

ARBC VISION 2023 – 40 DAYS OF PRAYER

Week 3

Dear Ashley River Family,

Welcome to Week 3 of our 40 Days of Prayer! Please commit to this important discipline as we seek God's direction and guidance for ARBC this year and next!

This week's portion of the Lord's Prayer focuses on His Kingdom: *Give us this day our daily bread.* Notice that God is our Jehovah Jireh, the One who provides. Notice too that it is for today; too often, we worry about what will happen tomorrow and beyond but Jesus' prayer and part of His Sermon on the Mount was to rest in God's provision for us today.

Day 15 – May 10 – PRAYER AS PETITION (PHILIPPIANS 4:6; 1 JOHN 5:14)

This week, we will be focusing on prayer as petition. The Scripture says that our Lord is our Heavenly Father who knows all our needs even before we ask Him. Yes, that is one of the reasons Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil.4:6). 1 John 5:14 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."

But if God already knows what we need, then why ask? This takes us to the deeper level of prayer and that is our communion with our Father in heaven. Our requesting is secondary to our:

- a) being with Him
- b) acknowledging Him as the source of all our needs
- c) listening to Him, and
- d) aligning our will to His will because His will for us is best.

As we ponder over prayer as a petition, our focus is to meditate on God's faithful nature to hear our petitions, His justful nature to validate our petitions, and His perfect plan to fulfill our petitions. What is our role and action as we bring our petitions to Him?

Spend time with God in prayer and ask Him to increase your intimacy with Him, to help you to align your will to His not only today but for the rest of your life.

Day 16 – May 11 – PRAYING IN FAITH (EXODUS 34:6; DEUTERONOMY 7:9-11; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9)

God is always faithful to supply our every need, and He gives us the choice to remain at that level of relationship. However, His desire is to go much deeper. God was faithful to meet the physical needs of the Israelites as they wandered the desert. As for Moses, that wasn't enough. He longed to experience the fullness of God at the deepest level; he ultimately wanted what Adam and Eve experienced before the Fall.

Because of His death and Resurrection, Jesus has taken out the prohibitions to knowing who He truly is. Within the Trinity, there is love, delight, security, and acceptance. The invitation is not just to be a bystander craving that kind of relationship; it is to fully take part in that relationship.

Meditate on John 15:9 and then spend time with God in prayer, asking Him to reveal the places in your heart where you haven't opened up to Him. What is He asking of you in response?

Day 17 – May 12 – PRAYING FOR OUR WORLD (PSALM 32:7,34:4,107:6; ISAIAH 43:18-19; 1 JOHN 4:4)

Our world is broken. It is filled with constant pain – from overseas conflicts where the mighty attack the weak to our own nation where people are filled with violence against each other. How do we approach God amid this injustice and unrest? It is good and right to weep with those who weep and to mourn with those who mourn. It is being like Christ, who had compassion for the people, "...because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Mt. 9:36)

God has also called us to be a people of prayerful petition, asking Him to protect children, those who are being wronged, and our Christian brothers and sisters who are suffering. We claim the promise of Psalm 32:7: "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance."

Further, we should give thanks that even while evil is at work, God is greater than the one who is in the world (1 Jn. 4:4) and is doing a new thing. He is making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland (Isa. 43:18-19). We claim these truths and pray that God will overcome evil with good. We pray that He will send His people to bring peace, restoration, and justice to the places in our world thirsty for the hope only Christ can bring.

Spend time with God in prayer, asking Him to care for those who need His protection and rescue.

Day 18 – May 13 – PRAYING FOR OUR NEIGHBORS (DEUTERONOMY 10:18; LUKE 10:25-37)

Who is my neighbor? We've heard the Good Samaritan parable many times. It was in response to a ruler who felt good because he had the religious answers about how to obtain eternal life – by loving God and loving others.

There are many in our communities, even right next door or just down the road, who are hurting. Whether their needs are relational, financial, physical, spiritual, emotional, or even psychological, we know Jesus is the answer. Theologian Miroslav Volf stated, "There is something deeply hypocritical about praying for a problem you are unwilling to resolve." Part of a good prayer life is aligning our thoughts and desires with the heart of God. While you and I may not have a Jericho-road experience as in the parable, we can begin to see others as God does as we intercede spiritually, materially, and physically on their behalf.

Spend time with God in prayer. Pray specifically for some of your neighbors. Maybe even go a step further and become the answer to the prayer.

Day 19 – May 14 – PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH (MATTHEW 16:13-20; JOHN 4:24; COLOSSIANS 4:2; 2 TIMOTHY 4:2)

Jesus said, "...I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." Notice His claim that it is **HIS** church. We must never forget that Ashley River is Jesus' church. We all worship together, pray together, study together, share together, and are then sent out on a rescue mission. One hymn writer captured the essence of Jesus' statement with this line: *Rescue the perishing, care for the dying, Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.* We are God's S.W.A.T. and Jesus is our Commander (Josh. 5:13-15; Matthew 12:22-29).

The Father seeks those who worship Him in "spirit and truth." (Jn. 4:24) Therefore, our worship should be full of joy and love, our hearts joined together in song and sacrifice, but also grounded in God's truth. Therefore, my sermons will never be watered down or just pablum for the soul. The meat is what takes us to deeper levels with Him, and we then become more convinced of the truth of our message (the Gospel) as we live it and share it. And as we go, we are to "pray that God will open a door for our message," that we may "proclaim it clearly," and "make the most of every opportunity." (Col. 4:2-6).

Spend time with God in prayer, asking Him to take you to deeper levels in prayer, worship, and witness.

Day 20 – May 15 – PRAYING FOR THE LOST (LUKE 19:10; ROMANS 10:1-17; 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4)

Jesus came to “seek and to save the lost.” He had a singular mission and His purpose was always to that end. Since we are followers of Jesus, our mission is His mission. But as we learned yesterday from Colossians 4, it all begins with prayer, asking God to open doors of opportunity to share the Good News. Paul had this same heart, as he was in anguish that his own people were stubbornly holding on to their lineage and their works. (Rom. 9:30 – 10:4)

In his letter to Timothy, Paul clearly states that God “wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim. 2:4) When we pray for those we know who are lost, we are praying the very heart of our Father in heaven. Therefore, we need to all step out of our comfort zone and expand our network to those who are far from God. This takes intentionality and courage, but we are all called to “obey everything” He has commanded us. (Matt. 28:20)

Spend some time with God in prayer and ask Him to give you a heart for the lost in your life and to give you the courage to expand your network.

Day 21 – May 16 – PRAYING FOR OURSELVES – PSALM 23:1; MATTHEW 6:33; JOHN 15:5

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Ps. 23:1) God provides for all humans and creatures, but He is a Shepherd only to His people. As Shepherd, He’s always there to take care of His sheep, and they will lack nothing. Jesus is our Good Shepherd (John 10:11). He looks after our whole being – body, soul, and spirit.

Jesus wanted His disciples’ hearts to be occupied by Him and His Kingdom. He did not want them to worry about the things of this world. He said, “But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33). For those who set King Jesus before them, God makes sure that they have all they need.

As believers in Christ, we depend on Him for all things. He said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn. 15:5). The assurance for the branch to always bear fruit is in abiding in the vine. The Father, the farmer, is looking for fruit on the branches, fruit that only come from the farmer’s vine. Only these fruits bring glory to Him.

Spend time with God in prayer, asking Him to be your Good Shepherd, to help you to seek first His Kingdom, and to help you to stay connected to the True Vine.