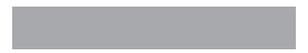


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**DAILY
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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

We Are All Ministers.

21 Days of Prayer: Day 8

“What do you want to be when you grow up?”

It's a great question we often ask kids, not only because we love talking about their future, but also because their answers are fun to listen to.

You might hear, "a firefighter," or "a police officer," or even, "the President," all of which are standard answers. You might also hear, "a doctor for toys, not people," if you're the parent of a two-year-old who happens to love a cartoon doctor (thanks, Doc McStuffins, for helping my daughter reach for the stars in her ambition to medically operate on inanimate objects). Finally, you might hear "Batman," if you're the parents of a young boy who aspires to be the greatest superhero of all time. (I'm not saying this was me, but isn't it a little suspicious that you've never seen Batman and me in the same place together?)

Regardless of which attainable (or completely unrealistic) career you might hear in response to the question, most likely, you probably haven't heard "minister" as a response.

Honestly, when you were a kid, and you answered this question, was "minister" your answer? Probably not.

What's interesting is that no matter what career we end up in, as a part of the church, **we are all *ministers***.

In the second week of our series, “Who Needs Church,” Ben Snyder walked through this statement:

God has called *you* to be a minister and to build up his church one step at a time.

You most likely don't feel like you're a minister, but as a part of the church, you are!

In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul explains that each of us - no matter our roles - play the ultimate role of a minister. But, what does it mean to be a minister?

Throughout the Bible, the term “minister” means [one who serves](#). All of us, as a part of Christ's bride, the church, are ministers, and this is a humbling, staggering fact and responsibility.

All of us play a significant role in building up the church. As ministers, however, we have to tend to our relationship with our Heavenly Father so we can better tend to those we serve.

For the second week of our 21 days of prayer, we will be looking at the place of worship for the Israelites before the temple: the Tabernacle. Before Solomon built the temple, the Israelites went to the Tabernacle - a traveling tent - to worship. We will discuss much of what happened in the Tabernacle later this week, but for today, we will focus on the posture of the Israelites as they entered. Psalm 100 is a Psalm of Thanksgiving to God for all that he is and has done.

In verses 4-5, the Psalmist writes,

*⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving;
go into his courts with praise.
Give thanks to him and praise his name.*

*⁵For the Lord is good.
His unfailing love continues forever,
and his faithfulness continues to each generation.*

The Psalmist instructs the Israelites to enter God's gates - the outer court - with thanksgiving and praise. Why? Because the Lord is good, his love is forever, and he is always faithful. Before we enter to worship, or serve, or enjoy, we are to thank God. As a part of the new covenant, we have direct access to the God of the universe. He did this out of his great love and mercy for us. So, when we enter into our ministry - our opportunity to serve - we enter with thanksgiving and praise.

For day 8 of our 21 Days of Prayer, we are going to thank God.

What do you need to thank God for today?

What people has God placed in your life?

What opportunities has God given you?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I know you've called me to minister to others. Thank you for this incredible calling, and help me to do it as you would have me do it. You are worthy of all praise and honor, and before I do anything else today, I want to thank you. Thank you for another day, for the breath in my lungs, for the family

and friends you've given me, and for the opportunity to serve. Most importantly, Father, thank you for your Son Jesus, and his death and resurrection. Help me to be thankful every day, and I ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

This post was written by Andy Rectenwald, the Director of the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Today, Thank God for Forgiveness.

21 Days of Prayer: Day 9

The Brazen Altar is a step of The Tabernacle Prayer that took place right inside the gates where the Israelites made animal sacrifices to pay – or atone for – the sins they committed. To be pure before the Lord, this act of sacrifice was, in effect, placing the sins of the Israelites upon an innocent animal without blemish that would take on the guilt of the nation and would take the ultimate punishment: death.

Psalm 103:2-5 says,

- ² *Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—*
³ *who **forgives** all your sins
and **heals** all your diseases,*
⁴ *who **redeems** your life from the pit
and crowns you with **love** and compassion,*
⁵ *who **satisfies** your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

What does this mean for us today? These animal sacrifices took place yearly, but we no longer have to offer animal sacrifices to atone for our sins because Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, came as the ultimate and last sacrifice when he offered up his life. However, this does not mean we can forget about the sins we commit or the impure lifestyle we are living. God wants us to come to him with a pure heart, acknowledge that we have made mistakes and that we need and desire his forgiveness. To hear from God, we must clear the paths that block or distract us from his voice. When we ask for forgiveness, God offers us redemption with his unconditional love. When we come to this place of oneness with him, we feel and experience satisfaction in our spiritual life, which then allows us to feel full in the other areas of our life: mentally, emotionally, physically, and socially.

Prayer:

God, thank you that I can receive forgiveness at any point in my life, no matter how extreme or far I have strayed from you. I pray that you would forgive me for the sins I know I have committed, but also for the sins of which I am unaware. Help me to receive healing from the inside out through your love. Thank you in advance for your work of redemption in my life and the power of your Spirit. I pray that you would pour out your Spirit on me and use me to be a blessing to others in my life. Amen.

This post was written by Rachel Marroquin, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

What Does Surrender Look Like?

21 Days of Prayer: Day 10

Today, we continue with the third stage of the Tabernacle Prayer: The Laver.

As Andy explained on Monday, the Tabernacle Prayer aligns our prayer activity with the seven stations in the Tabernacle, or dwelling place of God. These steps can help us connect with God and lead us through essential elements of prayer. Earlier this week, we explored the Outer Court, where visitors entered the Tabernacle to offer thanksgiving and praise, and the Brazen Altar, or cross of Jesus, where the Israelites sacrificed animals to atone for their sins.

While the Brazen Altar served as the site for cleansing sins through animal sacrifice, this day of the Tabernacle Prayer brings us to the Laver, or wash basin, where people would more literally cleanse themselves in ritualistic preparation for offering themselves to God. This seminal portion of the Tabernacle Prayer journey enables us to surrender and sacrifice our lives to God.

In Romans 12:1, the Apostle Paul writes, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.”

The living sacrifice to which Paul refers is not an offering of human life in the literal sense (death). Rather, he implores us to give or *devote* our life to God by repenting for our sins and offering the totality of our being to him. Sacrificing our life – even in the form of devotion – is much easier said than done. But equally clear is the impact and reward of being intentional about living in harmony with God.

So, today, as we pray at the Laver, we look inward at our heart and motives, and recommit to surrendering our life to God. Giving our whole self to God encompasses all portions of our body and mind. This includes:

- Our tongue (or words) – to speak good and not evil;
- Our eyes – to see God and the needs of others;
- Our ears – to listen to God;
- Our hands – to do good works for God and our fellow man; and
- Our feet – to walk in God’s ways.

Just as we offer our body to God, so too must we offer our mind. In Romans 12:2, Paul continues, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

I have the pleasure of participating in a weekly, early-morning Bible study group at CedarCreek. Each Wednesday at 6:15 a.m., our group of a dozen or so men

convene at the Perrysburg campus to partake in fellowship through the exploration and discussion of various aspects of the Bible. For the past two months, we have been immersed in a thorough reading and discussion of the Book of Romans. Coincidentally (or perhaps not), we closed last week's session with the first two verses of Romans 12, which were previously referenced in this devotional.

After reading verses 12:1-2 aloud, we talked about the challenges inherent in abiding by Paul's directive to offer our bodies in living sacrifice to God and resist the temptation to succumb to the pattern of the present-day world.

As men of God, we openly acknowledge the tug of war between our devotion to God and the forces that challenge our resilience in consistently walking with him. Along with our fellowship, we know that we can also take comfort in knowing that God has made available to us the priceless gift of prayer to support and sustain our quest to live our faith.

The Alabama-based Church of the Highlands offers a [Personal Prayer Guide](#), which serves as a companion of sorts to our 21 Days of Prayer. Within the guide is an excellent prayer devotional that offers suggestions for confession and cleansing as we present our heart to God. As we pray, we are encouraged to ask God to search our heart for:

- Sin – to receive cleansing and righteousness;
- Selfishness – to receive holiness and sanctification;
- Stress – to receive life and power; and
- Sickness – to receive healing and strength.

Today, pray this prayer to ask for God's help in keeping his purposes and goals in view:

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I thank you, as always, for the unconditional love and mercy that you so generously offer to me. Even as I surrender myself to you and seek to serve you as a living sacrifice, I ask for your help in resisting the lure of the pattern and ways of this world governed by man. Grant me the ability to keep you present and, in doing so, to remain ever mindful of my overarching commitment to walk in your ways. Amen.

This post was written by Todd Romain, a regular contributor to and editor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.

The One Thing You Might Be Missing:

21 Days of Prayer: Day 11

I have a friend who I've known for many years, and as our friendship was growing, she began to ask me more about my faith. She had a church background, but many of the fundamental truths of the Bible were unfamiliar to her. Although I loved being a person in her life who was able to speak the truth of God to her, it came with an obvious amount of pressure. I wouldn't dare want to lead someone astray. I had considered myself a growing Christian at the time, and a lot of our conversations were allowing me to do some growing as well.

One particular conversation involved the topic of salvation: one of the most important conversations you could have. My friend was laying some whammies on me, really getting to the nitty gritty, and I began to stumble a bit in my answers. For one of the first times in my Christian life, it dawned on me hard, like a baseball smacking me in the face. *PRAY about it.* Duh!

I prayed for the Holy Spirit to speak through me and answer this sweet girl's life-altering questions. It was too big for me to answer alone. As our conversation continued, a significant shift took place, and I said things to this girl that I didn't even think I knew myself, things about salvation and Jesus that were biblical, but also totally not from me and my brain. God was teaching me in that moment just as much as he was teaching her! The fact that this pre-talk prayer had to "occur" to me rocked me a bit. I thought I was a maturing Christian, but praying for the Spirit to guide me was not yet a regular part of my life. The result of doing this before this one conversation changed my whole walk in faith. It encouraged me to make it a habit to say an intentional prayer for the Holy Spirit to guide me on a regular basis.

As we go through the symbols in the Tabernacle, we get to the seven-branched candlestick, otherwise known as the golden lampstand. This candlestick was the only light source in the Tabernacle, so it was essential for the people to approach God. For us, the fire represents the Holy Spirit. Every day, you should invite the presence of the Holy Spirit. The light provided by the Holy Spirit guides us so that we don't have to walk blindly in life. We can see where we are meant to go, and how to go about doing so.

Isaiah 11:2

*The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him-
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.*

The Holy Spirit is there, just waiting for you to use him! Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you, to give you the words, the right responses. The small amount of time it takes to invite the Holy Spirit and center your thoughts on God can be life-altering. If you allow the Holy Spirit to work in every part of your day, asking him at the beginning of the day and throughout, you will see your days begin to take a different course. You will be using your spiritual gifts in the way God intended. You will be better at avoiding sin and your most difficult temptations. Think of it as an essential resource that God has gifted to us, as important as light is in navigating a dark Tabernacle.

Is calling on the Holy Spirit something that comes naturally to you, or is it something you need to work into your routine?

Can you recall a time that you felt the Holy Spirit working through you?

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for the Holy Spirit. I invite you today to lead me in everything I do. I invite the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. I ask you to give me spiritual gifts to be used for your glory. Allow me to feel your Spirit spring to life in me, and let us walk together in everything I do. Amen.

This is Essential to Your Spiritual Health:

21 Days of Prayer: Day 12

One of the most necessary things for life is energy. We humans cannot function without the proper amount and type of energy. The primary source of our energy is the food we eat. Though it can look different depending on culture, time of day, and mood, food is a necessity. If you've participated in an extended fast before, you know how it feels to be deprived of this essential source.

In fact, food is such a necessity, which no one questions the role it plays in our lives. We might debate what type of food to eat or how much, but you'd be hard pressed to find anyone arguing that we should stop eating altogether.

Physical food is a necessity for our natural bodies to survive, and we all know this. What about our souls? What is the food that we require to thrive in our soul? God is clear all throughout the Bible that it is his word we require for our souls. Even more important than the health of our physical body, our soul's health requires a constant diet of God's Word. When Jesus fasted from physical food for 40 days and nights, he was hungry. The Devil began tempting him telling him to turn stones into bread to satisfy his physical appetite. Jesus' response, though often overlooked, is striking.

⁴ But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4)

We need the word of God to live. It is a necessity.

We are in day 12 of our 21 Days of Prayer, and for this week, we have been exploring what the Tabernacle and how it relates to our prayers.

Yesterday, we read about the Lampstand and how we needed to rely on the Holy Spirit every day. Today, we are going to focus on the table of Showbread. On this elaborate table, there were 12 loaves of bread situated into two piles of six. Bread, representing the essential item for physical life, was a gift from God. The priest was to eat the bread, and in this act, [show fellowship and peace with God](#).

The Israelites were to remember - through the sacrifices and worship in the Tabernacle - that God had given them peace and forgiveness. They were also to remember that all their needs would be provided by God alone.

It's no coincidence that Jesus equates bread with the Word of God. As Christians, we are called to feast on God's word and also realize that it is the source of

sustenance for our souls. In the Old Testament book of Joshua, we see a prescription for how we should do this:

Joshua 1:8

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and fruitful.

What do you think God means when he tells Joshua to meditate on his word day and night?

Do you have a daily time for reading God's word scheduled out? If so, what does it look like and how could it improve?

If not, what can you do to set that up? Whom can you ask to help?

When we pray, we are communicating with God, when we read the Bible, God is communicating to us, which means that reading the Bible – though something we do naturally – requires God's supernatural help.

Today, pray that God would speak to you through his word and that his word would become more and more central to your life.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. I know that your word is my daily bread, that it is necessary for the health of my soul. Help me to feast on your word daily, so that I can experience the peace and prosperity you promise.

My Words are Sweet Incense to God?

21 Days of Prayer: Day 13

It was going to be a busy day; he could see that already. The outer courts were full of people milling about with animals ready to bear the price for the people's sins. The people came into the outer courts praising God that their sins could be forgiven. This forgiveness came at a cost, though: the death of an animal.

As he reflected on his job as a priest, he wondered if there was another way. As he stood up to take the next animal to the Brazen Altar, he could feel how this animal was going to take the punishment for this family. After the blood was shed, he walked to the Laver and cleansed himself. To enter into the presence of God, one needed to be clean.

Upon entering the Holy Place, he stopped to allow his eyes to adjust to the light from the menorah. The next stop was the Table of Showbread. This was a special place as it demonstrated that God desired to have fellowship with him - a priest, a sinful man.

The final place, the Altar of Incense, was his favorite. This was the place where all of his senses came alive. His eyes were now well-adjusted to the lamplight, the sounds of the people and animals in the outer courts were muffled by the curtain, he could feel the thick air of the enclosed tent, but what transported him was the scent of the incense. It carried him from the hot, dusty desert into the presence of God. This altar was his favorite piece of the Holy Place. It was a small altar about 3 feet tall and 1.5 feet square. It was made of acacia, a strong and enduring wood, overlaid with gold. It had four horns representing the four camps of Israel. The construction of the altar was beautiful, but what transported him to intimate worship with God was the aroma. The incense was to be burned twice a day, morning and evening, while the burnt offerings were being made. The incense was a mixture of three precious spices and frankincense. It was holy and symbolized the prayers of the people going up to God, a sweet aroma. It was in this place he knew that his God was different from the gods of the peoples around them. This God wanted communion with his people and provided a way for them to be made right with him. He did not know that this ritual he performed twice a day was foretelling a sacrifice that God would one day make to atone for the people's sins once and for all.

As we think about what the Altar of Incense meant for the people in the Old Testament time, we can see how it becomes meaningful to us as Christians today. The Altar of Incense provided the people an opportunity to offer up to God a sweet aroma of praise in the form of incense that was only used on that altar. We too can offer up our prayers to God as a sweet aroma when we worship him with our entire being. When we enter into the presence of God, worshipping

him by name - Sanctifier, Healer, Provider, Peace, Righteousness, and Savior - our words become sweet incense before him. While these people had to perform a particular ritual to come into God's presence before Jesus' death, we can come boldly into his presence and worship him. Through Christ's death and resurrection, we do not need a priest to intercede for us; we can communicate directly with the God of the universe and experience true intimacy with the God who made us. We can sing with David in Psalm 141:2, "May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice." Our praises bring us into the presence of God to commune with him and find rest and a safe place.

Proverbs 18:10

The name of the Lord is a fortified tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.

We can run to God and know that he is a safe place. Our worship should transport us from the cares of this world into the presence of God. We can come before him and know that we are safe in his presence no matter what we have done and can freely worship him with our whole being.

Think about what it would mean for you to view your prayers as a time when you are stepping into the presence of God. Think about the incense that our priest burned before the Lord and how it transported him from the desert into the presence of God. Think about how Jesus became our sacrifice and, through the shedding of his blood, we can now freely enter into the presence of God without fear or shame. Does it change how you pray?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Sanctifier, Healer, thank you for allowing me to come into your presence. Thank you for coming down from your home in heaven to give your life for me, a sinner, so that we can boldly come before you, the God of the universe. Thank you that I may come before you a sinner and leave cleansed by your blood. I pray that the words of my mouth are a sweet aroma before you. I pray that my worship blesses your name and as the Psalmist says, "Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness; let us exalt his name together." Amen

Pray for Everyone... Even Your Enemies?

21 Days of Prayer: Day 14

The Holy of Holies. The sacred, innermost part of the Tabernacle, was widely believed to be the place God dwelt, in addition to containing the Ark of the Covenant (the Tabernacle is described in detail in Exodus). Only the high priest could enter this section of the temple, as it was separated by a veil. It was in this place that the priest would offer his requests to God - known as intercessory prayer. The priest would enter into the presence of the Lord, and pray for other people, as well as himself.

Jesus taught us how to pray with what is known as the Lord's Prayer, which we have been studying and praying through. Paul gave us further instructions on how to pray for others, and for whom we are to pray:

1 Timothy 2:1-4

¹I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – ²for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Who are we to pray for? Just ourselves? Our friends and family? No. We are to pray for *all people*. Yes, we should be praying for our friends, our family, and those close to us. But we also need to pray for our enemies, our church, our leaders, and those in authority - bosses, government officials, and yes, even the president.

It seems like it should be easy to pray for our own family, the people we care about the most. We want the best for them, especially for our children. Last week, I got to pray for my son as he went to kindergarten for the first time, and my kids never fail to remind me that we need to pray before bedtime. We ask God for provision and thank him for our friends and the blessings he has given us. On the other hand, consider your typical response when you're on your last nerve from a long day at work, the children are arguing as you walk in the door, and you need to get dinner on the table as soon as possible. Tensions can quickly run high, but with a simple breath and a prayer, your night could be a lot different.

Praying for our friends and people we care about might be easier. We want them to succeed, to be well, and to experience the love of God. When we pray for others, we can see transformative change. In college, I was a volunteer Young Life leader tasked with starting a new ministry at a local high school. I didn't know the students at the school, but I cared about them. I got a sports program

and started praying for them by name, looking at their pictures and asking God to change their lives. While not all of those students came to know Christ, those hours of prayer laid the foundation for a ministry that is going strong more than a decade later.

The leaders of our church, as well as the leaders of our country and world, need our prayers, too. Wait, pastors need prayer? A lot more than you think. In 1 Timothy 3, leaders are charged with being “above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach... gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money,” in addition to managing his family and being worthy of respect. Certainly a tall order, especially if they are trying to do it alone. Fortunately, we can help, through the power of prayer. For the church itself, we can pray to be like the first church, discussed in Acts 2, where people “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer,” as well as praising God together, opening their homes, and sharing their possessions with anyone in need.

It may seem odd to pray for those in authority. Why do they need any help from us? For one thing, many of them do not know Jesus. They need guidance as much as anyone else. And do you want to follow someone if they are going in a direction you don’t want to go? Think about your boss. He may stress you out, but consider the pressure he may be under. How would your relationship, and even your job satisfaction, be different if every time you wanted to complain about him to your spouse or co-workers, you prayed for him instead?

It is easy to treat others well if they treat you well. “Even the pagans do that.” But when we are mistreated by people who don’t like us, it is far more difficult to turn the other cheek. Matthew 5 encourages us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. How can we turn those people into friends? There is a (cheesy) saying that a stranger is a friend you haven’t met. **Well, an enemy is a person you have yet to pray for.**

We all need God’s help. Ask him who you can be praying for specifically. Consider the strained relationships in your life - enemies, friends, family - and how they could be different if you prayed for those individuals instead of griping about them. Commit to praying for a different person every day this week, and then reflect on them later in the week.