

Week 40 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

Gen. 1:26-31 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Reflect

"Let us make man in our image" is a phrase that packs a lot of content into a very few words. "Man" is the Hebrew word "adam" which means human. It is also, of course, the name of the first male human. God said "Let us make humans in our image." This is the Triune God (Father, Son, Spirit) describing the ultimate act of His creative work. Humans are related horizontally to the rest of creation in that we have been "made" we are not eternally self-existing like God is. Humans are related vertically to God in a way that the rest of creation is not in that we are made in His image. We are created and yet we are eternal beings.

Respond

C.S. Lewis wrote "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - 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. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption."

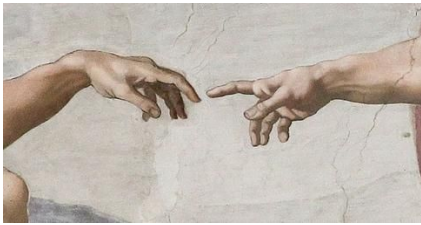
Pray for the people in your life right now. People you love and enjoy as well as people you struggle to relate with. Ask God to help you see all people as image bearers. Ask Him to help you more consistently interact with them in line with this reality.

Day 2

Read

Gen. 1:26-31 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Reflect



This is a part of Michelangelo's famous painting of the creation of Adam. In this portion of the painting God's hand (on the right) is reaching out to Adam's hand. God is taking the initiative, he is reaching decisively to Adam's "limp" hand. Of course this is just an artist's creative depiction of an event that defies the imagination's ability to comprehend. The reality is God has made you in His image. This has many implications such as you are personal (versus impersonal...like a machine), volitional (you can choose freely), rational (you can think sound thoughts), emotional (you

have passion, desire) and many other things. Look at your hand. "Tell" your fingers to move. They obey you. A thought "order" sent from mind to hand by your will can command fingers to move. This is amazing but it is so common that we lose sight of how profound and complex it is to live as choosing beings in physical bodies. We can command our hand to obey our will. We can command our lives to obey God's will.

Respond

You have the ability, the choice to reach out to God. He is forever reaching out to you. Just as you can (if you have no physical disability) choose to move your hand through the power of your will...so too you can reach out to God. He has initiated so now you can respond. Perhaps you would be helped by actually reaching your hand up in the air right now... symbolizing a heart response to God. As you do this pray "God, I want to respond to you right now. I want relationship with you more than anything else. I want to want this...make it so in my heart and life."

Day 3

Read

Gal. 4:4-7 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "*Abba*, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Reflect

God exists eternally, independently from time and space. You can try to contemplate this but very quickly your mind will get to the end of the path and find it can go no farther. This God who is independent of space and time made them both. He created us to dwell in space and time and has entered into our world with a purpose. That purpose is to ransom us from slavery to sin and death. He paid our sin debt so that now we are not just "freed slaves" but we are sons and daughters, heirs to his eternal riches. We can call him "Abba"..."Daddy".

Respond

Do your best to think about some of these great and powerful thoughts. God's amazing existence. Jesus coming as a child to our space and time. Your being ransomed from sin and death. Your being able to call God "daddy". These are good and transformational thoughts. Practice thinking them.

Day 4

Read

Psa. 73A psalm of Asaph.

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" This is what the wicked are like — always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children.

Reflect

Read the Psalm again, as you do consider contemporary characters who might fit into this ancient narrative. Despot leaders of corrupt countries. People with money and power who use people for their own pleasure here in America. Perhaps someone you know personally who has been brutal and arrogant and it seems there are no consequences.

Respond

The "problem" of the wicked prospering and the righteous suffering has puzzled believers for a long time. It continues to do so. If you are puzzled by it, or perhaps dismayed by it...talk to God about it now. You may trust God and yet still be baffled by how it seems that evil does prosper and the righteous suffer. Whatever you feel about this, talk with God about it. Don't tell him what you think you ought to feel...tell what you actually do feel.

Day 5

Read

Psalm 73:16-28 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

Reflect

The Psalmist was sinking into the depths of despair. When he tried to understand what he "thought" he was seeing in the world around him it was "oppressive." Some translations say "it was wearisome task." Trying to figure this out wore him out. It exhausted him emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. But then he "went to church." He entered the sanctuary of God. The holy place where he encountered God's presence. There he would have worshipped God with other believers, he would have experienced the declaration of the Word. It was there he "saw" what was really real versus what merely appeared to be real to his physical senses and his rational mind. His heart was restored, God "rebooted" him and he began to operate in the world in line with the way things actually are. He went from despair and discontent to worship and contentment. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Respond

The Psalmist didn't place confidence in his own ability to maintain perspective. "My flesh and my heart may fail." He did, however, have confidence in God's ability to keep his heart in check, "God is the strength of my heart..." Express your confidence in God's grace to keep your heart safe. It may not feel true but it is actually true that in our heart of hearts we know that "earth has nothing I desire beside you." Confess this truth with your mouth to God. Ask him to help you to fully believe and consistently live what is actually true.

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:

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.