



## High School Prayer Guide, Grades 9-12\* Week 3

### Day 15 Seventh Inning Stretch

Congratulations on making it to Day 15! By now you should be feeling a little more comfortable getting into the Bible and praying on your own.

Today, take some time to reflect on what God has already been doing and speaking to you. Looking back and being thankful goes along the lines of Psalm 105:5 which tells us to “Remember the wonders (God) has done.”

*To journal about or consider:*

What prayer request(s) have you seen God answer? If there hasn't been an answer, do you see any evidence that God is at work? (Examples would be changed attitudes, improved circumstances, etc.)

What requests do you want to continue to lift up in prayer?

Has God gotten your attention through a specific Bible passage? How?

Which passage is your favorite? You may want to write important Scriptures on 3x5 cards to encourage yourself and help you begin to memorize God's Word.

### Day 16 Working as Unto the Lord

Ah, work. We either love it or love to hate it. Ironic, isn't it? Even if I'm not at work, I have the drive to be doing something purposeful. However, when I'm on vacation, I find it challenging to really rest. Oddly enough, this trend reverses itself as soon as I get home!

The drive for purpose and achievement is something God intended for our good. Did you know He created us to work? After all, He put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and told them to take care of it (Genesis 2:15). You probably enjoy the sense of accomplishment you feel when you finish a task. Whether it is cleaning your room, raking the yard, or completing a science project, we feel pride in our work because that is how God wired us. God Himself works (Genesis 2:2; John 5:17). In fact, we are His handiwork, designed in His very own image (Genesis 1:27).

Unfortunately, the beauty of work was marred when Adam and Eve sinned. As a punishment, God cursed the ground. He told Adam he would have to work by the sweat of his brow. Work would no longer be a 100 percent pleasant experience (Genesis 3:17-19). At times, it would be toilsome and frustrating.

On the other hand, the Bible tells us that work can still be a genuine source of satisfaction in spite of the Fall (Ecclesiastes 5:18; Ephesians 2:10). And there are so many types of work to do! Jesus was a carpenter. Peter and Andrew were fishermen. Paul made tents. The sons of Korah were musicians and songwriters. Artisans, skilled tradesmen, doctors, bakers, shepherds, farmers, scribes, and so forth fill the pages of the Bible. While popular occupations have changed a LOT since Jesus' day (do YOU want to be a shepherd? Nope, didn't think so!), the principles of a strong work ethic remain solid.

What will you do? Whatever it is, be sure to put your entire heart and soul into it (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Even if you don't like the job itself, God will honor your faithfulness.

### **Practicing Prayer**

- Pray God would help you to choose diligence instead of laziness in all you do (Proverbs 10:4; 21:25).
- Ask God to help you find work you can do with skill and pride (Proverbs 11:3; 22:29).
- Pray He would show you your talents and make a place for you to use your gifts (Proverbs 18:16).
- Ask God to help you manage your time at work well (even with your schoolwork!) so you will experience success (Psalm 90:12).

## **Day 17**

### **Displaying the Fruit of the Spirit**

Today's devotion is about just acting nice! We may think this is one of the basics of being a Christian, but truth be told, sometimes we don't "just act nice"! We can be irritable, rude, mean, insincere, insecure, snappy, and crabby. We can be a lot of things that don't reflect God's love. Unfortunately, my youth group has a few stories about times when I failed to practice what I preached. I'm humbled that God has chosen to use me in spite of them, and we've laughed at them since. Most of them involve either food or sleep deprivation, but the truth is I have no excuse! Jesus was sleepless and starving when he hung on the cross. The Bible says He did this "for the joy set before Him" (Hebrews 12:2).

We show God's love to others when we let the Holy Spirit move through us. Sometimes we show the Holy Spirit by speaking in other tongues, which is the initial evidence of Baptism. God also shows up in different ways. Displaying the Holy Spirit involves overflowing with the following qualities: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). The Bible calls these characteristics the "fruit of the Spirit" (5:22).

We can't grow these good fruits in ourselves. Rather, God in His power and kindness grows them in us. As someone told me when I was young, none of us has ever seen an apple tree standing in a field saying, "Look at me - I'm growing apples!" Trees don't strive for their fruit. They just grow.

It is the same way with us. As we take in everything God has to give - love, salvation, forgiveness and hope - He enables us to share our fruit with others.

### **Practicing Prayer**

- Today, pray that Christ would make you “good trees” - that you would display the kind of qualities worthy of His name (Luke 6:43).
- Ask God to show you any branches He needs to cut off in your life to cause you to bear more fruit (the Bible uses the word “prune” to describe this process). This means to let Him take sin out of your life so His good qualities have more room to grow (John 15:2).
- Ask God to put someone in your life today that you can show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, or self-control to.
- Which of these fruits do you think you show? Which do you think God wants you to show more of?

## Day 18

### Giving What We Have

*“The leech has two daughters. ‘Give! Give!’ they cry” (Proverbs 30:15).*

Okay. You thought you were reading your morning devotional, right? That you were going to spend time with God and it would be really cool? And then you got hit with this rather disgusting proverb.

I would recommend putting down your breakfast for a moment.

What’s all this mess about leeches and giving?

Have you ever seen a leech? They are slimy, wormy creatures. If you want a ridiculously scientific classification of their hirudotherapeutic qualities, check out Wikipedia (like I did!) or your school library. Suffice to say, my academic training as an English major leads me to understand they are blood-sucking parasites, and they are nasty! They can carry serious viruses for months, and if not properly removed, can regurgitate vomit into their host victims.

To be fair to this fine specimen, some are beneficial to humans. But, back to the blood-sucking part, until they have had their fill, leeches will remain attached to their hosts. They are not satisfied until they take what they came to get.

Let’s contrast leeches with God. God’s way of giving is particularly un-leech-like. Sometimes we’re afraid to give to Him because we don’t know what to expect. Maybe we’ve known too many “takers.” God is not one of them! He does ask us for full commitment. However, because we are made in His image (and thankfully not that of a leech), when He asks us to give to others, we often receive more in return! Sure, there may be times when we can’t see immediate results of our giving, and it’s true that God often calls us to give without expecting anything in return. However, think of these givers in the Bible and what they received:

- *The people* freely gave of their wealth and contributed to the construction of the sanctuary (Exodus 36:3-5). They got to be part of a project bigger than themselves.
- *The little boy* gave away his lunch, but witnessed one of Jesus’ miracles - plus I’m sure he ate well that night (John 6:1-13)!
- *Jesus* gave His life freely - and gained the joy of drawing people like you and me into relationship with Himself (John 10:17-18).

Today, God is asking you to give - not out of your lack, but from something He has already given you. Perhaps it is your time, a kind word, a financial gift, or an act of service. Whatever it is, He will bless it when it is given in the appropriate spirit - with a heart that desires to honor Him and His people.

### **Practicing Prayer**

- Thank God for what He has already given you – salvation, provision, and relationships (Psalm 69:30; 1 Corinthians 1:4).
- Ask God to give you His generous spirit (Psalm 51:12) and make you a blessing to others (Isaiah 32:8; Proverbs 22:9).

To think about and commit to: What one thing can you do today to give to someone in need?

## **Day 19**

### **Commitment and Character**

The book of Ruth is a beautiful true story of one family's journey from loss to redemption. It begins with death and ends with a promise. It strikes a chord with me because, like Ruth's family, we live in a time of famine. Due to the economy, many people have lost jobs, homes, and vehicles. Even more staggering than financial problems are personal tragedies like the passing of a friend or loved one. No matter what we go through, everyone's life involves some measure of loss.

This is certainly true for Naomi, one of the main characters in the book of Ruth. We are told she moves with her family to survive and find food (Ruth 1:1). In the foreign land of Moab, her sons get married, and things fall apart. Her husband and sons die, and she is left in a strange place with only her two daughter-in-laws for comfort (1:3, 5).

Filled with sorrow, Naomi begins the journey back home to Bethlehem. She urges her sons' wives to stay behind in Moab. One of them does, but the other, Ruth, refuses to leave (Ruth 1:16). Notice how differently the two women respond. Naomi admits her bitterness, but Ruth takes on an entirely different attitude, even though she has been widowed, too (1:20). She shows her faith in Naomi's God and devotes herself to her mother-in-law's well-being instead of seeking her own comfort. She responds with a spirit of commitment instead of complaining.

God immediately blesses Ruth's decision. He shows her favor with one of Naomi's relatives, a man named Boaz, specifically because of her unselfish choice to give (Ruth 2:11-12). God uses Boaz to provide for their physical need for food. Boaz marries Ruth and they have a son, creating a brand new family and a grandchild for Naomi. Through her marriage, Ruth gains the honor of becoming the great grandmother of Jesus (see Matthew 1)!

From Ruth we learn that sometimes God calls us to give out of our pain and believe He will provide. He asks us for a commitment which costs us something. He may want us to leave what is familiar and take the less popular route of self-sacrifice. Don't forget – Ruth had to leave her entire culture and the gods she had worshiped before. She had to do things God's way – but her choice was well worth it.

What about you? What is God challenging you to commit to? Will you be like Ruth? Will you give even when it hurts?

### **Practicing Prayer**

- Today, ask God to help you identify any areas of loss or pain in your life and bring them to Him.
- Are there areas in your life that require full commitment to His ways? Is there something you need to turn away from to give Him your full devotion? Are you holding anything back? Ask Him to reveal any areas of stubbornness or disobedience.
- Pray God to strengthen your character and give you the courage to act like Ruth – to choose holiness even when things are hard.
- You may wish to read the book of Ruth – it is just a few pages long.

### **Day 20**

#### **Waiting on God**

*This one is just a little bit different.*

I wanted to write you words of valor - meaningful words to move you from “strength unto strength” (Psalm 84:7).

I wanted to encourage – to tell you, “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” – to conquer your foes in His name (Ephesians 6:10, *sic*), and shout, “You can do it!”

I wanted to give you victorious words. But I couldn’t find any.

Tonight I wait for the tide to turn and feel like David running from a mad King – his inheritance sure; his suffering real. I would like to stop, rest, sleep, play – but it’s the middle of the week and there’s just not time. Right now home is a memory and the promise far off.

Tonight still feels like the desert.

Thankfully, I’ve been in this place enough before to know that God has a way of turning our trials to joy. And it only gets us so far to meditate on our problems – God’s Word tells us to think on things that are pure, lovely, and good (Philippians 4:8).

But I want to be real with you. I would lie if I told you that life in Christ is all victory. The good news is God eventually comes through (in His time and His way)! The tough part is sticking around long enough to get there. We have to hang in for the “eventually.” Remember – Jesus did a lot of “hanging in” for all of us – six hours one Friday on a cross!

The Bible tells us there is a time and a season for everything under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3:1), and that God has “made everything beautiful in its time” (3:11). The truth is, we will never see His promises come to pass unless we wait for those seasons to change. Troubles will come regardless. It is our choice whether we go through them with God or without Him. This is why the Word gives us clear instruction: “Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD” (Psalm 27:14).

So here are the words I would give you. I write them in honesty, in the middle of the world’s safest place: the rest of God’s presence.

### **Practicing Prayer**

- Today as part of your prayer, you may want to write a song or poem of praise to God. At any rate, honor Him in prayer, even if you are feeling down.
- Seek God and cry out to Him in any areas of need you have (Psalm 77:2).
- Thank God for prayers He has answered in the past (Psalm 77:11-12). You may want to make a list of ways He has come through on your behalf.
- Take comfort in the fact that Jesus is “near to the brokenhearted” (Psalms 34:18). Allow Him to restore your soul (Psalm 23:3).

## **Day 21**

### **Joy Unspeakable**

Romans 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Hebrews 12:2 *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.*

Congratulations! You’ve made it to the last day of our prayer journey. I hope you have been touched, instructed, and refreshed as you’ve cried out to God. I trust He has given you new insight, refueled your passion, and answered some of your questions during this time.

God does the work and He gets the glory. He is so worthy of our praise!

### **Practicing Prayer**

- Today, take time to write out any testimonies or praise reports you have as a result of your 21-day iPray journey. What has God done in your life? In the lives of friends or family members?
- What prayers are you still waiting on God to answer? Make a list and put it somewhere you will see to help you remember to pray.
- What Scriptures did God use to speak to you specifically? As on Day 16, you may want to write these down as a reminder and source of encouragement.
- Praise God for His faithfulness and blessings in your life. They are limitless – without number!
- Ask God for His continued help as you run the very best race – your life in Christ!

## **Afterword**

### **Thank you for praying with us!**

Please let us know how iPray has impacted you by contacting [Director@micog.com](mailto:Director@micog.com) or posting testimonies on Facebook and Twitter (you could even post a video clip to YouTube if you’d like).

### **Keep Praying!**

Allow God to turn the habit of prayer you started into a lifestyle. Let “the name of our Lord Jesus... be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:12).

In Christ,

Bishop Dusty Wilson

Director, Youth and Christian Education  
Michigan Church of God

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Scripture quotations are from the New International Version and New King James Version of the Bible.

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