

Week of October 15

ThanksLiving

IN EVERYTHING, GIVE THANKS

A Pattern for Daily Prayer

Becoming Aware of God's Presence

The Lord is near to all who call on him,
To all who call on him in truth.

-Psalm 145:18

Giving thanks to God

Be rooted and built up in him, be established in faith, and
overflow with thanksgiving just as you were taught.

-Colossians 2:7

Listening for God's Voice

(see daily guides)

Silence / Reflection

***Prayers for our world, the church,
those near to us, and ourselves.***

Offering of Self to God

God, what do you want to do through me today?

Blessing

You teach me the way of life.

In your presence is total celebration.

Beautiful things are always in your right hand.

-Psalm 16:11

Growing in prayer

What habits or practices have encouraged your prayer life? Christians throughout the ages have found that prayer at a regular time and place, or within a regular routine, helps to train the mind and body to relax and be open to God. activities and concerns of the day and opening one's self to God's presence and voice. You may already have a prayer pattern that serves you well; if so, you are welcome to adapt the elements provided here to fit your particular pattern.

Most of us do not decide each morning whether we will brush our teeth—we just do it! Prayer is at least this important, yet not always done with the same faithfulness. How might you include a time of prayer in the routines of the day? What preparation would be needed ahead of time? However you use these materials, trust that God welcomes the time and mindfulness as a precious gift; God will use these as means of grace to bring about transformation. May the moments of peace and awareness of God's presence experienced during these practices result in a greater awareness of God's love and presence with you throughout the day.

The pattern for daily prayer provided here can be used as a means for setting aside the

Day 1: Colossians 1:1-4

From Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Timothy our brother. ² To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae. Grace and peace to you from God our Father.

How startling...Paul acts like his words have the power over the creator of the universe. He writes, "Grace and peace to you from God our Father," as though simply praying will convey God's grace and God's peace to his readers.

Imagine the voice of God booming in the darkness: "Let there be light." Through Paul's writings that same voice speaks, showering readers then and now with grace and peace. "Let there be grace! Let there be peace!"

When Jesus teaches the disciples to pray, he reminds them that parents don't give a scorpion or snake when children are hungry. When we ask, how much more will our heavenly father give what we most need, the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13)?

Trust that Paul's words direct God's creative power not because he is a uniquely powerful person but because of God's character. Pray and send someone a text or write a note, "I am praying for grace and peace to you from God our Father."

Pastor Cyndi

Day 2: Colossians 1:5-6

⁵ You have this faith and love because of the hope reserved for you in heaven. You previously heard about this hope through the true message, the good news, ⁶ which has come to you. This message has been bearing fruit and growing among you since the day you heard and truly understood God's grace, in the same way that it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world.

The time had come for my husband and I to find a church closer to home. Our home church was simply too far away for us to serve as we wanted to. My parents attended with us, and we knelt beside each other to take communion, one kid on each side of their beloved grandparents. It was going to be a big move. We got the courage to attend a Wednesday night supper here. Unbeknownst to us, when we walked in, there sat dear friends who had already relocated to McKendree. They gave us big smiles and a hearty welcome. This lady had watched us raise our boys and lovingly provided support for many years. I simply said to my husband, "We are home." You see, this was God at work, covering our nerves with grace and bearing witness that McKendree folks are always loving and welcoming.

I well remember a time when we were just getting home

from a funeral home, going through the motions of preparing a service for a loved one who passed. Pulling into the driveway, we saw two lovely ladies from McKendree standing in the driveway with food prepared for us. I had to sit still for a moment and feel the overwhelming power of grace God had poured over us again through the acts of folks at this church. My gratitude was hard to put into words.

My brother knew the power of love that this church spread throughout the community. He drove past a man sitting on the side of the road. He went back to his home and prepared two ham sandwiches. He drove back to the man and shared a meal with him. He pointed down the road to McKendree and said, "See that church right there? There are good people in that church, and they will help you." Another provision from God illustrating the love for community and others bearing fruit for God.

My desire and prayer for you today is that you will feel hugged. Filled with gratitude and the presence of God in your life and the life of McKendree. We love you and are grateful for you. Let's give the whole world a giant hug from McKendree UMC!

Judy Meador

Day 3: Colossians 1:7-9

⁷ You learned it from Epaphras, who is the fellow slave we love and Christ's faithful minister for your sake. ⁸ He informed us of your love in the Spirit. ⁹ Because of this, since the day we heard about you, we haven't stopped praying for you and asking for you to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Isn't it wonderful to know that someone is praying for you? How does that make you feel? I think it's good to know that people care enough about me to take my concerns to God even when they could be praying for someone else. I am overwhelmed with gratefulness to know that when I'm too tired to pray, someone is praying for me. I am grateful for friends, family, and a church that cares for me in that way.

Have you asked someone to pray for your health, your relationships, your job, your school work, or for those things you fear in life? But notice the specifics that Paul is praying for in this scripture, "for you to be filled with the knowledge of God's will, with all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Meditate on how different our lives would be if we were filled with the knowledge of God's will, wisdom, and spiritual understanding. How would we live differently? Would we be less fearful and trust God more? Would we live as grateful people even in hard times? Would we be more

generous with our presence, time, talents, gifts, and offerings?

Pray: God of salvation, my strength and my redeemer, fill me with your love and your peace so that I may come to know you better and to know your will for my life. Amen.

Pastor Paula Dallas

Day 4: Colossians 1:10

¹⁰ We're praying this so that you can live lives that are worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way: by producing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God;

When I read this rich verse, I am reminded that we are ALL worthy of Him. Being worthy to His WILL is to have His life reproduced in us, to follow His example, to have "the mind of Christ Jesus." As I read and reflect on this verse and Apostle Paul's words to the people of Colossae, I cannot help but think of my father, Rev. Dr. Daniel Gueh and my mother Musu Gueh. They brought four children to these United States in the late 80's from a war-torn Liberia, West Africa. Escaping a brutal civil war, we came to the US with nothing but each other. My father, following the Will of God by pursuing ministry here in America, started the first African United Methodist Church in the Southern New Jersey United Methodist Conference.

The journey to America and starting an ethnic congregation during the early 90's, while raising four children in a strange

land was no easy task. As children, we witnessed our parents go through many trials and persecution. Through it all, they remained steadfast and committed to God's ordination and Will. I am blessed to say that ALL four children are college-educated and are called to serve our Lord and Savior in various capacities today. I could never script that a little boy from Liberia, West Africa, would come to this country and one day have a Ph.D. from The University of Georgia and be an esteemed faculty professor/program director at one of the most prominent research universities in the country (Georgia State University).

Being fruitful in every good work is one way we are to walk worthy of the Lord and please Him. It is by endeavoring to become better acquainted with His true character, listening to the subtle voice of the Holy Spirit, and giving thanks and exaltation for God's Grace and Mercy that we can know His true Will and purpose for us.

I give thanks that God has blessed and guided that little boy from Liberia, West Africa, and has used me through my personal and professional life to minister to thousands of students through the educational system from New Jersey to Georgia. God's grace is sufficient, and we are a living testament. Grow in the knowledge of God, practice His good will, and give thanks for all things.

Dr. Bobby Gueh

Day 5: Colossians 1:11-12a

¹¹ *by being strengthened through his glorious might so that you endure everything and have patience;* ¹² *and by giving thanks with joy to the Father.*

Who do you look for when you need help? A friend, a relative, some type of coach, or maybe a mentor? The truth is we need all of these resources and more, but I believe this verse shows us we have access to more support than the world can offer. We actually have access to a God who loves us and wants to help us through our struggles. Think about what that means. God not only cares about us, but he offers his strength when our strength is not enough. We are not promised a struggle-free life, but we are promised God's support when we need it the most.

How do we see this love? For me, I tend to see it through my family and Christian friends. I have seen them care for each other during medical problems, financial crises, and the loss of loved ones. I have learned from them to care for people in need, to see the other side of issues that divide us, and sometimes to just listen instead of talking.

If you are in need, turn to God. Ask for help from your Church family. Know that God loves you no matter what is going on in your life.

Brian Green

Day 6: Colossians 1:12b-14

He made it so you could take part in the inheritance, in light granted to God's holy people. ¹³ *He rescued us from the control of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.* ¹⁴ *He set us free through the Son and forgave our sins.*

What comes to mind when reading this scripture passage are the words "**love and inheritance.**"

For it is the unconditional love of God that He (God) offered us the inheritance of His kingdom.

Every parent wants their children to inherit their wealth and properties. Growing up in my family and my community, my parents and other parents always encouraged us to be good, do our house chores, and listen to their advice and instructions to inherit their wealth and properties. In the 1990s, this was more focused on the male children; however, in modern-day African societies, both male and female children are allowed to inherit their parents' wealth and properties. Sometimes, when we do not listen to our parents, we are admonished, and they threaten us of losing their wealth and properties. However, when we follow their instructions, they forgive us, and their wealth is promised to us. Just like Jesus Christ, our parents also make sacrifices for us to inherit their wealth and properties. This is out of the love they have for their children. We pray for God's blessings upon our parents.

The story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 also comes to mind when reading this scripture passage (Colossians 1:12b-14). In the story of the prodigal son, the father, knowing that his son is unfit, covered with guilt, darkness, and sin, forgave him, took him in, and made a feast for his son. In doing this, the father gave him a share of his wealth out of love. Sometimes we may distance ourselves from God and His kingdom because we are covered in darkness and sin. However, God loves us regardless and wants us to share and inherit His kingdom.

God's desire and purpose for everyone is for us to inherit His kingdom, which He has prepared for us. Knowing that we are sinful due to our disobedience to God, God sent His Son Jesus Christ to rescue us from our sins by forgiving us and making us fit to inherit God's kingdom.

To prepare ourselves to inherit God's kingdom, we can start by forgiving one another, having good relationships with others, accepting others, doing good, serving humanity, and loving one another.

"Everyone should be proud of the unconditional love of God and the offer of the inheritance of the kingdom of God."

Dr. Lele Dominic Dummene