

Week of October 29

# ThanksLiving

IN EVERYTHING, GIVE THANKS

## *A Pattern for Daily Prayer*

### ***Becoming Aware of God's Presence***

All of God's promises have their yes in Christ. That is why we say Amen through him to the glory of God. - 2 Corinthians 1:20

### ***Giving thanks to God***

Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks.

- Philippians 4:6

### ***Listening for God's Voice***

*(see daily guides at right and inside)*

### ***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***

Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:7

# Growing in Prayer

Prayer is one of our most natural expressions. At its core, prayer is sharing one's innermost thoughts and feelings with God. Perhaps this is the most convincing evidence of God—our desire to give thanks, our pleas for help, the urge to shout at God for injustice—these suggest that we know there is a God.

Yet prayer can be difficult. We struggle to find time. Long, dry spells make us wonder whether something is wrong. Our minds wander, wondering if we even know how to pray correctly. Sometimes, we resist, knowing that true prayer will require confession and change.

This week's scripture describes the transformation God wants for you. God doesn't want you to live full of anger, fear, and greed. God wants so much more for you!

Paul writes, "Keep on praying and guard your prayers with thanksgiving." In a mysterious way, giving thanks helps us pray rightly. It's hard to be afraid and thankful simultaneously, angry and thankful, or fearful and thankful. Giving thanks moves us from focusing on ourselves to God as creator, redeemer, and sustainer, wanting God's longings and desires to become our own.

## DAILY REFLECTIONS

### **Day 1: Colossians 2:11-12**

*<sup>11</sup> In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by human hands. The circumcision of Christ is realized in the stripping away of the whole self dominated by sin. <sup>12</sup> You were buried with him through baptism and raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.*

Although reluctant and feeling mounds of uncertainty, about a year ago, I attended the small group bible study of the Seekers here at McKendree. This bible study is held every Sunday at 9:00am in the Education Building. My biggest fear was that I would end up joining a group of women who had nothing to do but get up on Sunday mornings and come together to gossip and judge others. Unfortunately, I had experienced that when attending a different church in the past.

I knew there were other small groups in the church but, I felt a need to be a part of something that would draw me out of a bubble that I had created for myself. I needed to belong to a ministry that encouraged serving and consistently demonstrated love for everyone. Also, a nagging feeling had a hold on me. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of women who, like me, needed a safe place to grow spiritually. Surely someone in this group of women could teach me how to truly accept God's love and trust that this love was unconditional. Learning how to inwardly let go of the old Shirley and take on a new union with Christ was what I was seeking.

Would the Seekers help me? I asked this question for months and days on end. Would there be someone in the group who had adopted the mind of Christ and was willing to share? Would the Sunday school teachings be in line with the sermons and lectures of our Spiritual Leaders?

Well, the Seeker Sisters accepted me raw, broken, and running with no place to hide. You see, my sisters had all experienced an inward circumcision through their union with Christ long before the holy spirit led me to them. They watched my journey for months, remaining gentle and patient, allowing me to reflect and process every Sunday. They called me during the week to say hello and stay present in the moments with me.

Carol, our spiritual leader, taught me perseverance through faith and gratitude. Linda consistently shared wisdom, compassion, and showed me how to love through the worst and best of times. Judy taught me that it is okay to talk about my feelings of brokenness as I surrendered to God. Bessie taught me how much love there is in a freshly brewed pot of coffee with donuts and cookies. I now know how much a pot of coffee and donuts means to the McKendree family. Because Bessie makes it very special. The other Seeker Sisters have shown me how much power there is in unity, support, and forgiveness.

We enjoy studying and discussing the scriptures together. We rejoice when one of us has good news about events in our personal lives. We cry together when one of us is hurting due to a loss or bad news. We celebrate the collective contributions we make to others.

Standing individually and collectively, on love for God, faith, and trust, the Seeker Sisters have taught me to always look for good, show up in life, and continue to trust God.

Shirley Wilkins

## Day 2: Colossians 2:13-15

<sup>13</sup> *When you were dead because of the things you had done wrong and because your body wasn't circumcised, God made you alive with Christ and forgave all the things you had done wrong.* <sup>14</sup> *He destroyed the record of the debt we owed, with its requirements that worked against us. He canceled it by nailing it to the cross.* <sup>15</sup> *When he disarmed the rulers and authorities, he exposed them to public disgrace by leading them in a triumphal parade.*

### Alive, Forgiven, Victorious

Because Christ died and is risen, in him we have a new life. Apart from Christ we were spiritually dead. We had two serious problems, sins we committed and, because of our sin nature, we got at birth. Christ's resurrection is the basis of our resurrection because through faith we are in Him. Only God can raise the dead.

There is a huge difference between dead religion and new life in the risen Savior. Do you have new life in Christ? If not you may be just a good religious person who is a walking spiritual corpse. You need life from God. Because Christ died and is risen, in Him we have forgiveness of all our sins. On the cross Christ completely paid all the debt that we owe by taking it away and nailing it to the cross.

Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ and his death on the cross as payment for all your sins? If so, then your debt has been paid in full. Because Christ died and is risen in him we have victory over the forces of evil.

Through the cross God took what looked like Satan's greatest moment of triumph, the death of the sinless Lord of Glory and turned it into Satan's greatest defeat. Christ won the victory over Satan and over death on the cross. His victory was confirmed when God raised Him from the dead.

Dead religion cannot give new life. It cannot defeat the devil, but the crucified and risen

Savior can. Trust in Him and enjoy LIFE-FORGIVENESS and VICTORY!

Marge Olmsted

### **Day 3: Colossians 3:1-2**

*Therefore, if you were raised with Christ, look for the things that are above where Christ is sitting at God's right side. <sup>2</sup> Think about the things above and not things on earth.*

When I was diagnosed with breast cancer, my 12-year-old daughter asked me if I was going to live to see her and her brother grow up. I could only share that I was trusting that God would Heal me and allow me the opportunity to be there for every single one of their life events including graduations, weddings, and the grandchildren that I would one day have.

When I read the statistics of the kind of cancer I had, the prognosis did not look promising. However, when I asked the Lord to show me He was Sovereign, He revealed Himself in so many ways – through the caring of friends, the encouragement from co-workers, the prayers of church members, and the aggressive treatment by my medical staff. Thirty years later, with six adorable grandchildren, I rejoice daily for my Healing.

It is so easy to focus on the negativity that we see and hear all around us. Whether it be our own health issues, finances, family problems, or news stories about racism, crime, or climate change, if we only focus on those things, we can become anxious, depressed, negative, and fearful.

Instead, let us focus on the One who died and rose again and ask Him to help us focus on His Word as well as His Peace, Provision, Presence, Protection and the Power of His Holy Spirit. Let's also worship, praise and adore Him for His Promise of Eternal Life and that He is always with us.

Margaret Cheeley

### **Day 4: Colossians 3:3-6**

*<sup>3</sup> You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. <sup>5</sup> So put to death the parts of your life that belong to the earth, such as sexual immorality, moral corruption, lust, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). <sup>6</sup> The wrath of God is coming upon disobedient people because of these things.*

This text makes me prayerfully reveal a few difficult things, good and not-so-good. First of all, as a professing and practicing Christian for as long as I can remember, I must somehow die to the things that are not of Christ.

But do I really? Jesus the Christ died for me as God the Son, and, as a believer, I must die to 'self.' This passage throws some hard human frailties at us. Some have threatened in my earlier life but Christ overcame. Some are easy to justify by wording. Do I have impure thoughts....well, I've got skin on, so I guess I do. Can life in Christ trump that? I believe so but I must acknowledge and sacrifice. I think the same with most of the others.

BUT, Greed as idolatry. Well, I don't worship greed, so how is that idolatry? I don't have a little dollar sign on my mantle beside my angels and my crosses. But, do I try to die to that very human greediness? I don't have a lot financially, but I know I have more than many. I was raised to give a minimum of 10% of my allowance to the church, but I had to budget the rest to give to Sunday School and Youth and still keep after-school snack money. Yes, we took up three collections. I'm grateful for that upbringing.

BUT, well today, I'm a retired pastor, so when pledge time comes around and that Living Grace thing, too, I have to ask myself, can I truly die to my own needs? Do I trust God to provide? I don't believe in God, as wrathful, as Brother Paul states it, but I think we know God wants us to be faithful and trust.

So here we are again at that Stewardship Time. As

a pastor, unlike some folks, I've never apologized for this part of church. Giving and sharing in every way is a gift of one who has died to self in Christ. As I continue to mature, somehow I've found that as I've willingly considered giving more, I've got more.

Hmm...could it be that I've leaned more into a fuller 'life' as I've died more fully into Christ life!? So I think I'll keep slicing away at those things which deny dying in Christ, and come to more fully Live In and for Him, even that nasty greed thing.

Rev. E. Gail Thompson

### **Day 5: Colossians 3:7-8**

*<sup>7</sup> You used to live this way, when you were alive to these things. <sup>8</sup> But now set aside these things, such as anger, rage, malice, slander, and obscene language.*

If anyone knew me before 1993, you really did not "Know" me. I worked mainly with women at insurance companies. If you think men's locker room language is rough, they have nothing on a group of 50+ women in a big office! I could curse, gossip, throw things, and had quite the temper!

But I could hide that and be the perfect Church Lady, saying all the right stuff on Sundays.

Then I met Jesus Christ! He told me he loved me! That's it! He loved me! Truly almost overnight, I did not want to be that person who used foul language, who shared others secrets, ranted and raved about things of no consequence. I wanted to become the person God created me to be, and I could only do that by knowing who He is through Jesus. So, although I wanted to change immediately, this has been a process. Jesus is always there loving me even when I have failed him and others. But he has given me the words (scripture) to read and follow to remind me whom I want to please. Others? Myself? Or my Lord?

One of my all-time favorite scriptures is; "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." Colossians 3:15

Words for me to remember and live by....  
BJ Griffith

**Day 6: Colossians 3:10**

<sup>10</sup> *Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.*

The NLT contains one of my favorite translations of Colossians 3:10, which tells us to “Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him.”

Joining a small group provides an excellent way to “learn to know your Creator.” One of my first small group experiences at McKendree was Disciple 1 with Paul Norris. Wow! If you have not yet taken Disciple 1 (and assuming you don’t have a new baby or a high school senior), I urge you to check it out.

I grew up in church, so I came to Disciple with a lot of head knowledge about the Bible. Disciple 1 helped move the head knowledge into my heart. That is where the real work begins to “put on your new nature.” Knowledge alone can make us smug and arrogant.

Currently, I attend the Life-Change Sunday School class. The name comes from a book series we use, and it also represents how God continues to work in us. Knowing you have people praying for you and celebrating with you makes such a difference in your daily life.

I’m so grateful that we are constantly being renewed. Every morning, God offers us a gift of a new day. I am reminded of a line from a song we sometimes sing at 9:30: “I’m not yet where I’m going, but I’m a long way from where I was.”

Thank you, Jesus, that you don’t give up on us!

Lisa Bierman