

GOD IS GRACIOUS

Heavenly Father, I would ask that you clear my heart and my mind right now so that I can focus completely on *You*. And that I can enjoy the next fifteen minutes engaging with you today. Thank you, Lord.

The reason you want to focus your heart right now is that you are engaging with the God of the universe. The breath that you just took right now – that was air that God has given to you. The lungs you just used to breathe in that air – those are also given to you by him. They are gifts...they are grace.

What is grace? Grace is simple - the things that we receive that we *don't* deserve. And that is exactly who our God is today. He is a God who gives us what we *don't* deserve. Grace is a part of God's nature.

PRAISE HIM

Psalm 103:8 (ESV) The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

God is *gracious*. That means he shows favor and gives good gifts to those who *don't* deserve it. It is God's nature that he desires to bless and give good gifts to those who are undeserving.

Praise Him this morning that he is *gracious*.

*God, I praise you that you are **gracious**.*

Tell God what it means to you this morning that he is *gracious*.

GIVE THANKS

The fact that God is a gracious God is some of the best news we could ever hear, because we are people that are in desperate need. And we *don't* deserve anything good from God.

Romans 3:23 (ESV) For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

So what is it that we actually do deserve?

Romans 6:23 (ESV) For the wages of sin is death.

But this is where God's grace meets us in our desperate situation.

Ephesians 2: 4-5 (ESV) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2: 8-9 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

You are saved by *the grace of God*. There is nothing you could have done or will ever be able to do to

earn it. God's grace is the only reason that you and I have a way of salvation from our sin. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, then he has rescued you because of his grace. God made a way for you to be saved from your sin, because he is **gracious!**

Thank Him for that now....

- Thank God for his grace.
- Thank God for making a way for you to be saved.
- Thank God that your salvation isn't something you have to earn, because you never could do enough good to be saved.
- Thank God that your salvation is a gift.

CONFESS AND REPENT

God longs to give his grace to us. And he tells us in scripture that he pours out his grace on us when we humble ourselves.

1 Peter 5:5 (ESV) Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives *grace* to the humble.

The opposite of humility is pride. And pride is a sense of superiority; it is being more confident in yourself than you are in God. Pride causes you to elevate yourself above everyone else.

You are called to humble yourself before God. So do that now. Ask God to reveal to you where pride has crept into your heart...

God, please reveal my pride to me.

- As you continue in prayer, what pride does is it causes you to see only good in yourself and miss the good in others, only seeing their faults. Confess where you are only seeing the faults of others.
- Pride causes you to speak judgmentally of other people's sins. Confess where you are speaking judgmentally of other people's sin.
- Pride is overly concerned with how people see you. Confess where you have been overly concerned with other people's perception of you.
- Pride causes you to think too highly of your abilities and neglect how dependent on God you truly are. Confess where you have been trusting in yourself rather than in God.
- Pride causes you to seek glory for yourself rather than giving God all the glory. Confess where you have been seeking glory.

Ask God to empower you by his spirit to live today in humility that you might experience more of the fullness of his grace in your life.

God, empower me, by your spirit, to live humbly before you today. Thank you, Lord! Amen.

REQUESTS

Hebrews 4:16 (ESV) Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of *grace*, that we may receive mercy and find *grace* to help in time of need.

God tells you to come to him in your time of need and you will find his grace waiting for you, ready to help you.

What is it that you need this morning? What are the needs around you that you are aware of? Here are a few categories and as you reflect on these categories as the Lord brings needs of the people around you or your own needs to mind, go ahead and lift those up to him.

- The first category is your **family**. What needs does your family have, be specific about certain family members? _____
- The next category is your **friends** – what needs do you know of in your friends’ lives? Be specific as you ask God to meet their needs. _____
- The next category is **church** – what needs is God bringing to your mind for the other believers in your church family? _____
- The next category is **work** – what needs come to mind when you think about your work situation? _____
- The final category is **yourself** – what needs do you have personally? Go ahead and bring them to God now. _____

May this passage be of encouragement to you as you pray...

2 Corinthians 12: 8-9 (ESV) Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Know that however God answers your prayers, that his *grace* will be enough for you.

YIELD

1 Peter 4:10 (ESV) As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.

If you are a follower of Jesus, then he has given you a gift. The Holy Spirit living inside of you is empowering you in a particular way to serve the people around you. God intends for you to use your energy, your mind, your heart, your hands to serve and to bless other people. He longs for his grace to flow through you today. Let God know what you want your day to be like because you know that’s true.

God, thank you for equipping me with a way to serve other people. Please use my life today to be a blessing to someone else. Please bring glory to yourself through my life today. I give you myself for your purposes today. In Jesus’ name.

As you continue to pray, know that God is loving this time with you.

And let me share with you the final verse of the bible...as my prayer for you today...

Revelation 22:21 (ESV) The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Day 21

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

Today we are going to pray through one of the most famous and beloved psalms; Psalm 23.

PRAISE HIM

Psalm 23:1 (ESV) *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord of heaven and earth is your *shepherd*. You have a good *shepherd*. The good *shepherd* is watchful, he is caring and he is devoted to his sheep. You have a devoted, caring *shepherd* that is looking out for you today.

Praise him for that!

God, I praise you that you are my shepherd!

Tell God what it means to you that he is your *shepherd*.

REQUESTS

Psalm 23:1 (ESV) *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

The second half of verse 1 simply says: *I shall not want*. Because the Lord is, in fact, your shepherd, your good *shepherd* provides everything that his sheep needs.

Your shepherd takes care of you. You see this in the next verse.

Psalm 23:2 (ESV) *He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*

Lying in green pastures is all about the shepherd taking the sheep to a place where they can lie down and they can get rejuvenating rest.

And leading them to still water is the shepherd taking them to the drink they need. But he knows that the sheep are skittish animals, and they won't drink out of flowing or moving water. The water needs to be still and calm. So the shepherd taking them to still water is about giving the sheep *specifically* what they need. And that's our shepherd toward us. Ask your *shepherd* to provide for you today in these ways:

- Ask God to provide the opportunity for physical rest that you need.
- Ask God to provide for what he knows you especially need.

Your shepherd's provision goes beyond the physical needs you have. It reaches into your soul.

Psalm 23:3a (ESV) *He restores my soul.*

Ask God to provide for you in the depth of your being today. Ask God to bring a restoration to your soul.

YIELD

In verse 3, it continues...

Psalm 23:3b (ESV) He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Your shepherd wants to show you the right direction, the best direction for your life today, and he beckons you to follow him...

God, please lead me in paths of righteousness today. Help me to follow you and your ways. I choose to honor you and put you first in my life today. Thank you, Lord.

GIVE THANKS

The next verse speaks of an ominous threat that is looming, but it also speaks of the comfort that our shepherd brings us in it.

Psalm 23:4 (ESV) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

I will not fear! Why not? Because the *shepherd* is with you. And he has a rod and a staff. The rod was a large stick that was used to defend the sheep. And it was also a great comfort to the sheep to know that nothing would get to them unless it got through the shepherd first. And the staff was used to redirect the sheep if they got off course or got stuck in a briar bush. The shepherd could pull them free and rescue them. Thank God today that he is your good shepherd and is doing that for you.

- Thank God that he is with you no matter what you face and that he is with you in this very moment.
- Thank God that he defends and protects you (whatever gets to you has to go through him first)
- Thank God that he comforts and guides you.

Psalm 23:5 (ESV) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

When he says that there is a table that is prepared for him, it is a lavish feast that he's alluding to that he's partaking of in the middle of being surrounded by his enemies. What you see here is that God can provide for you no matter what you face in this life. Nothing can stop God from his glorious provision in your life.

Then the scripture says, "You anoint my head with oil." This signifies a promise of what was going to come in the future. God's promises don't go away. Nothing can stop the promises of God in your life. God made a promise to David and God provides according to his promises. It is a reminder that the promises God makes are unstoppable. He will keep them.

“My cup overflows.” When God meets your needs, God doesn’t just *meet* your needs, he goes *above and beyond*... it is more than enough... he provides but he provides to the point of overflow. More than is needed!

Thank God for his provision:

- Thank you that nothing can stop you from meeting my needs today.
- Thank you that your promises are unstoppable.
- Thank you that you provide more than enough for me.

Psalm 23:6 (ESV) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

“Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.” Goodness and mercy are the ear marks of God’s presence and provision in your life.

Your God is a *good shepherd*. He leads you, he guides you, he protects you, he provides for you, he comforts you, he restores you, and his goodness and mercy follow you!

And at the end of it all... because of your faith in Jesus, you will be with him forever!

How good is your God!

Join in this prayer...

God, you are a good and merciful shepherd. Thank you that you are inviting me to walk with you today. I love you, Lord. Thank you for loving me first. In your name, Jesus, I pray.

I encourage you to sit before the Lord for a few more minutes now. Open up Psalm 23 and read it again. And let whatever catches your attention be the spark or generator for some more real conversation with God this morning.

Remember he is loving this time with you!

Day 22

GOD IS MY HEAVENLY FATHER

In the gospels, Jesus' disciples didn't ask Jesus to teach them to walk on water, or to do miracles. The only thing recorded in the gospels that they asked Jesus to do... is to teach them to pray.

In Matthew 6, we find how Jesus teaches them; and we are going to pray through this model prayer this morning. This model prayer is known as "The Lord's Prayer".

PRAISE HIM

Matthew 6:9 (ESV) Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Our Father in heaven – When Jesus calls God his Father in heaven, and tells us to do the same, he's not telling us about *where* God is, he's telling us about *who* God is. That he is a father, a personal God that is in heaven not on earth like an earthly father. But the heavenly father who is above all fathers. The father who is on the throne; the one who has authority over all things. He is seated in the seat of power and has dominion over all creation. That is our Heavenly Father.

Hallowed be your name – Another way of saying this is "may your name be proclaimed as holy." And let it start with me. Let it come from lips, let it come from my heart. Holy are you God; worthy are You above all others.

Start your time of prayer this morning echoing those words, following the lead of Jesus in this model prayer and praising your God that way.

God, I praise you because you are my Heavenly Father, who is worthy of all my worship.

Tell him what it means to you that he is your *Heavenly Father*.

Matthew 6:10 (ESV) Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

God's kingdom is where he is king and where his authority is submitted to.

Jesus teaches us to ask for God's rule and reign to increase – that is for more people to submit to him as their king and to submit to his authority.

Your will be done – this is saying, God, *I want* what *you want* to happen. My desire is that you would accomplish your purposes. I want everything and everyone to submit to your authority like it does in heaven right now.

Make this your prayer as well...

Father, I ask that you bring more people to the point of submitting to your authority like everything does in heaven. And, Lord, I want to start by submitting myself again today. Be my king and help me to live according to your will today. Thank you, Lord.

REQUESTS

Matthew 6:11 (ESV) Give us this day our daily bread.

Jesus taught us to daily come before God and ask for what we need today.

So, do that now. Ask him to give us what you need today.

What do you need today?

Physically _____

Emotionally _____

Relationally _____

Mentally _____

Spiritually _____

Financially _____

CONFESS AND REPENT

Matthew 6:12 (ESV) and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Jesus says we are to ask God to forgive us.

The only reason we can be forgiven is because our sin was put on Jesus. He hung on the cross and he paid for our guilt so that we could be forgiven. So we need to come before God and confess to him where we have fallen short of his perfect plan for our lives.

Ask God to bring to your mind any sin in your life. Then, confess it, asking for his help to turn from it and live according to his righteousness. _____

And now, who do *you* need to forgive? Ask God to help you let go of any offenses that you are holding on to this morning. _____

YIELD

Matthew 6:13 (ESV) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Temptation is all around you. Ways that promise goodness but deliver only regret; illegitimate ways to meet legitimate needs. Today, God wants to lead you away from these things. He wants to lead you toward righteousness. And he not only *can*, but he *will*, as you ask him. So ask him now.

God, we are so easily convinced that sin is a good idea. We fall into the trap of temptation all too often. We ask that today you would protect us from its deception and keep us from giving in. Thank you for leading us today.

Now spend a few more minutes in prayer. And as you do, why don't you express some gratitude to God for the things he is doing in your life.

Specifically thank God for some of these...

- Blessings from yesterday
- People in your life
- Opportunities to serve and give
- What he has given you
- What you get to do today

Remember that God is loving this time with you! Enjoy the rest of your time in prayer this morning with him.

Day 23

JESUS IS A FISHER OF MEN

What happens when Jesus asks you to do something that seems a little bit like a bad idea?

Jesus asked Peter to do kind of a strange thing. Today, we will pray through Luke 5 - the account of the miraculous catch.

Luke 5:3-5 (ESV) Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."

Peter had been out all night fishing and didn't catch anything. And then Jesus, a carpenter, not a fisherman, gets into the boat with Peter and said "Let's go do some fishing." Peter thinks, "This isn't going to work. The fish don't come to the surface during the day. They're down in the depths. We can't catch them right now". But, he responds to Jesus as his superior. He calls him his master. He agrees to do what Jesus says because Jesus is in charge.

How are you doing with allowing Jesus to be in charge of your decisions?

Are there any decisions that you have recently made or are facing right now and you're trying to make them on your own, but you haven't allowed Jesus to have his say?

What decisions do you need to let Jesus **guide** you in today? _____
Ask Him to **direct** you as you make them.

GIVE THANKS

So they push off from shore and head out to deeper water. And they let down their nets.

Luke 5:6-7(ESV) And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

Jesus orchestrated their catch and they had so many fish that their nets were tearing. They were afraid of losing all the fish. They had to call over to their partners to come help bring in the catch.

Jesus gave them way more than they expected, and more than they needed.

Jesus does that in our everyday life. He gives us what we need and then he gives us *more* than we need.

What are 2 blessings from yesterday that you can thank him for now?

CONFESS AND REPENT

The story continues in verse 8:

Luke 5:8-10 (ESV) But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

Peter saw the power of Jesus displayed. He was astonished and realized that it was from God; that he was in the presence of the goodness of God. Peter sees the contrast of his own sinfulness and it drops him to his knees.

As we look to Jesus, as we gaze upon his perfection and his holiness, may we see all the more clearly how we don't measure up. May we see how much we need him and that we need him today to help us to think and act and speak as we ought.

Lord, we confess that we have sinned. We bow at your feet this morning in humility. Please forgive us for not loving you with our whole hearts. Forgive us for not loving our neighbors as ourselves. And help us today to live and love like you Jesus in all we think, do, and say. Thank you, Lord.

YIELD

Luke 5:10-11 (ESV) And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Jesus invites these men to join him in his mission, and they do. They leave everything and follow him.

Are you ready to do that again today? Or maybe for the very first time? Are you ready to join Jesus in his mission today? If so, would you join me in this prayer...

Lord, our lives are meaningless unless they are lived for you. Today, we want to be about your mission – changing people's lives eternally. Help us to use our time, our abilities, our energy to bring more good into people's lives. I give you this day. I give you myself. Be glorified in my life today. In your name, Jesus, Amen.

I want to encourage you to continue in prayer. And as you bring some of the things that may still be on your heart and that you need to lay before the Lord, would you just ask him to work in those situations and to bring good in to them and to meet those needs today?

As you continue to pray consider these areas of your life and talk to God about them...

Family, Friends, Church, Work, Yourself

Day 24

GOD IS GOOD

Have you ever been skeptical of trying a new food? Not so sure you're going to like it and then you taste it and it's delicious and it becomes one of your favorites! God calls us to taste and see that he is good and that is what we're going to do this morning!

In Psalm 34 we come across this invitation...

Psalm 34:8 (ESV) Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

This morning have you tasted and seen that God is good?

We are going to use this psalm that the verse comes out of to lead us as we reconnect with our God this morning.

PRAISE HIM

In Psalm 34 David writes...

Psalm 34:1-3 (ESV) I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

To bless the lord is to praise him! David says I am never going to stop praising my God! And then he invites us to join with him in that!

So take a minute and praise God for his goodness.

*God, I praise you that you are **good!***

Would you celebrate that and tell God how glad you are that he is *good*?

REQUESTS

Psalm 34:4, 10 (ESV) I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears...The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

Seek the Lord according to your needs this morning. Knowing that as you seek him, he answers, he delivers and he provides the good things that you need.

- What does your **family** need today? Be specific. _____
- What do your **friends** need today? Be specific. _____
- What does your **neighbor** need today? Be specific. _____
- What do **you** need today? Be specific. _____

GIVE THANKS

Psalm 34:5-9 (ESV) Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

When we look to the Lord, we are filled with confidence. He saves us from our troubles. He delivers us and provides for us – because he is so *good!*

Say thank you...

- How has the Lord filled you with **confidence**? Tell him thank you.
- What **trouble** has he **saved** you from? Tell him thank you.
- How has God **provided** for you? Tell him thank you.

God, you are so good to us. Thank you for blessing us every day.

CONFESS AND REPENT

Psalm 34:15-17 (ESV) The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.

God is not okay with evil. Evil is anything that doesn't line up with the character of God and the will of God.

This morning, where have you not lined up with God's character or will – in your thoughts, words, actions?

What do you need to confess to the Lord and ask him for his help to live differently today? Go ahead and tell him and tell him you're sorry. Then ask him to help you live differently today.

Thank you, Lord, for loving me and for forgiving me through the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross for me.

YIELD

Psalm 34:11-14 (ESV) Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

That is the way we should want to live today! Fearing the Lord and standing in awe of him. Using our words for good and seeking peace.

Pray and ask God to help us do just that.

Lord, help me to be more in awe of you today than anything else. Remind me of your greatness throughout today. Use my mouth for good today. May the words that come to my mind and out of my mouth be pleasing to you. And help me seek to bring peace into every relationship I have today. Give me opportunities today to be a blessing. Thank you, Lord.

Psalm 34 ends this way...

Psalm 34:17-22 (ESV) When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken. Affliction will slay the wicked, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Our God is *good* and he is a safe place for us to go when we are crushed in spirit; when we go through many afflictions – he is our refuge.

You are encouraged to continue in prayer now. Stay right there and stay in the presence of your gracious God, your refuge. And enjoy being in his presence. May the things that come to mind right now, may they spur your conversation with him. Maybe there's nothing that comes to mind. Maybe you just need to sit and be still in his presence. As you do, remember he is loving every minute of this time with you. He sent his son to die on the cross so that you could have this relationship with him. Enjoy it.

Psalm 34:8 (ESV) Oh, **taste** and **see** that the Lord is **good**!

Day 25