identity to be more and more like you, amen.

## **Tuesday July 23**

### **Scripture: Matthew 18:15-21**

If your brother or sister sins against you, go and correct them when you are alone together. If they listen to you, then you've won over your brother or sister. But if they won't listen, take with you one or two others so that *every word may be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses*. But if they still won't pay attention, report it to the church. If they won't pay attention even to the church, treat them as you would a Gentile and tax collector. I assure you that whatever you fasten on earth will be fastened in heaven. And whatever you loosen on earth will be loosened in heaven. Again I assure you that if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, then my Father who is in heaven will do it for you. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I'm there with them.

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?"

### **Observation**

We are a people who live in community and relationship with other, which means we are a people who also need to learn how to navigate conflict and forgiveness. Here, Jesus suggests a way of navigating conflict that was very different from cultural expectations.

### **Application**

Pastor and scholar N.T. Wright noted, "Forgiveness doesn't mean saying 'it didn't really happen' or 'it didn't really matter.' In either of those cases, you don't need forgiveness; you just need to clear up a misunderstanding. Forgiveness is when it did happen, and it did matter, and you're going to deal with it and end up loving and accepting one another again anyway." When have you experienced the joy of honest, hard-won reconciliation?

## **Prayer**

Lord, thank you for being realistic and honest about the fact that we will all mess up, and need forgiveness from you and one another. Keep me forgiving as well as forgiven. Amen

## **Wednesday July 24**

### **Scripture: Matthew 18:21-27**

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.

### **Observation**

Some rabbis taught that any sin could only be forgiven three times, so Peter may have thought that extending to seven was more than generous. But Jesus had something more in mind. In this parable, Jesus tells of a servant with an extravagant debt, who was shown mercy. The point here isn’t that we keep count to 7, or 77, or 490. Instead, Jesus says we are to keep on forgiving – to be a people who don’t hold grudges, and instead extend mercy to one another – just as we have been forgiven.

### **Application**

There are two sides of this parable: first, a lesson that we are forgiven again and again. And second, a reminder that we are also called to forgive one another in the same way. Do you struggle with one more than the other? How might you ask God to help you today?

## **Prayer**

Jesus, thank you for the gift of forgiveness. Help me to offer mercy to others, just as you have given mercy to me. Make my life a response to your grace. Amen.

## **Thursday July 25**

### **Scripture: Matthew 18:28-35**

“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**

With his enormous debt forgiven, Jesus said, the servant breathed a huge sigh of relief, and then spotted someone who owed him a much smaller debt. He demanded payment on the spot, and when that debtor pleaded for mercy, he refused. His actions made it clear that he didn’t understand the mercy shown him.

### **Application**

Have you been in a situation where you have found it difficult to extend someone mercy? This is part of being human – we struggle! But Jesus calls us to live another way. How can we learn from God’s mercy and grace, asking God to help transform our own hearts and actions towards others?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you gave up so much in order to reach me with your forgiveness. Help me to accept and value that gift, and to be more forgiving toward myself and others in my life. Amen

## **Friday July 26**

### **Scripture: Luke 23:20-37**

Pilate addressed them again because he wanted to release Jesus.

They kept shouting out, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

For the third time, Pilate said to them, “Why? What wrong has he done? I’ve found no legal basis for the death penalty in his case. Therefore, I will have him whipped, then let him go.”

But they were adamant, shouting their demand that Jesus be crucified. Their voices won out. Pilate issued his decision to grant their request. He released the one they asked for,

who had been thrown into prison because of a riot and murder. But he handed Jesus over to their will.

As they led Jesus away, they grabbed Simon, a man from Cyrene, who was coming in from the countryside. They put the cross on his back and made him carry it behind Jesus. A huge crowd of people followed Jesus, including women, who were mourning and wailing for him. Jesus turned to the women and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, don't cry for me. Rather, cry for yourselves and your children. The time will come when they will say, 'Happy are those who are unable to become pregnant, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed a child.' Then they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

They also led two other criminals to be executed with Jesus. When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him, along with the criminals, one on his right and the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." They drew lots as a way of dividing up his clothing.

The people were standing around watching, but the leaders sneered at him, saying, "He saved others. Let him save himself if he really is the Christ sent from God, the chosen one."

The soldiers also mocked him. They came up to him, offering him sour wine and saying, "If you really are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

### **Observation**

Anytime I read the account of Jesus last days, I am struck by those words upon the cross: "Father, forgive them." If ever I needed reminders that Jesus is God (and I am not!) it is in his ability to forgive the people who have taken his life.

### **Application**

Jesus shows us that there is nothing we can do that is "too much" for us to seek forgiveness. Is there something in your life that you need to ask God to forgive? Is there something in your life you need help forgiving yourself? Take courage, beloved, and know that God is on your side.

### **Prayer**

Compassionate God, you suffered so much, yet prayed, "Father, forgive them ...." As you forge a new identity in me, may I see myself and others through your eyes, and forgive as you forgave. Amen.

## **Saturday July 27**

### **Scripture: Colossians 3:12-14**

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.

### **Observation**

In these verses, Paul describes the character of those who follow Christ. Forgiveness does not exist by itself, but requires an ability to live with honesty, compassion, and love.

### **Application**

Jesus offers us the opportunity, beginning here and now, to live forever a life characterized by compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love. As you live more and more into the kingdom life God has called you to, in what ways are you experiencing freedom to be like Christ as you "put on the new nature"?

### **Prayer**

God, I choose the qualities you offer to grow in me to be the template, the pattern, of how I live. But I'm a work in progress. As I relate to others who are also "works in progress," help me to extend the love and forgiveness you give me to them. Amen.