

40 DAYS OF *prayer*

WEEK 5 FAMILY NOW

1 Corinthians 12:27

Families are important for growing, celebrating, enjoying, finding love, communication, safety, and a sense of belonging. However, many forces in the world seek to tear families apart. Similarly, there are competing forces that aim to separate the family of God, even though we share the same Father. In these troublesome yet encouraging times, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we must now safeguard and strengthen the Body of Christ. Let each one of us continue to grow strong and thereby grow together as the family of God serving out the purposes of God.

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PERSEVERING TOGETHER

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

Paul's exhortation to persevere in the Lord's work is as timely today as it was the day it was written. There remains the urgent need for the family of God to persevere in our commitment to one another and to the mission of King Jesus.

We live in a world in which division, shrinking back, and questioning whether any hope remains are real temptations for many of us. But God, through Paul, commands us to be as immovable in our perseverance as a giant sequoia is at withstanding the fiercest of storms.

Paul roots this charge in the gospel reality that death has been conquered through the victorious Resurrection of Jesus. We remain steadfast and immovable because we share Christ's victory.

We see in 1 Corinthians that these good works seek the welfare of others. Good works done for the family of God strive for unity and the building up of our brothers and sisters in love. Good works done for the lost involve becoming all things to all people so that through faithful gospel proclamation, we might win some to Christ.

After all has been considered, we resolve to abound in the Lord's work because our Father has said it is never in vain. Even when our earthly eyes cannot see the fruit, we persevere because He who promised is faithful.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, I thank and praise You for adopting me into Your family. Let the truth that Jesus has defeated death sink deep into my heart. May it cause me to be immovable and abounding in good works, especially in service to others. May I eagerly pursue unity with fellow Christians. May I boldly share the good news of Jesus with lost friends, family, and neighbors. Help me not grow weary or discouraged, knowing working for You is never in vain. Father, please show me one thing I can do to abound in Your work today. Amen.

SERVING WITH EACH OTHER

PHILIPPIANS 2

Philippians 2 tells us that our attitude as Christians should be like that of Christ Jesus: one marked by humility, where we consider others before we consider ourselves. I am convicted that all too often, I consider the calling of Christ as an exclusively individual calling: “What has Christ called *me* to do? What does He gifted *me* to do?” However, Philippians reminds us that Christ’s calling is to serve those around us as He modeled for us.

Jesus humbly and faithfully served His “family” of disciples and considered their needs as more important than His own. He spent His life humbly, graciously, and patiently serving them, though He could have easily fulfilled His mission without them.

In seeking to live out the call of Jesus on your life, let me encourage you to embody Philippians 2 where you are right now. Who is around you? What do they need? How can you serve them? Jesus says in John 17:21 that the world will believe the gospel when the family of God lives in unity.

God has called you to be a gospel witness to the world by simply being filled with the Holy Spirit and living with the attitude of Christ. Serve those around you in humility. In doing so, Christ not only transforms you, but also the family of God and ultimately, the world.



REFLECTION PRAYER

The following prayer is from John Wesley and communicates a heart transformed by the humility of Jesus well:

“I am no longer my own, but Yours. Put me to what You will, place me with whom You will. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be put to work for You or set aside for You, praised for You, or criticized for You. Let me be full; let me be empty. Let me have all things; let me have nothing. I freely and fully surrender all things to Your glory and service. And now, O wonderful and holy God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, You are mine, and I am Yours. So be it. Amen.”

SHOWING COMPASSION TO OTHERS

EPHESIANS 4:32

I have been learning the importance of loving my enemies. It's easy to love those we have a mutual love for, who think like us, or have a personality that we enjoy hanging out with. On the other hand, the commandment to love our enemies isn't quite as easily obtained.

As we focus on the family this week, I think of not only my immediate family but also the family of God. Within both family units, there are members who are difficult to love, perhaps because they have hurt, disappointed, or offended us. The commandment to love our enemies still holds true. Allowing my heart to become tender with a deeper understanding of walking in their shoes, seeing the situation through their perspective, and feeling the pain that I have caused the one who feels like an enemy is the beginning of loving them as Christ loves us.

Practicing intentional compassion begins with noticing the hurt, especially the hurt that we have caused. Compassion grows when we allow ourselves to sit in the pain with the person we have hurt without trying to fix it. Sitting with them validates the pain, and we will find our ability to feel compassion growing.

Let's pray that we are a family who desire to love our enemies.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, we thank You that You are our perfect example as a God of compassion. Relationships and families are Your idea. You desire that we are kind and helpful to one another, tender-hearted, compassionate, and understanding, forgiving one another readily and freely, just as God in Christ has forgiven us. With You living in us, we have the Holy Spirit's power to love others with the same heart of compassion, mercy, and grace that You have bestowed on us. We pray for Your strength to truly love one another. In the powerful name of Jesus, amen.

EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS

EPHESIANS 3:20

The Israelites piled stones or made altars to remember the great and mighty works of their God. They would then tell their children, their children's children, and their community how supernaturally God had worked on their behalf. Do we tell our children about the mighty works of God in our lives, in our family's lives, in our church, and in our community?

It is important that we encourage and inspire others so they can know that our God wants an intimate relationship with them and can and will do great things they never imagined. We may not see God working, and we may not feel He is working, but amid the struggles and challenges of life, we can trust the heart of God.

It may not work the way we would do it, but He will work it out for our good. We need to help our family, our church family, and our community to see that the God we serve is a God of intimacy that cares for each one of us. We must impart this to others so that they can know and serve the God that is above every other. We must live in an expectation of God's power.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Jesus, help us to remember Your mighty works, and may we expect these same works in our own lives. May we instill these actions and memories in our family, church family, and community. Help us to reflect on Your goodness and pass such down to the next generation, our family, and our community. You are great and mighty. Amen.

STRIVING TO DO GOOD TO EACH OTHER

GENESIS 50:20

When I was kid, I had an intense dislike for one of my brothers who was seven years my senior. He was a yeller. He hit me often. He kept me from doing fun things. I was relieved when he went off to the Army's basic training. However, my celebration was short-lived because he was an Army Reservist who was bound to come home after a few months.

When I grew a little older, since my brother was a boxer, I took up boxing lessons in hopes that one day I could give him a taste of his own medicine. Years went by, and I left the nest. By then, my former nemesis became more loving and caring toward me. He even came to visit me several times, which was neither a cheap nor short trip. To this day, I cannot remember when my anger toward him subsided, but it did.

The people who are the closest to us can cause the deepest wounds and the longest heartbreaks. Often, their behavior towards us was the product of their own brokenness, insecurities, or jealousies. God used my relationship with my brother to allow me to extend forgiveness and for me to witness redemption. Is God able to turn the offense, the wound, or the evil perpetrated against you by your loved one into something good?



REFLECTION PRAYER

Dear Lord, when a transgression is perpetrated against me by a loved one or someone else, please help me declare, "What someone meant for evil, God meant it for good," as I witness Your perfect will unfold in my life! Thank You for Your steadfastness. Amen.

CARRYING EACH OTHERS' BURDENS

GALATIANS 6:2

Paul's statement begs us to ask, "What is the law of Christ?" The Scriptures invite us to investigate this question because Paul does not explicitly express his thoughts, and many verses volunteer themselves for consideration. Perhaps our best options are Jesus' own words such as: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34); "Pick up your cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24); and finally, "No greater love exists than one who would lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

These verses incline one towards the understanding that the law of Christ is not Jesus' interpretation of the Old Testament laws but how He lived His life. Jesus' idea of love encapsulates the expressions of burden-bearing and self-giving. It perfectly describes His life: intentionally living to seek the ultimate betterment of others, despite the circumstances, even at the cost of ultimate personal sacrifice.

Jesus offers humanity the opportunity to restore its once-great state of "the image of God," free from our fallen nature, as a result.

If the Church is responsible for emulating Christ's life to the nations, how much more should we imitate Christ to the church Body? How can we better emulate Christ's life and mission to our church family than bearing one another's burdens—even if that burden is sin? In embodying Christ, we represent His burden-bearing and self-giving love, our Heavenly Father's patience, and the Holy Spirit's vital restorative work within us.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Father, open my eyes to the things unseen, my ears to the unheard, and my mind to the unknown so that I may resemble Christ to those in and out of the Church—that I eagerly desire, soberly examine, humbly accept, and perfectly perform the things most pleasing to You. For the glory, honor, and praise of Your name. I pray these things in Your Son's holy name, who lives and reigns with You, together with the Holy Spirit, now, before, and forever. Amen.

EVERYONE WITH EYES ON JESUS

HEBREWS 12:2

The writer leads into this verse by highlighting the faith of those who have witnessed God's work in their lives—Abraham, Noah, Rehab, Samson, and many other lives of faithful perseverance unto death. The challenge to fix our eyes on Jesus calls us to remember that Christ is well-acquainted with the joy and the sacrifice.

Yet, there is one other not mentioned here that my mind turns to when I read this verse—Jesus' mother, Mary. She watched as her son was ridiculed, flogged, mocked, and hung on a cross. Scripture tells us she remained when many fled. Her eyes were fixed on Jesus, and in the moment of His greatest suffering, she was not forgotten.

Maybe you feel forgotten today. Maybe the suffering seems too great. Maybe you wonder if Jesus sees you. In His weakest moment, our Lord and Savior cried out for the world. He continues to intercede for you and me. When all seems hopeless, you can confidently turn your eyes to Jesus.



REFLECTION PRAYER

Heavenly Father, may You give us eyes to see the hope of glory that your Son has provided to this world. Thank You that in our greatest joys and sufferings, You are there, and we can look to You knowing that You are interceding on our behalf. Amen.