

Daily Devotions August 9th – 15th

Monday August 9th

Prayer Focus – Those Who are Away From God

Rise Again

Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again. Proverbs 24:16

Olympic runner Ryan Hall is the US record-holder for the half marathon. He completed the event distance of 13.1 miles (21 kilometers) in a remarkable time of fifty-nine minutes and forty-three seconds, making him the first US athlete to run the race in under one hour. While Hall has celebrated record-setting victories, he's also known the disappointment of not being able to finish a race.

Having tasted both success and failure, Hall credits his faith in Jesus for sustaining him. One of his favorite Bible verses is an encouraging reminder from the book of Proverbs that “though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again” (24:16). This proverb reminds us that the righteous, those who trust in and have a right relationship with God, will still experience difficulties and hardships. However, as they continue to seek Him even in the midst of difficulty, God is faithful to give them the strength to rise again.

Have you recently experienced a devastating disappointment or failure and feel like you'll never recover? Scripture encourages us not to rely on our strength but to continue to put our confidence in God and His promises. As we trust Him, God's Spirit gives us strength for every difficulty we encounter in this life, from the seemingly mundane to significant struggles (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You that in every trial and disappointment You're always close, offering comfort and strength to help me rise again. Amen.

Tuesday 10th

Prayer Focus – A Hunger For Revival

Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. John 4:14

Lake Baikal, the world's deepest lake, is vast and magnificent. Measuring one-mile-deep and nearly 400 miles (636 km) by 49 miles (79 km) across, it contains one-fifth of all the surface fresh water in the world. But this water is largely inaccessible. Lake Baikal is located in Siberia—one of the most remote areas of Russia. With water so desperately needed for much of our planet, it's ironic that such a vast supply of water is tucked away in a place where not many people can access it.

Although Lake Baikal may be remote, there is an endless source of life-giving water that is available and accessible to those who need it most. When at a well in Samaria, Jesus engaged a woman in conversation, probing at the edges of her deep spiritual thirst. The solution to her heart-need? Jesus Himself.

In contrast to the water she had come to draw from the well, Jesus offered something better: *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life”* (John 4:13–14).

Many things promise satisfaction but never fully quench our thirsty hearts. Jesus alone can truly satisfy our spiritual thirst, and His provision is available to everyone, everywhere.

Prayer

Loving God, thank You for the life You provide and the purpose and meaning You give to me. Teach me to find my truest satisfaction in You and Your love. Amen!

Wednesday August 11th

Prayer Focus – Children, Teens & College Students

The back-to-school season is always filled with a mixture of emotions. My own kids felt a combination of excitement and anxiety mixed with a little disappointment because summer was over. I just remember the relief of routine. Going back to school meant structure and predictability.

As I watch my grandkids now prepare for a new school year, there's very little predictability. Weary parents face the uncertainty of in-person learning, mask mandates, and controversy over curriculum or vaccination requirements. With so many factors out of our control, what can parents and grandparents do?

We can pray.

Here are four BIG reasons why I'm especially committed to praying for our kids this year.

When we pray for our children, we're joining Jesus as He prays on their behalf.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus "lives forever to intercede with God on [our] behalf" (Hebrews 7:25). And the book of Romans reminds us that "he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us" (Romans 8:34). Don't you imagine the Savior's prayer list includes our children? When we pray, we have the privilege of joining Jesus in prayer for our kids and grandkids.

When we pray for our children, we're joining Jesus in His celebrations.

In Christ's last moments on earth, He revealed His loving desire for us: "that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11). Jesus finds joy in our children and in our families. Since family is a special representation of Christ's love, He feels a special joy when He sees families thriving. He loves when our relationships are a testimony to a hurting world. When we pray, we have the privilege of joining Jesus in a celebration of the beauty of family (see Psalm 127:3).

When we pray for our children, we're joining Jesus in His concern.

Jesus feels compassion for the struggles in our families. He feels heartbroken about the anxiety and stress of trying to learn during a pandemic. Christ feels compassion for kids who miss their friends and parents who can't do "it" anymore. Jesus' heart is moved with compassion when He sees you or your family hurting, disappointed, discouraged, or alone. So, let's join Jesus in lifting up concerns and ask God to give us a deeper understanding of His heart for us. It's this upward focus that will allow the Holy Spirit to help us see what Jesus sees, so we can love the way Jesus loves (see 2 Corinthians 1:2-4).

When we pray for our children, we strengthen our own walk with Jesus.

Spending time with our Savior deepens our closeness with Him. As we pray, the Spirit will minister to our heart, to our needs, and to our concerns. Let's pray often. Let's pray consistently. Let's pray boldly. Let's pray faithfully (see Romans 8:26-27).

Take the time right now and join Jesus in prayer?

Jesus, when I imagine that I can join you in prayer about anything, my heart feels grateful because _____. I want to join you in prayer for my children. First, I'm grateful for my children because _____. I'm comforted that you feel compassion for me and my family because _____. I lift up my children to you and pray specifically that you would _____.

Thursday August 12th

Prayer Focus – A Secured Home, A Safe Place

May we discern the relational needs of others and share God's love in meaningful ways, especially as we bring security to our home

STORIES FROM A PARENT'S HEART

I've discovered that giving security to a child means creating a home environment where there is harmony in relationships. It means creating a home where there is freedom from fear or threat of harm. A secure home is one where adults keep their promises, are dependable, and consistently provide for a child's physical, emotional, and financial needs.

A home that is secure also provides appropriate boundaries for behavior. Although they deny it, my children derive a sense of security from knowing where the limits are and knowing there are parents in their lives who care enough to set rules and actually enforce limits through loving discipline. If I want to effectively teach and train my children, these six things need to be a part of my discipline:

- **Intimacy:** Knowing my children and letting them know me is the foundation for all effective discipline.
- **Instruction:** My children need me to clearly and briefly explain what is expected of them. I can't just assume they know what to do.
- **Training:** My children often need a model or support in how to do what I have asked.
- **Warning:** My children need me to spell out the clear consequences that will occur if a behavior is not stopped or a task completed.
- **Correction:** My children need for me to follow through and implement the consequences that have been spelled out, with self-control, firmness, and without anger.
- **Reassurance:** After times of correction, my children need moments of reassurance about my love through words, hugs, and other expressions of love.

Appropriate discipline actually meets the need for security. I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for our children to thank me, but I can be confident that I am, indeed, meeting one of their deepest needs.

PRAY: LISTEN TO JESUS

I promise to never leave you or forsake you. I will always meet your needs for food, clothing, and shelter. I will be your ever-present help in times of trouble. You can count on me to be faithful, unchangeable, and constant. I give security for those who trust in me as their Savior. The mountains may be removed, and the hills may shake, but my loving-kindness will not be removed. My promise of peace will not be shaken. I will set you securely on high and protect you fiercely because you have known my name (see Psalms 46:1; 91:14–15; Lamentations 3:23; Hebrews 13:8; John 10:28; Isaiah 54:10).

- Jesus, I'm grateful for your reassurance about _____.
- I'm thankful for how you have given me security that _____. I am counting on you to _____.
- Lord, I need an extra dose of your reassurance about _____. Remind me often that you are my ever-present help and unchangeable stability when _____.
- God, thank you that you give me the security of explaining what's right and wrong. Remind me of any ways that I need to stay within the boundaries you have set. I sense that you want these changes in my life: _____.

LIVE: DO THE BIBLE

Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it. —Proverbs 22:6

God, I want to be a source of your emotional security for my children. In what ways can I give them reassurance and stability? What promises need to be kept? In what ways can I be more dependable? Speak, Lord. I want to hear from you.

Lord, I pray that I would know how to set appropriate boundaries with my child and discipline with wisdom. Give me guidance about how to discipline my child in the area of _____.

TAKE ACTION

- Make a plan to increase the closeness between you and your child. Lay the foundation for discipline and security by building a loving connection.
- Assess your plans for discipline. How can you improve instructions and increase clarity of expectations? What training or modeling is needed?
- Assess your plans for discipline. Are you clear about consequences? Do you follow through? Make any adjustments that are needed.

CLAIM HIS PROMISES

By your power I will be safe and secure; peace will be my portion. —Psalm 55:18

Friday August 13th

Prayer Focus – The Forgotten and Those Who Feel Alone

Not Forgotten

I will not forget you!

Isaiah 49:15

“Uncle Arthur, do you remember the day you took me to the barbershop and the supermarket? I was wearing tan khakis, a blue-plaid oxford shirt, a navy-blue cardigan, brown socks, and brown Rockport shoes. The date was Thursday, October 20, 2016.” Arthur’s nephew Jared’s autism-related challenges are offset by his phenomenal memory that can recall details like days and dates and the clothes he was wearing years after an event took place.

Because of the way he’s wired, Jared possesses the kind of memory that reminds me of the all-knowing, loving God—the Keeper of time and eternity. He knows the facts and won’t forget His promises or His people. Have you had moments when you have questioned whether or not God has forgot you? When others appear to be healthier or happier or more successful or otherwise better off?

Ancient Israel’s less-than-ideal situation caused her to say, “*The Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me*” (Isaiah 49:14). But that wasn’t the case. God’s compassion and care exceeded the natural bonds of affection that mothers have for their children (v. 15). Before embracing labels like “forsaken” or “forgotten,” think again of what God has done in and through His Son, Jesus. In the gospel that brings forgiveness, God has clearly said, “*I will not forget you!*” (v. 15).

Prayer

Father, when I’m tempted to feel neglected, forgotten, and abandoned, help me to ponder again the love You demonstrated by sending Jesus to die for me. May I be more aware and show compassion to those who are feeling neglected and forgotten. Some are genuinely feeling so abandoned and I know You will give me wisdom and love to reach out to them and offer them the Hope we have in You! Amen.

Saturday, August 14th

Prayer Focus – Foster Care and Adoption

The Beauty of Adoption

In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. Galatians 3:26

The 2009 film *The Blind Side* depicts the true story of Michael Oher, a homeless teenager. A family takes him in and helps him overcome learning difficulties and achieve excellence in American football. In one scene, the family talks with Michael about the possibility of adopting him after he'd been living with them for several months. In a sweet and tender reply, Michael exclaims that he thought he already was a part of the family!

It's a beautiful moment, just as adoption is a beautiful thing. Love is extended and full inclusion is offered as a family opens its arms to a new member. Adoption changes lives, just as it profoundly changed Michael's life.

In Jesus, believers are made "*children of God*" through faith in Him (Galatians 3:26). We're adopted by God and become His sons and daughters (4:5). As God's adopted children, we receive the Spirit of His Son, we call God "*Father*" (v. 6), and we become His heirs (v. 7) and coheirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). We become full members of His family.

When Michael Oher was adopted, it changed his life, his identity, and his future. How much more for us who are adopted by God! Our life changes as we know Him as Father. Our identity changes as we belong to Him. And our future changes as we're promised a glorious, eternal inheritance.

Prayer

Father, thank You for making me Yours. Help me to understand my identity as Your child. Help me to be passionate and mindful of the many children in our communities without a family to call their own. Make us aware that the church is called to take care of kids who need a home. Amen!

Sunday, August 15th

Prayer Focus – My Neighbors and Friends

Who Needs You?

Ahikam son of Shaphan supported Jeremiah, and so he was not handed over to the people to be put to death. Jeremiah 26:24

Clifford Williams was sentenced to die for a murder he didn't commit. From death row he vainly filed motions to reconsider the evidence against him. Each petition was denied—for forty-two years. Then attorney Shelley Thibodeau learned of his case. She found that not only was there no evidence to convict Williams, but that another man had confessed to the crime. At the age of seventy-six, Williams was finally exonerated and released.

The prophets Jeremiah and Uriah were also in deep trouble. They had told Judah that God promised to judge His people if they didn't repent (Jeremiah 26:12–13, 20). This message angered the people and officials of Judah, who sought to kill both prophets. They succeeded with Uriah. He fled to Egypt, but was brought back to face the king, who “*had him struck down with a sword*” (v. 23). Why didn't they kill Jeremiah? In part because Ahikam “*stood up for Jeremiah*” (nlt), “and so he was not handed over to the people to be put to death” (v. 24).

We may not know anyone facing death, but we probably know someone who could use our support. Whose rights are trampled? Whose talents are dismissed? Whose voice isn't heard? It may be risky to step out like Thibodeau or Ahikam, but it's so right. Who needs us to stand up for them as God guides us?

Prayer

Loving Father, help me to love others as You've loved me. Help me to make a difference in the life of someone today May my heart be moved to serve someone in Your love. Amen.