



PRAYER JOURNAL

This week, I will praise God for...

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I will ask God for...

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I will thank God for...

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I need to confess...

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I will pray for others...

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MONDAY | JUST AN INNOCENT LIE

READ → **1 Samuel 22:16-17a**

¹⁶ But the king said, "You will surely die, Ahimelek, you and your whole family."

¹⁷ Then the king ordered the guards at his side: "Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me."

REFLECT → Why did King Saul have all the priests killed? Simple: Ahimelech, the chief priest, committed mutiny. He gave aid to an enemy of the king. The only thing is he didn't know he was doing it.

You see, David had been becoming more and more popular even since slaying Goliath. Saul was jealous of David's success and knew that he would soon be so popular he'd take over the kingdom. So, Saul wanted him dead. He tried to spear David in the royal dining room, and David went on the run. He left without taking any provisions or weapons. When he came to Ahimelech's house, the priest wanted to know why David was traveling alone. David lied. He told Ahimelech he was on a top-secret mission for the king and nobody else could know about it. Ahimelech was loyal to the king and wanted to help with the mission. So, he gave David bread and a sword.

Since the priest had no use for a sword and he had a bunch of extra bread around, David didn't see the harm in his lie. But because of his lie, Ahimelech and dozens of others lost their lives.

It's hard to know what the cost of dishonesty will be. But there will always be consequences for a lie. It could be feeling guilty. It could be losing the trust of a parent or friend. The best bet is always the truth.

RESPOND → Sometimes it seems like it's easier to lie. But nothing good comes out of dishonesty. Whenever you're tempted to lie, pray to God and ask for the strength and courage to tell the truth.

TUESDAY | THE BLAME GAME

READ → **Genesis 3:11-13**

¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

REFLECT → Adam and Eve were caught with their hands in the cookie jar--or on the fruit tree, as the case may be. They had been given pretty clear instructions. Of the hundreds of trees in the garden, they could eat the fruit from all of them but one. And, you know how the story goes. The talking snake convinced them that God was holding out on them and that they would be better off ignoring God, making their own decision, and eating the fruit. So much for listening to talking snakes!

Well, you can't keep the truth from God. God knew they had eaten the fruit and called them out on it. But neither of them wanted to admit being wrong.

Adam basically said, "You put this woman here, and she ate the fruit first and then made me eat it. It's not my fault, God. It's her fault. And it's your fault, too, for putting her here."

Make a little note here: Blaming God for our sins...not a good idea.

Meanwhile, Eve says, "Don't look at me. Talk to the snake."

First they did something wrong and then they had to blame somebody else for it. We get ourselves into the same situations sometimes, don't we? We hate to admit we're wrong and we make excuses and search high and low for someone or something else to blame.

RESPOND → It takes a person of strong character to avoid the "blame game" and stand up and admit to being wrong. But being a person of strong character is exactly what Jesus has called you to be. Everybody makes mistakes. It's a fact of life. But, even in the face of messing up you can bring honor to God in how you handle it.

WEDNESDAY | PROACTIVE TRUTH

READ → **Exodus 20:16**

¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

James 4:17

¹⁷ So then, if you know the good you ought to do and don't do it, you sin.

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REFLECT → As is often the case with Christianity, the quest for truthfulness and integrity requires us to be proactive. It is not enough for us to simply refrain from telling lies. We are also called to do whatever we can to help clear up misunderstandings and deceptions.

You can probably think of a situation where one person has the wrong idea about another person. Do you know the truth? What can you do to help the truth be known?

Maybe there's something going on behind the back of another person and it's making that person look foolish. Perhaps that person is giving a lot of trust to somebody who is misusing it. If you have the real facts and the ability to protect that person's dignity, shouldn't you do something?

Always be sure you know the real deal before speaking. Otherwise, you're just spreading rumors and gossip. But a big part of honesty and truthfulness is not allowing a lie to thrive.

Situations like these are always a little touchy, and sometimes it's hard to know the right thing to do--and even harder to do it. So, you might want to talk it over with your youth leader.

RESPOND → Memorize James 4:17 to use as a guide when faced with a situation where it seems like you should do something. And always remember the best guide of all: prayer.

THURSDAY | UNGODLINESS ABOUNDS

READ → **2 Kings 23:25**

²⁵ Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.

REFLECT → Josiah was the king of Judah, starting in 640 B.C., when he was six years old. His father, Amon, and grandfather, Manasseh, were both evil kings who encouraged the worship of idols throughout the land and allowed God's temple to be desecrated and fall into ruin.

When Josiah got older and could begin making his own decisions, he started to passionately seek out God. Despite being surrounded by ungodliness, he made major changes in his own life. He got rid of all the idols, began restoring the temple, and made sure God's law was taught throughout the kingdom. He is lifted up in the Bible as being one of God's most faithful servants. He heard God's word and responded obediently.

RESPOND → We, too, are surrounded by ungodliness. We are constantly urged by our friends, our leaders, celebrities, and the media to stray from God's will. And our overcrowded schedules often leave us little time to spend with God, praying and growing in our faith.

What are the things in your life that are keeping you from being as close to God as you can be? What can change?

FRIDAY | GOD IS SO GOOD

READ → **1 Samuel 7:10-12**

¹⁰ While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. ¹¹ The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar.

¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us."

REFLECT → In this passage, Samuel is setting up a monument to remind everybody of the great thing God had just done for them. Israel was no match for the Philistines. There's no way they should have won, except that God interceded on their behalf. Samuel wanted to erect a physical reminder that God would always care for the Israelites.

It's not a bad idea. Sometimes, when life gets rough and nothing seems to be going right, when friends turn against us and we feel all alone, it's easy to think God has abandoned us, too. It's good for us to have some kind of a reminder of how God loves us and always cares for us.

RESPOND → Think of a time when you felt really close to God or a time when God really helped you out. Maybe you could write about it and tuck it away so that in the future, if you're feeling far away from God, you can read about it as a reminder of God's love. Reflect on these words from Romans: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." And take some time in prayer, now, to thank God for this time you're thinking about.

SATURDAY | LESS DRAMA!

READ → **Romans 16:17-18a**

¹⁷ I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. ¹⁸ For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites.

REFLECT → Do you know what we could all use in our lives? Less drama! That's pretty much what today's reading says.

You can probably think of a person--or two, or three--who isn't happy unless the people around him or her are unhappy.

Sometimes it's like a jealous friendship triangle, where the person expects you to be his or her best friend, which apparently means you can't have any other friends or have plans with anybody else.

Sometimes it's like the person is addicted to crises. Every day, there's a new reason why this person's world is about to fall apart. And if you're not willing to drop everything and panic too, then you're just not being supportive and are a terrible friend.

In both of these scenarios, it would seem that the person involved is insecure and has very low self esteem. As a Christian, you owe that person love and acceptance. And that person could use a good many words of encouragement and support as well as your prayers.

At the same time, be sure to not allow this person to drive a wedge between you and your other friends. It might seem easier to go along with this person's behavior, but don't sacrifice your integrity by doing that. Sometimes it's hard to strike the right balance between offering Christian love and protecting yourself and your relationships from a person's divisiveness. If you're not sure of the best way to respond, talk it over with your youth leader.

RESPOND → You might know a person who acts divisively. Write that person's name on a random piece of scrap paper and post it somewhere where you'll be reminded to pray for that person each day.