

Week 23 Daily Devotional

I. Prayer to enter the Lord's presence:

Be still for a moment. "Lord, I give the day that is now past to you. It is yours. I give the day that is to come to you; help me to see where you are working and to join you there. Speak to me during these moments. I commit them and myself to you."

II. Prayer of Confession:

"Lord, you are faithful to forgive me and cleanse me of my sin when I confess it to you. I confess my sin(s) of _____. Thank you for forgiveness." (1 John 1:9)

III. Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Choose to be thankful, speak out loud of what God has done.

"Thank you, Father, for _____. Fill my heart and my mouth with gratitude throughout this day."

IV. Scripture Reflection

Day 1

Read

John 1:12-13 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Reflect

Who you are is a combination of choices made by others in your relational network that have impacted you, choices made by you that have shaped your character and habits and the physical factors that make you "you." However if you are a follower of Christ none of this is what truly defines you. Your identity is rooted in the reality that you have been born again. You have become a child of God in a special way through your spiritual birth. This new "birthright" trumps all other factors in your life in terms of your true identity. To think consistently and deeply about this should impact how you think of yourself in regards to others. You should not think too highly of yourself; you are special because of God not because you are great in your own right. You should not think too low of yourself; God has called you son or daughter. This is no small thing. To think too high or too low of self is to think too much of self. Think much of Christ instead...he has given you new birth. Then you are able to think much of others.

Respond

Contemplate the past day or two. Have you thought of yourself as better than others? Have you thought of others as being better than you? Have you thought much of yourself and do you know realize that you have thought less of God and others? Today, starting right now, actively put aside both pride and shame...set the Lord before your mind and set the good of others there as well.

Day 2

Read

2Cor. 5:16-17 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Reflect

"You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. " CS Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

Respond

Today you will interact with immortals. Determine a way to keep this truth before your mind all day. Talk to God about the people you will interact with today. Name them and ask God to lead you in all your interactions with them.

Day 3

Read

Eph. 1:11-14 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

Reflect

Your salvation is part of God's eternal plan. This can be hard to contemplate because we tend to try to understand God through the filter of our own lives rather than trying to understand our lives through the filter of God's life. God sees all time as "now." He doesn't look up and down a fixed time line, studying the billions upon billions of events in every human who has ever lived. He sees all time as now and his knowledge is complete and immediate. This means what knows he knows perfectly, he doesn't grow or improve in knowledge and understanding. There is no growth in God because he is perfect. He isn't getting smarter and gaining more information. His knowledge is exhaustive, he knows all there is to know and all this knowledge is instantly accessed by his mind. He doesn't have to remember stuff, he doesn't have to think things through or be reminded. Your life has always been before his mind. It always will be. His capacity to know and to love and to pay attention is unlimited.

Respond

You are on God's mind even when he is not on yours. He comes and goes from our conscious awareness but we have always been and always will be on his mind. Think of this for a few minutes. Ask him to help you to keep him before your mind more consistently today.

Day 4

Read

Eph. 2:1-10 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Reflect

You have been saved by grace. God has justified you in Christ. He has declared you "not guilty" of your sins if you have committed your life to Christ. This is a past action with present implications. You will be saved by grace. In the future Christ will glorify you in Christ. You will be made into a sinless person, freed completely from slavery to sin. But now, in this time in the middle between what already is and what will be someday, you are "raised up with Christ and seated in the heavenly realms." This type of language is a little strange to our ears but it is telling us something very important about our existence now as humans. What will be true of us, or future perfection in, Christ is a settled reality. What will be true of you as a follower of Christ is already true because the course has been set and no one can stop what God has begun.

Respond

How has God changed you since you first began to follow him in earnest? Can you see the difference in who you were and who you are now? It is important to take stock of what God has already done in our lives so that we will live with gratitude and have hope for what he is yet to do. Contemplate the changes God has wrought in your life thus far. Let it spur you to gratitude and joy and hope for more change to come.

Day 5

Read

Gal. 3:26-29 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Rom. 12:4-5 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Reflect

You have a nationality, a family line, a gender, and other factors that combine to define you as the unique person you are. We are not to look to these or any similar distinctions or descriptors to understand who we really are. We are to look to Christ to find our identity. In Christ you do not lose these distinctions and they remain important but they are infinitely less important than the fact that we are sons and daughters of God. Your temptations, struggles, addictions, your successes, gifts and talents...none of this must be allowed to capture our attention and affection. We must choose to be captured more and more in our attention (what we think most about) and our affections (what we value most) by Christ.

Respond

As a spiritual discipline today take the different things that describe and define who you are and "give them to God". For instance you might pray something like this... "God I give you my education in "...", my talent for "...", my experiences of "...". You gave these gifts and opportunities to me for your glory and the good of others. I now consider them as nothing compared to the greatness of knowing you. God I give you my sin, my shame, my mistakes as well."

Take your time, be thorough...give all that you might find pride or shame in and give it to God. To "give to God" means you acknowledge that he is the giver of all gifts and he forgives all confessed sin. You might want to open your hands physically or raise them up in surrender as you do this.

V. Prayer for others:

Pray specifically for the concerns of your life and the lives of others.

VI. Prayer of commitment:

"Lord God, I commit to love you with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength and with all my mind and to love my neighbor as myself. Empower me today to love you and others with everything that I am." (Luke 10:27)

This Month's Scripture Memory:

Matthew 6:25-31

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'