

# *Prayer Devotions*

*July 2024*



**Luke 18:1**

**Pray Always and Never Give Up.**

## ***Prayer for Persecuted Church***

*Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Hebrews 13:3*

Global watchdog Open Doors reports that in just the last year...

- Over 360 million Christians live in places where they experience high levels of persecution and discrimination.
- 5,898 Christians were killed for their faith.
- 5,110 churches and other Christian buildings were attacked.
- 4,765 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced, or imprisoned.

These numbers are heart-breaking. And sadly, they do not tell the whole story.

Please pray:

- Whatever their circumstances, God will give persecuted Christians the right words. (Ephesians 6:19-20)
- That persecuted Christians will understand and find peace in the sufficiency of God's grace, even in their weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- That Christians facing hardship will draw from a source of power larger than themselves. (2 Corinthians 1:7-9)
- God be present in their hardship, protecting them according to His will.
- That their witness would inspire those who seek to harm them.

### **Qatar**

**Persecution Type:** Islamic oppression, Clan oppression, Dictatorial paranoia

**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Absolute Monarchy

**Leader:** Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani

### **Congo DR (DRC)**

**Persecution Type:** Islamic oppression, Dictatorial paranoia, Organized corruption and crime Clan oppression

**Main Religion:** Christianity

**Government:** Semi-Presidential Republic

**Leader:** President Felix Tshisekedi

### **Indonesia**

**Persecution Type:** Islamic oppression

**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Presidential Republic

**Leader:** President Joko Widodo

## Daily Prayers for July:

"Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulty." ~ Abraham Lincoln

### Monday, July 1st, 2024:

#### **Because I Said So**

Most parents have uttered these words, and if you're not a parent, you probably heard them as a child in response to, "Why?" "Because I said so!" Children are seldom satisfied with that answer, but obedience is expected because the one saying it is an authority figure who has a greater understanding of the situation. Oftentimes it is also because the need to comply has been questioned too many times, even when valid reasons were given.

For parents, it's often out of frustration because *they know* what's in the children's best interest. I wonder how often God feels that way with us. He has established pathways and boundaries for us that are in our best interest, and yet so often we question or simply disregard them. When we do that, we're acting like rebellious children. We're foolishly claiming that we know better. We're too educated, too sophisticated, too enlightened to believe an "antiquated and no longer relevant" book like the Bible.

This is nothing new. Even the disciples who traveled with Jesus for three years had trouble understanding the extent and power of His authority. What they learned, and what we must come to understand is this: if He could command a violent storm to subside in nature, He can calm the storms inside of us; and if He, a carpenter, can tell two seasoned fisherman who've fished all night without success to cast their nets *on the other side of the boat* and it produces a haul that bursts the nets - He must have some power and insight beyond our limited resources and understanding.

"The LORD says: 'My thoughts and my ways are not like yours. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours.'" (**Isaiah 55:8-9** Contemporary English Version) We need to humbly accept that there will be times we don't understand what He asks of us, and that's when we obediently do it anyway - because He said so.

**Tuesday, July 2nd,2024:**

### **Equal but Different**

We are blessed to be living in the United States. There is a basic sense of equality of opportunity, but that differs from the current trend demanding equity. Equity requires equal outcomes, and achieving that requires manipulating the criteria for determining the basis for distribution of benefits.

The truth is, we've all been given different inherent talents, abilities and attributes. Sameness diminishes us all. We need differences because God created each one of us uniquely to make a contribution to our particular sphere of influence. For some He has a global assignment, and for others it may be most pronounced within our nuclear family. Either way, He expects us to use what He's given us right where He's placed us that we might bring Him glory.

God's creation consists of deserts and ocean-front properties, rugged mountains and rolling prairies, tropics and tundras. Each has its own unique challenges and opportunities for prosperity. The same is true of humanity, so who are we to question how God formed us? Instead we should be asking Him how we can best reflect His image in every circumstance and using what He has given us to that end. "Whatever you do [whatever your task may be], work from the soul [that is, put in your very best effort], as [something done] for the Lord and not for men, knowing [with all certainty] that it is from the Lord [not from men] that you will receive the inheritance which is your [greatest] reward. It is the Lord Christ whom you [actually] serve." (**Colossians 3:23-24** Amplified Bible)

We are all divinely equipped and are given the opportunity to be the best version of ourselves possible. "Each of you has been blessed with one of God's many wonderful gifts to be used in the service of others. So use your gift well." (**1 Peter 4:10** Contemporary English Version)

**Wednesday, July 3rd, 2024:**

### **The Principal Thing**

“How abundant are the good things that you have stored up for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all, on those who take refuge in you.” **(Psalm 31:19)** NIV

The fear of the Lord is a good thing. Blessings come to those who fear the Lord. Hear what the Lord says: “To those who fear the Lord he promises ‘He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him: He also will hear their cry and save them.’” **(Psalm 145:19)** King Solomon gave us so much understanding of the fear of the Lord when he penned the book of Proverbs. What is the fear of the Lord? King Solomon answers in **Proverbs 9:10-11** “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding: For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you.” “Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore, get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. **(Proverbs 4:7)** So here is a question only you can answer. Do you fear the Lord? Have you ever given it any thought? “Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him: He also will hear their cry and save them.” **(Psalm 33:18)**

**Thursday, July 4th, 2024:**

### **Independence Day**

Today we celebrate 248 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, even though it wasn't actually signed until August 2<sup>nd</sup>. The second paragraph of this document begins as follows:

*“We hold these truths to be **self-evident**, that **all** men are created equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator** with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the **consent of the governed...**”*  
(emphasis added)

The freedoms that we celebrate are not only freedom “*to*” but also freedom “*from*”! The United States in which we currently reside would do well to reexamine the verbiage of this important document. It would first seem that it is no longer self-evident that the rights aforementioned are unalienable nor that they are universally believed to be endowed by a benevolent and supreme Creator. Rather His very existence is either ignored or mocked by many of those who sit in the seat of government. These elected representatives too often forget that their power and decisions should be a reflection of the will and consent of those governed.

In all fairness, we are still blessed to live in a free nation, but we can't allow ourselves to take this for granted. Praise God that He has chosen to place us here, and by His grace we are free indeed. Freed from the tyranny of sin and free to speak out and stand up for those truths we hold dear. Then ask Him to show us how we are to live out that blessing in a manner that will reflect His goodness, mercy, provision, and the higher laws that have been instituted to govern us all. And make your voice heard in deciding those who will represent us. (**1 Peter 2:13-16**)

**Friday, July 5th ,2024**

**Pick A Side**

To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln when asked if he thought God was on the side of the Union Army, he replied that he wasn't so concerned about God being on their side as he was in being on God's side. Russian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsy commented in his 1983 Templeton Lecture that after spending 50 years researching the history of the Revolution and its devastating results, he identified the cause was precisely what he has heard from the older generation at the beginning of his research: "Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened."

In his farewell address to the children of Israel, Joshua reviewed their history and pointed out to them the victories they had gained and the rest they could enjoy - all because of God's favor. And then he cautioned them to cling to the Lord and not become ensnared in the ways of the ungodly because God wouldn't continue to drive the enemies out if his children were holding the doors open and hanging out the welcome sign.

There are always lessons to be learned from history. It doesn't take much discernment to recognize how rapidly our country is spiraling downward and away from God's standards. There's a lot of effort going into blurring or obliterating the lines that separate good from evil, but praise God, we have a plumb line and a compass to keep us on the right path. We can't ignore the deviations or try to give them justification; we need to lovingly and unashamedly overcome evil with the goodness and promises of our God. There are only two choices - if you're not for Him, you're against Him. As Joshua commanded, choose you this day whom you will serve. (**Joshua 24:15**) Choose the side that we know will garner His favor.

**Saturday, July 6th, 2024:**

### **The Way of Cain**

You've probably heard the expression "raising Cain" which means to cause trouble or create a disturbance. It's actually more serious than that. In fact, Jude warns against going the way of Cain, likening it to Sodom and Gomorrah, gross immorality, rejecting authority, and by these things being destroyed and perishing as in the rebellion of Korah. (**Jude 11**)

Korah and his co-conspirators tried to usurp the authority of Moses - God's chosen leader. Moses proposed a test, they failed the test, and the earth opened up and swallowed them along with their families and all their possessions. In addition, fire came down and consumed the other 250 conspirators. (**Genesis 4**)

So what was Cain's downfall? It was his flesh - pride - jealousy. He brought an offering simply from the fruit of the ground, but his brother Abel's offering was from the firstborn of his flock along with the best portions. God was pleased with Abel's sacrifice but not Cain's, and Cain was angry. He was mad at God! His offering was a "form" of religion whereas Abel's was a true sacrifice reflecting trust and reverence. Cain's anger then turned on Abel and he murdered him.

Cain was essentially holding to the *form* of godliness, an outward show, but denying its power. (**2 Timothy 3:5**) He wanted to make the rules, ignoring the fact that it's God who's in charge, and the resulting curse was estrangement from his family, loss of fruitfulness in his farming, and being driven from the face of the Lord.

Jesus is our perfect sacrifice to redeem us from the curse, but we still have a choice and the sinful pride of life is always lurking at the door. Simply going through the motions isn't enough; we must believe, humble ourselves, trust and obey. Don't raise Cain; instead, bury him!



**Sunday, July 7th, 2024:**

**Walking Wisely: Ephesians 5:15-19**

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord."

**Reflection:**

Paul urges us to live wisely in a world full of distractions. Here's how we can apply his teaching:

Walk Wisely (v. 15): Be intentional in your actions, aligning them with God's purpose.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Make the Most of Every Opportunity (v. 16): Seize every moment for good, recognizing life's brevity.

**Colossians 4:5** "Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity."

Understand the Lord's Will (v. 17): Seek and understand God's will to live meaningfully.

**Romans 12:2** "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Be Filled with the Spirit (v. 18-19): Seek fulfillment in the Holy Spirit, expressing joy and gratitude.

**Galatians 5:22-23** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

**Application:**

**Be Intentional:** Pray for wisdom daily.

**Stay Connected:** Regularly read Scripture.

**Live Joyfully:** Let the Holy Spirit fill you with joy and gratitude.

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, grant us wisdom to walk wisely and make the most of every opportunity. Help us understand and follow Your will. Fill us with Your Spirit, so we may live joyfully and glorify Your name. Amen.

**Monday, July 8th, 2024:**

## **Resisting Temptation**

As believers, we want to bring glory to God in all we do. Yet how often do we give into temptation and do the very thing(s) we don't want to do?

The apostle Paul shares his own experiences about being a redeemed sinner whose carnal body still waged war against the indwelling Spirit. Throughout the New Testament, he teaches us how God provides the help we need to overcome our struggles with our flesh.

Here are four resources the Bible presents to help us conquer sin:

The **Holy Spirit** indwells us and we need to walk in the Spirit and yield to His control. Ask Him to guide you and expose anything in your heart that grieves Him.

The **Word of God** teaches us how to live and how to get back on track if we choose the wrong path. If we want to know God, we must know His Word. Study it, memorize it, and meditate on it daily.

**Prayer** is how we have conversations with our Heavenly Father that fosters an intimate relationship with Him through Christ. Seek Him and ask Him for help with your struggles.

We need **Community**. Don't just attend church – get involved in your church. Build relationships with other believers. Find a trusted believer who can help you stay accountable. There is strength in numbers.

Paul also gives us great hope and confidence in our salvation, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Even though we have a forgiving Father and we know we will never achieve perfect victory over sin in our earthly life, we should still strive to avoid sin and bring glory to God in all we think, say and do.

**Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:16-25; Colossians 3:16; Matthew 7:7-8; James 5:16; Romans 8:1**

**Tuesday, July 9th, 2024:**

### **More Than a Textbook Assignment**

In his book *The Crucified Life: How To Live Out A Deeper Christian Experience* A.W. Tozer wrote, “One important point many fail to understand is that the Bible was never meant to replace God; rather, it was meant to lead us into the heart of God. Too many Christians stop with the text and never go on to experience the presence of God.”

For a number of years it has been my intention to read through the Bible in a year. I’ve used several translations of the One Year Bible, and I recently followed a one-year plan from a ministry I follow. Both of these plans helped me discipline myself not only to make my reading a daily occurrence but also to ensure that I don’t disregard some of the less, shall we say, exciting books – like Leviticus and Numbers.

Unfortunately, the trap I can fall into, no matter how lofty my intentions may be, is that when I get to those books it can be both tempting and seemingly excusable to skim through them to complete the objective. And therein lies the problem. I’m approaching it as an assignment more than an appointment to meet with my heavenly Father, seeking to know His heart and to glean something from the experience that would deepen my relationship with Him.

When I remember to pray first in order to prepare my heart and mind to engage, I find that I can actually discover new and exciting things – even in Leviticus and Numbers! Ask Him to open your eyes and your heart to His word and, more importantly, to Him. (**Psalm 119:10-18**)

**Wednesday, July 10th, 2024:**

**Secure the Future!**

We really can secure our future, and it won't be by investing in gold or even getting a better job and putting our heart and soul into it. It all depends on what we believe will secure it. "Trust in *and* rely confidently on the LORD with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight *or* understanding. In all your ways know *and* acknowledge *and* recognize Him, And He will make your paths straight *and* smooth [removing obstacles that block your way]." (**Proverbs 3:5-6**, Amplified) Another way to interpret that is He will make your way prosperous, as in successful or favorable. Who wouldn't want a favorable future?

That's not to say that it will all be easy sailing, but it does mean that when we put the outcome in the hands of Almighty God, He will be faithful in guiding us and showing us the way around or through the obstacles we will inevitably encounter. Daniel understood this when faced with imminent execution unless God came through in a seemingly impossible situation - and He did. (**Daniel 2:20-21**) Daniel acknowledged the sovereignty and wisdom of God to a pagan king, and suddenly a slave was made ruler over the entire province of Babylon.

We were all born slaves to sin, but God..." Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His great mercy gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." (**1 Peter 1:3-4**) He will teach us to prosper in whatever place we may be. Remember, His beautiful promise in Jeremiah's letter promising a future and hope (**Jeremiah 29:11**); he had written for them to basically grow where they were planted and trust Him. He can secure your future when you truly trust and obey.

**Thursday, July 11th, 2024:**

**Praying Ephesians 5:15-19**

"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord."

**Prayer Points:**

**Wisdom and Discernment:** "Lord, grant me wisdom to live each day carefully and purposefully. Help me to make wise choices in every aspect of my life."

**Time Management:** "Father, teach me to make the most of every opportunity. Help me to be mindful of how I use my time and to prioritize what truly matters."

**Understanding God's Will:** "God, reveal Your will to me and help me to understand it deeply. Guide my decisions so that they align with Your plans for my life."

**Sobriety and Self-Control:** "Lord, give me the strength to resist temptations that lead to excess and debauchery. Fill me with Your Spirit instead, that I may live a life of self-control and righteousness."

**Spiritual Fullness:** "Holy Spirit, fill me with Your presence. Let my life overflow with Your love, joy, and peace, and empower me to live in a way that honors You."

**Edifying Speech:** "Father, may my words be uplifting and encouraging to others. Let me speak to others with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, bringing grace and hope to those around me."

**Worship and Praise:** "Lord, help me to worship You with a sincere heart. Let my heart be full of songs of praise and gratitude, making music to You in every circumstance."

**Community and Fellowship:** "God, strengthen my relationships within the body of Christ. Help us to build each other up through spiritual songs and mutual encouragement."

Praying through these points can help align one's life more closely with the teachings in Ephesians 5:15-19, fostering a spirit-led and purposeful Christian Walk.

**Friday, July 12th, 2024:**

## **The Prodigal Son and the Love of the Father**

The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) is a poignant reminder of the unconditional love and boundless grace of our Heavenly Father. In this story, a young man demands his inheritance, leaves home, and squanders it in reckless living. When a severe famine strikes, he finds himself destitute and hungry. In his lowest moment, he decides to return to his father, hoping to be accepted as a servant.

But what happens next is a beautiful depiction of God's heart. Instead of anger or rejection, the father runs to his son, embraces him, and showers him with kisses. He dresses him in the finest robe, puts a ring on his finger, and celebrates his return with a grand feast. This is the image of God's love for us—no matter how far we wander, His desire is always to welcome us back with open arms and rejoice over our return.

In Revelation 19:6-9, we find another image of a grand feast—the marriage supper of the Lamb. This feast symbolizes the ultimate union between Christ and His Church. God's invitation extends to all humanity, desiring that everyone joins in this celebration. His love is inclusive, and He longs for each of us to accept His invitation and partake in the joy and fellowship of His eternal kingdom.

The parallels between these two passages highlight God's relentless pursuit of His children and His deep desire for us to be with Him. The father's joy in the parable mirrors the joy in Heaven when a sinner repents and turns back to God. Similarly, the celebration in Revelation signifies the fulfillment of God's plan for humankind—to be in perfect communion with Him.

### **Prayer Points:**

#### **Thanksgiving for God's Unconditional Love:**

"Heavenly Father, thank You for Your boundless love and grace. Thank You for always welcoming us back with open arms, no matter how far we have strayed."

#### **Desire for Intimacy with God:**

"Lord, cultivate in us a deeper longing to be in Your presence. Draw us closer to You, so we may experience the fullness of Your love and joy in our daily lives."

These prayers not only express our gratitude but also align our hearts with God's desire for us—to be in a loving relationship with Him, both now and for eternity.

**Saturday, July 13th, 2024:**

**Praying John 10:7-10**

Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

**Prayer Points**

**Thanksgiving for Jesus as the Gate:** "Lord, we thank You for Jesus, who is the gate for the sheep. Thank You for providing us a way to enter into Your presence and be saved."

**Discernment Against False Teachings:** "Father, grant us discernment to recognize and reject the thieves and robbers who seek to lead us astray. Help us to listen only to Your true voice."

**Salvation through Christ:** "Lord, we pray that more people would come to know Jesus as the gate and find salvation through Him. May they enter through Him and experience the safety and security that He provides."

**Provision and Guidance:** "God, as we enter through Jesus, we ask for Your provision and guidance. Lead us to green pastures and still waters, where we can find rest and nourishment for our souls."

**Protection from the Enemy:** "Heavenly Father, protect us from the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Surround us with Your divine protection and keep us safe from all harm."

**Abundant Life in Christ:** "Lord Jesus, You came that we may have life and have it to the full. Help us to experience the abundant life You offer, filled with Your love, joy, peace, and purpose."

**Spiritual Growth and Fulfillment:** "Father, as we live in Your pasture, may we grow spiritually and find fulfillment in Your presence. Help us to deepen our relationship with You and flourish in our faith."

**Sharing the Good News:** "Lord, empower us to share the good news of Jesus being the gate with others. Give us boldness and wisdom to lead others to the salvation and abundant life that He offers."

**Reflection and Personalization**

Reflect on how these prayer points relate to your personal lives and circumstances. Personalize these prayers by incorporating specific situations you are facing, seeking God's guidance, protection, and provision in these areas.

**Sunday, July 14th, 2024:**

**Spiritual Weapon**

“...Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord.” **(Zechariah 4:6)**

You might feel like the spiritual battle you face is too big but there is hope when you give your battle to the Lord. When you feel overwhelmed, look to the Lord and his word. “Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.” **(Romans 12:12)** The Lord is our hope and the reason we can rejoice. His ways are higher than our ways and so it is with patience we wait for “Him to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.” **(2 Chronicles 16:9)** James said “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. (James 1:3) When you have a trial and you feel like you are walking thru fire, know this, that God is beside you each step of the way. Be patient and joyful as you go through a trial because you will be victorious on the other side and your faith in Christ will grow. God will fight for you. He is for you. Look up and know that you will be strengthened to face whatever comes your way. The Lord is fighting for you by his Spirit. You have a spiritual weapon. That weapon is seeking The Lord in prayer and letting “your requests be made known” **(Philippians 4:8)** to the God of Heaven and Earth. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” **(Psalm 50:15)** Just remember the “...the battle is not yours, but God’s.” **(2 Chronicles 20:15)**

**Isaiah 55:9, Isaiah 43:2, Romans 8:31**



**Monday, July 15th, 2024**

### **Overlook vs Overcome**

As early as 1935 Dietrich Boenhoffer was trying to wake up the Christian church in Germany to the threat of the Nazis and to become vocal in their opposition. The church chose to look the other way and not become involved. Even after Hitler rose to power, they would sing hymns more loudly to drown out the cries of the Jews being taken to concentration camps as the trains passed by the church. What if they had used their voices to protest what they knew to be wrong?

From a Gestapo prison shortly before being hanged, Boenhoffer wrote to a friend “dead religion will never serve God.” Germany needed to stop *playing* church and instead rise up and *be* the church. We all need to live out our faith in our own spheres of influence. This is an election year; we need to respectfully stand *for* what aligns with Godly values and *against* anything that would compromise what we know to be right and true according to His Word, being neither mean-spirited nor mealy-mouthed.

In his book Letter to the American Church, author Eric Metaxas refutes the destructive and dangerous lie that fighting evil politicizes Christianity. Instead, he asserts that the Church has an irreplaceable role in shaping the culture of our nation. It is our duty to fight the powers of darkness, and especially to speak up for the weak and vulnerable. Consider those like William Wilberforce who used his influence in Parliament to abolish slave trade.

The biblical foundational doctrines of our country are crumbling before our eyes; we can't ignore the red flags. “Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.” **(James 4:17)** We can't stand idly by and ignore or overlook evil: we must overcome evil with good. **(Romans 12:21)**

**Tuesday, July 16th, 2024:**

### **Our Ultimate Goel**

The word is almost a homophone for our word goal, and in some respects there's a connection. For the Hebrews, a goel was a kinsman-redeemer. His responsibility was to buy a fellow Israelite out of slavery, to avenge the blood of a family member, and to carry on the family name by marrying a childless family widow.

In a sense, Judah was tricked into becoming a goel by his widowed and betrayed daughter-in-law Tamar. Born into that lineage was Boaz, the kinsman redeemer for Ruth, the Moabite widow who became the great-grandmother of King David. You might call Boaz a substitute father to secure the family lineage, even though the widow was not Jewish. It was not by coincidence that this redemption took place in Bethlehem, the very place where the final, ultimate goel would be born.

We also have a goel - a substitute Father who has redeemed us from bondage. He intervened in the human family line, avenged the blood of the sin that would demand our death, and because of that we have the responsibility to carry on His family name. Think of it as our family tree. We can't bear any worthwhile fruit on our own, but when we have been grafted in and have His blood flowing through us, it says we will bear *much* fruit. **(John 15:5)** So you could say that our "goel" has given us a goal. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." **(1 Peter 2:9)** Aim for the goal because now and for eternity, Jesus is our ultimate goel.

**Wednesday, July 17th, 2024:**

### **What Is**

There is so much fear broadcasted in the news and on social media that it's impossible to avoid it. What if World War III happens? What if we have another pandemic? What if ... fill in the blank. The "what-ifs" create a lot of fear and anxiety within us.

What does the Bible say about our fears and anxiety? You don't have to look far to see that God addresses our fears and worries often. He knew we would be facing these difficult, and sometimes debilitating, emotions in our fallen world.

How are we supposed to manage our fears and worries? The Bible gives us action steps on how to deal with these emotions. First, we stop focusing on the What Ifs and we turn our eyes on Jesus. We focus on What Is.

Jesus is in control, and He is seated at the right hand of the Father. We ground ourselves in the hope and promise of our Lord and Savior. We focus on His faithfulness and trust Him with our struggles.

Yes, it's sometimes easier said than done. When the fears and anxieties creep in, we must remind ourselves Who is in control.

Our thought patterns of fear and anxiety tend to be focused on ourselves. Jesus shows us that when we focus on serving others with a compassionate heart, we can redirect the fear and anxiety by refocusing our minds and hearts. By praying for others, helping those in need, and sharing the Gospel, it will help us experience less fear and anxiety and renew a right spirit within us.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

**Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 9:35-10:15; Psalm 51:10; John 14:27**

**Thursday, July 18th, 2024:**

## **Prayer For Spiritual Strength**

Ephesians 6:10-20 is a powerful passage that describes the "armor of God," emphasizing the need for spiritual strength and preparation for spiritual battles. Here are five prayer points based on this passage:

### **1. Prayer for Spiritual Strength**

**Scripture Reference:** Ephesians 6:10 - "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." **Prayer:** Heavenly Father, I pray for Your strength to fill me today. Help me to rely on Your mighty power in every situation I face. Strengthen my faith and resolve, so I can stand firm against any challenges or adversities.

### **2. Prayer for Protection with the Armor of God**

**Scripture Reference:** Ephesians 6:11 - "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." **Prayer:** Lord, I ask for Your protection as I put on the full armor of God. Clothe me with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the shoes of readiness that come from the gospel of peace. Shield me with faith, guard my mind with the helmet of salvation, and arm me with the sword of the Spirit, which is Your Word.

### **3. Prayer for Awareness and Resistance Against Evil**

**Scripture Reference:** Ephesians 6:12 - "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." **Prayer:** Gracious God, give me discernment and awareness of the spiritual battles around me. Help me to recognize that my true struggle is not against people, but against the spiritual forces of evil. Empower me to stand firm and resist these forces with Your divine power and wisdom.

### **4. Prayer for Faith and Readiness**

**Scripture Reference:** Ephesians 6:16 - "In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." **Prayer:** Father, increase my faith so that I can stand strong against all attacks from the enemy. Let my faith be a shield that extinguishes every flaming arrow directed at me. Help me to always be ready to defend my faith and to proclaim the gospel of peace with courage and conviction.

### **5. Prayer for Boldness and Clarity in Proclaiming the Gospel**

**Scripture Reference:** Ephesians 6:19-20 - "Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should." **Prayer:** Lord, I pray for boldness and clarity in proclaiming Your gospel. Give me the words to speak and the courage to declare Your truth fearlessly. Let me be a faithful ambassador of Christ, sharing the mystery of the gospel with love and conviction, regardless of the circumstances.

These prayer points can serve as a guide to seek God's strength, protection, discernment, faith, and boldness as described in Ephesians 6:10-20.

**Friday, July 19th, 2024:**

## **Unity in Christ**

Unity is a profound and essential element of the Christian faith. The Scriptures emphasize the importance of maintaining unity among believers, highlighting how it reflects our commitment to Christ and our love for one another.

**Ephesians 4:3** urges us to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” This verse underscores the active role we must play in fostering unity. It requires effort, intentionality, and a spirit of peace. The unity of the Spirit is a divine gift, but maintaining it involves our cooperation and dedication. We are called to transcend our differences, focusing on what unites us rather than what divides us.

In **2 Peter 1:3**, we read, “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” This passage reassures us that God has already equipped us with everything necessary to live in unity. Through His divine power and our knowledge of Him, we possess the tools to overcome discord. By relying on God’s provision and guidance, we can navigate conflicts and strive towards harmonious relationships.

Continuing in **2 Peter 1:5-8**, the apostle Peter encourages believers to “make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.” These virtues form a progressive chain, each building upon the other, culminating in love. When we cultivate these qualities, we contribute to the unity of the body of Christ. Love, the final and greatest virtue, binds us together in perfect harmony.

Unity in the Christian community is not merely an abstract ideal; it is a tangible reality we are called to manifest. By embracing the virtues outlined in Scripture and relying on God’s divine power, we can actively pursue unity. This unity is a testament to the world of God’s love and the transformative power of the Gospel.

Let us, therefore, make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, knowing that God has given us all we need to live in harmony. As we grow in faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection, and love, we reflect the unity that is found in Christ

**Saturday, July 20th, 2024:**

**Praying the Fruit of the Spirit Galatians 5:22-26**

Each of these prayer points focuses on asking God to help develop these aspects of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, allowing us to live more Christ-like and impactful lives.

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. <sup>24</sup> Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

**Love:** Heavenly Father, fill my heart with Your love. Help me to love others unconditionally as You have loved me. Let my actions reflect Your love in all situations. Amen.

**Joy:** Lord, grant me a deep and abiding joy that comes from knowing You and resting in Your promises. Even in difficult times, may Your joy be my strength. Amen.

**Peace:** God of peace, calm my anxious heart and grant me Your perfect peace that surpasses all understanding. Help me to be a peacemaker in my relationships and to trust in Your plan. Amen.

**Patience:** Father, teach me to be patient in all things. Help me to wait on Your timing and to bear with others in love, reflecting Your patience towards me. Amen.

**Kindness:** Lord Jesus may Your kindness flow through me. Enable me to show compassion and kindness to everyone I meet, reflecting Your gentle and loving nature. Amen.

**Goodness:** Gracious God, cultivate in me a spirit of goodness. Let my thoughts, words, and actions be pleasing to You, and let me do good to others as an expression of my faith. Amen.

**Faithfulness:** Faithful Father, help me to be faithful in my walk with You and in my commitments to others. Strengthen my faith and help me to trust You in all circumstances. Amen.

**Gentleness:** Lord, make me gentle in heart and spirit. Teach me to respond with gentleness in all interactions, reflecting Your humility and care. Amen.

**Self-Control:** Holy Spirit, empower me with self-control. Help me to resist temptations and to live a disciplined life that honors You. Guide my actions and decisions to align with Your will. Amen.

**Sunday, July 21st, 2024:**

### **Biblical Boundaries**

How far should we go to help people in need? In **Galatians 6:2**, Paul tells us to carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Does that mean it's our duty to rush in and take responsibility for fixing the problems of everyone who is in need, hurting or troubled? As a Christian, is this how we fulfill the law of Christ?

The Bible makes a clear distinction about what's our responsibility and what's not our responsibility in verse 5 where Paul writes, "for each one should carry their own load." This means the person in need should take responsibility for their own situation.

At first glance, it seems contradictory. First Paul says we are supposed to carry their burdens and then he says they should carry their own load. What's the difference between us carrying their burden and them carrying their own load?

The Greek translation of the word "load" in **Galatians 6:5** is phortion which refers to an individual burden that's not transferable. This means we alone are all responsible for our own burdens, and we shouldn't expect someone to handle them for us. We answer directly to God for our own actions. No one else can do that for us.

However, when we see someone hurting or struggling, it is our duty to walk alongside them. We empathize. We listen. We pray with them. Yet the way they deal with their burden remains their responsibility.

We fulfill the law of Christ when we bear their burdens by empathizing with them but we aren't supposed to carry their load by fixing their problems for them. Ultimately, we are all responsible for dealing with our own stuff while empathizing with those in need.

**Monday, July 22nd, 2024:**

### **Moving Time**

God is on the move, and the evidence can be witnessed in the degree of spiritual warfare we see. We've experienced His blessing for a long time, and we became so complacent we needed a wake-up call. A shaking, if you will, as in trying to wake someone up or get their attention.

The first shaking was in 2020 when a virus totally disrupted our status quo. It was a rude awakening to what things were deemed "essential" and "nonessential." We were forced to reevaluate where we placed our trust and where we turned for a sense of security. Since COVID, church attendance and affiliation have declined, and of those who do attend only 14% actually have a sound biblical worldview. Even the sanctity of life and a belief in moral absolutes are rejected.

And then came October 7th. Another shaking, and more division between darkness and light. It would be ludicrous to deny this is a spiritual battle. Evil is shouting in the streets and on the campuses. We can't afford to ignore it, and if we're not using our voices to counter it, we're simply abdicating to the darkness. We have to make a move, and there are only two ways to go. We can choose to move with God and actively battle the dark, or we can remain silent and by default choose the darkness.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*."  
**(Ephesians 6:12)** According to Oxford professor of physics Maximilian Abitrol, the 99% success of Israel's defense against Iran's attack was statistically *impossible!* *God is moving* and we can move with Him. Choose you this day. Let's get moving. **(Joshua 24:15)**



**Tuesday, July 23rd, 2024:**

### **Not Forsaken**

We know that His ways are higher than ours, and the only way we could possibly know the mind of God is by the Spirit of God. Even so, we still only know in part, and some things we will never wholly understand this side of heaven. One of those things that I've wrestled with is what Jesus cried out from the cross - "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (**Matthew 27:46**) This is Jesus - God in the flesh - and yet He experienced the feeling of being disowned by His Father - abandoned by God! How could Jesus ever doubt? It seems like a paradox.

This seemingly contradictory statement became for me an epiphany. Yes, Jesus was fully God, but He was also fully man - fully human with all the frailties of the flesh. We know that He was sinless, but we also know that He had to learn obedience through the things He suffered. (**Hebrews 5:8**) Then it made sense. The flesh must die in order for the Spirit to truly live victoriously. That applies to us as well.

Just like the human flesh of Jesus was nailed to the cross, so we too must crucify the sinful nature in order to be led by the Spirit. "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (**Galatians 5:24**) "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." (**Galatians 5:16**) The more we identify with Jesus and His victory over sinful flesh, the more we will come to know His fellowship even in those times when it *feels* like we've been abandoned. His promise is sure, "...for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (**Hebrews 13:5b**)

**Wednesday, July 24th, 2024:**

**Part 1 - Praying Philippians 2:9-11**

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

**Prayer Points**

**1. Exaltation of Jesus Christ:**

- **Praise:** "Heavenly Father, I praise You for exalting Jesus to the highest place and giving Him the name above every name. I glorify Your holy name for Your perfect plan and the supremacy of Christ."
- **Worship:** "Lord Jesus, I bow before You and acknowledge Your lordship over all creation. May my life be a continuous act of worship, honoring Your exalted position."

**2. Recognition of Jesus' Authority:**

- **Acknowledgment:** "Father, help me and others to always recognize and submit to the authority of Jesus in every aspect of our lives. May we live in a way that reflects His lordship."
- **Submission:** "Lord, I surrender every part of my life to You. Teach me to live under Your authority, making decisions and taking actions that honor Your name."

**3. Universal Acknowledgment of Christ:**

- **Evangelism:** "Father, I pray for those who have not yet acknowledged Jesus as Lord. Use me as Your instrument to share the Gospel so that more people will come to know and confess Jesus as Lord."
- **Global Church:** "Lord, I pray for the global Church, that we may be united in proclaiming the lordship of Jesus Christ to the world. Strengthen believers everywhere to boldly declare Your name."

These prayer points can guide you in a deep and focused time of prayer, aligning your heart and intentions with the truths found in Philippians 2:9-11.

**Thursday, July 25th, 2024**

**Part 2 - Philippians 2:9-11**

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

**Prayer Points**

**Power in the Name of Jesus:**

- **Healing and Deliverance:** "In the name of Jesus, I pray for healing and deliverance for those who are suffering. May Your powerful name bring restoration and freedom to those in need."
- **Protection:** "Lord Jesus, I pray for protection over my family, friends, and community. Your name is a strong tower; may we find safety and refuge in You."

**Glory to God the Father:**

- **Purpose:** "Heavenly Father, may everything I do bring glory to Your name. Help me to live a life that reflects Your love and grace, pointing others to You."
- **Thanksgiving:** "Thank You, Father, for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. I am grateful for His sacrifice and exaltation, and I give You all the glory for Your marvelous works."

**Every Knee Shall Bow:**

- **Humility:** "Lord, instill in me a heart of humility, recognizing that every knee shall bow before You. May my life be a testament to Your greatness and majesty."

**Every Tongue Confess:**

- **Confession:** "Lord, I confess that You are Lord over my life. Help me to speak boldly of Your lordship to others, encouraging them to also confess and believe."
- **Intercession:** "I pray for those who are resistant or indifferent to the Gospel. Soften their hearts, Lord, that they may come to confess Jesus as Lord and experience the transformative power of Your love."

These prayer points can guide you in a deep and focused time of prayer, aligning your heart and intentions with the truths found in Philippians 2:9-11.

**Friday, July 26th, 2024**

### **Yada, Yada, Yada**

You've probably heard someone sarcastically utter those words, possibly even accompanied with some hand motions. The implication is whatever is being said is boring and empty. You can reasonably assume that it's being given little attention and the listener has tuned out with no intention of giving a second thought to what's being said.

When I researched the term, I was both surprised and intrigued to the idea that it's just one more of the enemy's subtle schemes to minimize our attention to things that God deems as important. The word "yada" in Hebrew means "to know" intimately, deeply and with compassion. The word is used in the Bible to describe your most important relationships. Interestingly, an episode of Seinfeld (a decidedly Jewish name) was titled "Yada, Yada" and inferred leaving out not only boring details but also salient ones that could (and ultimately did) diminish or cause fractured relationships.

What God desires is a deeply personal relationship with us. The enemy wants to convince us that His story is boring and has little relevance to "the big picture" of what's happening right now. That's a lie! God already knows us intimately. Just read **Psalm 139**. Really - read it! His unfathomable love for us is from everlasting to everlasting, and He wants us to experience the full extent of it. It's beyond our natural ability to even comprehend, but once we've experienced it, Paul says we can be filled up to all the fullness of God! (**Ephesians 3:19**) *Know Him: yada - compassionately, yada - intimately, yada - from everlasting to everlasting!*

**Saturday, July 27th, 2024**

### **Real Faith**

Having a lush yard in Arizona can be a bit of a challenge, to put it mildly. This time of year requires frequent and intensive watering. Weeds need to be pulled or poisoned, good foliage needs feeding, and you need to mow regularly to promote growth and give an attractive appearance.

A friend has an astroturf lawn. It requires little maintenance and is always green and attractive. It's so tempting. But it isn't real. I only give this comparison because too many settle for an astroturf faith. An artificial lawn is not a problem; an artificial faith is.

Call it synthetic spirituality. At first glance it can appear to be flourishing, but over time its inability to grow and the unnatural feel when you come in close contact will eventually reveal itself. An active, thriving faith requires regular feeding and watering with the Word. You need to be diligent in detecting when anything that might try to choke it out and not allow it to take root.

Finally, there will always be times when Holy Spirit must be allowed to do some mowing. Think of it as pruning. **John 15:1-8** explains that pruning is necessary to produce good fruit. When something is growing wild it can get out of control and it isn't as healthy or productive as it could be. Mowing grass actually helps it to grow thicker because the tips of the blades contain hormones that suppress horizontal growth.

Don't settle for just the appearance of a thriving faith; be willing to do what it takes to be the real deal. Then you'll be producing fruit that will not only make your own life healthier, it will be both attractive *and* beneficial to others. "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." (**Proverbs 11:25**)

**Sunday, July 28th, 2024**

### **Eternal Perspective**

Can you imagine what it would look like if we wrote down everything we did – minute by minute - for an entire day? That would be a real eye-opener...and perhaps a bit startling! How many minutes or even hours did we waste on things that are temporary? One could argue that everything in this life is temporary, and yes, that is true, but there are things that we must do to survive in this life. And there are also things we want to do just for the sheer enjoyment of it. While there's nothing wrong with enjoying temporary things (that don't lead to sin, of course), our lives can get out of balance when our thoughts and our actions are consumed with temporary things to the exclusion of time with God in His Word and in prayer, time in fellowship, time sharing the gospel and time serving others. We can easily become distracted by things that won't matter even a year from now. So, we need to guard our hearts from these temporary distractions and prioritize our eternal pursuits.

Our number one priority should be our relationship with God. Are we living the Father's will for our lives? Do we have an intimate relationship with Jesus? Do we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells us, to guide us and open our eyes to see and our ears to hear so we can understand God's Word and His will? And are we glorifying God by fulfilling His will with our thoughts, words and deeds?

This eternal pursuit is what matters most...now and forevermore.

**Proverbs 4:23; 1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:19-21; Colossians 3:1&2; John 16:13; Galatians 5:16-26**

**Monday, July 29th, 2024**

**Living Water**

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God, I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. **(Isaiah 41:10)**

You are mine; you are created in my image. I am walking beside you and I will give you strength when you call on me. I will lead you in the way that is right for you. I will be there to calm all your fears. I am the rock you can depend on. I am not a man that I should lie. I am a covenant keeping God. I have chosen you from the foundation of the world. I sent my son, Jesus to die for you and carry your sin to the cross. Jesus died and rose again. He is alive forever more. Surrender your heart to the King of Kings. He came to give you life and give it more abundantly. Bring all your cares before the King and let Jesus work in your life to make all things new. His presence will change your heart. Come before him, get in His presence and be filled with the living water that your soul is thirsting for. Hold out your hand and let him hold your hand. You are safe from fear when you look to the "...rock that is higher" than you. **(Psalm 61:2)**

**Genesis 1:27, Joshua 1:9, Psalm 18:2, Numbers 23:19, Deuteronomy 7:9, Ephesians 1:4, 1Peter 2:24, Revelation 1:18, 1 Corinthians 15:4, John 10:10, Revelation 21:5, Isaiah41:13**

**Tuesday, July 30th, 2024**

**God is For Us!**

There's no question that our country was founded on Judeo-Christian values; there's evidence in our founding documents and carved into the walls and bases of monuments and institutions. We're unique in the blending together of a multitude of ethnicities that were forged into a nation with common goals and ideals. What has allowed us to prosper for so long has been the general agreement on our worldview - our concept of right and wrong - because when we agree with God's standards, He blesses us, but there are consequences for abandoning Him and His principles.

This pattern is played out throughout history from Bible times to the present. How many of you have a neighbor who's a Hittite or a Perezite? Didn't think so. More recently, as a result of the Inquisition Spain was reduced to a much lesser nation and Britain lost her Empire for turning her back on the Jewish people. Countries like Greece, once centers of faith, lost their compass and forfeited His blessing. Our country's strength has been because of His blessing. Countless stories of His intervention in times of need are indicators that He is for us. The heavy fog that rolled in over the East River in 1776 allowed General Washington to complete his evacuation of the Continental army to Manhattan. "Incredibly, yet again, circumstances – fate, luck, Providence, the hand of God, as would be said so often – intervened." (David McCullough from 1776)

His hand has been with us and we've been given a mandate to model what can be accomplished by a nation dedicated to honoring Him. As Paul wrote, if God is for us, who can be against us? (**Romans 8:31**) We need Him on our side, but we also need to be on His side. "Now return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies." (**Malachi 3:7**) As long as we honor Him, He is still for us.



**Wednesday, July 31st, 2024**

### **Don't be Deceived**

If Jesus felt the need to sternly warn the disciples about deception, it stands to reason that we need to listen as well. In **Matthew 24** he tells them four times to watch out and be alert because many would seek to deceive. It's a common tactic of Satan that began in the Garden of Eden, and Jesus warns that it's just going to get worse. Did God really say? Does the Bible *really* say? Is it *all* relevant today?

We only read that God told Adam about the tree, and he possibly failed to relate the specifics or gravity to Eve. She was deceived, but she questioned God's authority; Adam flat out ignored the warning. Both responses were deemed sin and resulted in separation from intimate fellowship with God. This underscores the importance for us to really know what He says, embrace all that He says as being authoritative, act accordingly, and accurately pass it on to those who follow us.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** instructs us to "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he grows older he will not abandon it." All of us are living in a time of rampant deception disguised as enlightened thinking supported by pseudo science and espoused by voices that we once trusted. We need to have wisdom to know which voices to give ear to. Solomon wrote that fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of knowledge, as in a clear perception of fact or truth, and he went on to say that those who despise (reject) wisdom and instruction are fools. They are either unwittingly or willingly mocking God, having been deceived into believing the lies.

"Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way." (**2 Timothy 3:16** The Message) Don't be deceived.