

GROWTHguide

"The Prayer"

February 25, 2018



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Luke 6:12, Mark 6:45-46, Matthew 26:36-46,
Luke 4:1-13 and 22:41-44, Mark 14:32-42
Matthew 17:1-9, Luke 22:39-46
Ephesians 6:10-20

DAY 1

Read [Luke 6:12](#), [Mark 6:45-46](#), [Matthew 26:36-46](#)

We know that Jesus often sought quiet places so that he could pray alone. He made it a practice to seek his Father's will through prayer, and cultivated a life filled with both personal and corporate prayers. However, on the night when he waited to be betrayed and arrested, he wanted to have friends near so they could pray for him. Sometimes we are reluctant to ask others to pray for us or with us. We might be shy about sharing our need - especially if we want others to think we are strong and independent. Conversely, we might feel like we are being selfish if we ask others to pray for us. We all need to learn to be prayer warriors and prayer recipients. That's what it means for us to "do life together."

- **Do you pray for others and do you ask others to pray for you? Do you pray for yourself? If you are reluctant to pray for yourself or to ask others to pray for you, why do you think you feel that way?**
- **Sit quietly and pray for yourself. Share your heart with the One who loves you as his very own child. Don't hold back. God already knows**

your need. He wants to know that it's important enough for you to share with him.

- **Sit quietly and ask God to reveal to your heart someone who needs your prayers. Pray for whoever comes to mind - even if they are not your favorite person. It might be a nudge from heaven.**

DAY 2

[Read Luke 4:1-13, Luke 22:41-44, and Mark 14:32-42](#)

Just before Jesus began his public ministry, he was baptized and then spent forty days fasting in the wilderness where he faced and resisted three temptations. As his ministry on earth drew to a close, he was tested once again. Three times he prayed, hoping that the cup of suffering would be taken from him, and each time he resisted the temptation to take an easier way. It's hard to image the Lord's anguished heart as he poured out his sorrow to the Father who loved him dearly. Luke's Gospel tells us that an angel came to give Jesus strength as he prayed. Our good Father gave Jesus the strength he needed to face his future willingly. While our lives include times of pain, suffering and grief, we will never experience a time of waiting knowing that we face the horror of torture or crucifixion. Jesus faced this for us. On your very worst day, remember that Jesus thought you were worth his own suffering and death.

- **What do you do first when you face temptation? Do you struggle to resist it in your own will or do you turn to God and ask for strength?**
- **Reflect quietly in God's presence. Consider temptations you faced most recently or those you face today. How might you change the way you respond to temptation so that God can strengthen you as he strengthened Jesus?**

- **Pray the Lord's Prayer focusing on the words *"lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."***

DAY 3

Richard Foster is a Christian writer from the Quaker denomination. He has written many books about spiritual formation and the practice of various spiritual disciplines, including prayer. His book Celebration of Discipline is a classic that looks at how spiritual practices contribute to a balanced spiritual life. He has also written a book called Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home for anyone who wants to learn more about growing closer to God through the faithful practice of prayer.

Foster describes Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane as a prayer of relinquishment where Jesus surrendered his will to embrace his Father's. Praying "yet I want your will to be done not mine," under the circumstances Jesus faced provides us with a perfect prayer of surrender - not resignation, not bitter or fatalistic - a relinquishment to the Father he loved and trusted.

- **Reflect on a time in the past or a current situation when you prayed fervently but did not experience the outcome you desired. How did you feel?**
- **Do you wrestle with God asking for him to bless your plans or provide every desire of your heart, or do you seek God's will through Prayer?**
- **Perhaps this Lenten season, one of Richard Foster's books could help you focus on your prayer habits in a new way. A few of them are available through the public library system.**
- **Pray about the one thing that troubles you the most. Ask God to show you if there is something he would like you to relinquish.**

DAY 4

Read [Matthew 17:1-9](#), [Luke 22:39-46](#)

Although Jesus had twelve named disciples, Peter, John, and James were the three he chose to accompany him to places where they would share significant moments the others did not experience. They saw him transfigured in the presence of Moses and Elijah and heard God's voice speak about Jesus, His Beloved Son. Yet, on the night Jesus asked them to pray and watch with him, they could not stay awake. Grief, sorrow, and fearful anticipation of the future can paralyze us into a state where we want to sleep simply to escape despair. Perhaps these three friends of the Lord, in their own human frailty, were overcome by what had been happening and what was about to happen to Jesus. It was as though they had forgotten what was revealed to them at the transfiguration of the Lord. Their behavior in this instance reminds us that we can forget the powerfully good and reassuring aspects of our faith experience when we face our worst moments. In those moments however, we should try to follow Jesus' words to his three friends - watch and pray.

- **Think about positive experiences when you have been closest to the Lord. Meditate on those moments so that you learn to bring them to mind during times of trouble or despair.**
- **Reflect on a time when life's troubles made you want to stay in bed with the covers pulled over your head. Allow yourself to remember that helpless feeling. Such a memory reminds us that we should not judge Peter, James and John too harshly!**
- **Pray a prayer for yourself - a prayer asking God to help you "stay awake" to pray when you face a time of trial or challenge.**

DAY 5

Read [Ephesians 6:10-20](#)

In our troubled world, it is tempting to fill our time with distractions and busyness to avoid facing the fact that the world is a very broken place. We sleepwalk past issues we have the power to address because it all seems too much for one person or a small group of people to fix. It is important for us to remember that vigilance and diligence are important facets of our Christian walk. We are not called to run away from trouble but to tackle the tough problems knowing that we wear the "armor of God" as we do the work the Lord has placed before us. We wear the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, gospel of peace, the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. Paul instructed his readers to pray for the Lord's people. So must we.

- **Pray for yourself, for you are the Lord's.**
- **Pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ, for they are the Lord's.**
- **Pray for St. Paul, it is the Lord's church and is entrusted to our care.**
- **Pray for all those who do not yet know the Lord for they are his as well - they just don't know it yet. That's part of our job. Peace and grace.**

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