



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SUNDAY, MAY 21, 2023 - DAY 22

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Like-minded, same love, one in spirit and purpose

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer (in Spanish)

By Chris Cassis, pastor of The Source Church, Miramar, Florida

Padre,

Gracias por mostrar tu amor al enviar a tu hijo a morir por nosotros. Aunque constantemente nos alejamos de ti, la gracia y el amor que muestras son inconmensurables. Esperas continuamente a que volvamos a ti. Esperas pacientemente a que volvamos a nuestros sentidos. Puedes elegir regresar a este mundo en cualquier momento para traer el cielo aquí en la tierra, pero esperas pacientemente a que más personas escuchen acerca de tu hijo Jesús y reciban salvación. Incluso, mientras estábamos etiquetados como tus enemigos, todavía elegiste sacrificar a tu hijo por nosotros.

Padre, ayúdanos a tener la misma paciencia unos con otros como tú tienes con cada uno de nosotros. Es fácil mostrar perdón y gracia a aquellos a quienes admiramos y respetamos, pero difícil mostrar amor por aquellos que no están de acuerdo con nosotros. Somos rápidos para responder y lentos para escuchar. Danos la paciencia que se necesita para escucharnos unos a otros. Danos la fortaleza para sentarnos

con personas que difieren en nuestra opinión. Ayúdanos a sacrificarnos los unos por los otros de la misma manera que Jesús entregó Su vida en sacrificio por cada uno de nosotros. Cuando estemos estresados, frustrados o molestos con los demás, que el amor de Jesús salga de nosotros y se desborde hacia los demás.

Amén.

English translation:

Father,

Thank you for choosing to show your love by sending your Son to die for us. Although we constantly turn away from you, the grace and love you display is immeasurable. You continually wait for us to repent and come back to you. You patiently wait for us to come to our senses. You could choose to return to this world anytime to bring heaven here on earth, but you wait for people to hear about your Son, Jesus, to receive salvation. Even while we were labeled as your enemies, you still chose to sacrifice your Son for us.

Father, may we have that same patience for one another as you have for each of us. It is easy to display forgiveness and grace for people whom we admire and respect, but it is difficult to show love to those who disagree with us. We are quick to respond and slow to listen. Give us the patience it takes to listen to each other. Give us the fortitude to sit with people whose opinions differ from ours. Help us to sacrifice for one another the same way Jesus sacrificially laid down his life for each of us. When we are stressed, frustrated, or upset with others, may the love of Jesus overflow from within us to others.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

To whom do you quickly show forgiveness and grace? To whom is that difficult? Pray again that God will work in you to reflect his grace toward others.

Who in your life needs to hear the good news of life in Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring individuals to mind, and pray for each of them by name. Then ask if the Holy Spirit has a role for you in sharing the hope you have in Jesus.



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MONDAY, MAY 22, 2023 - DAY 23

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Prayer

By Justin Kroeze, grade 11 student attending youth group at Faith CRC, New Brighton, Minnesota

Dear Lord,

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty. We know that you are a holy God. Your desire is for your people to be holy and righteous. We can't comprehend your greatness. You're more holy than anything we could possibly imagine, yet you still call us out of our lives of sin into a new life of righteousness with you.

Please come to us and reveal our sins and shortcomings to us. So often we lie to ourselves about our sin. We try to make ourselves feel like we're better than others, or we compare and weigh our sins against others. Lord, you know all of our hearts. Search them and reveal our sins. You know everything we've ever done: the times we've intentionally sinned and when we've sinned without even knowing it.

Please help us not to be apathetic toward our sins. Instead, lead us to repentance and turn us away from sin and toward eternal life. Let us pray as David did in Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Lead us in the world to live as you want us to live. Lead us not into temptation. Lead us to everlasting life in heaven with Jesus, and help us to lead others on that path as well.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Take a few minutes of silence, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you areas of your life that are offensive to God. Ask for forgiveness, and ask God to lead you in the way everlasting.

In what ways have you acted out of selfish ambition in the past 24 hours? Ask the Spirit to transform your selfish ambition into selfless service to the people in your life today.



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TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023 - DAY 24

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit

Suggested Bible Reading: James 4:13-17

Listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” . . . Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

Prayer

By Adrian de Lange, pastor of River City CRC, Calgary, Alberta

God, we so easily call you “Father” and then run from you or resent you. We reenact the habits of our childish flesh instead of basking in your wisdom, strength, and goodness. When we stand in leadership roles great and small—in our churches and jobs, at our schools, among our friends and families, in our communities, or even only with one other person—we confidently make plans and expect others to join us, to praise our wisdom and strength, and to trust our goodness.

In so much of what we do, Lord, we claim to fight evil or to stand for truth or even to improve society. Yet we confess that our confidence is far too much in ourselves and far too little in you. We confess that our words and actions are too large a part of our own plans rather than your will. We confess that we have not desired to sit at your feet like little children who long to be with our Father, to hear your words, and to feel the beam of your smile. Instead we have focused on the parts of you that are most accessible or sensical to us; so we have used you for our own advantage, our own glory, and our own name. We are not worthy to be called your children.

Revive us again because of your profound love; renew us again by your Spirit's incomparable power; and refocus our wayward hearts and minds with your strength and your will. Because you are greater than us, remind us that we can only know you more fully as a diverse community—and so break in us the pride that assumes we can do it all ourselves.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In what areas of your life is your confidence more in yourself than in God? How might you grow in having a change of heart about this?

How do you work on disproving your own presumptions about another person? Ask the Lord to help you see past your fears and emotions to humbly embody the love and grace of Christ reflected in your brother or sister in Christ.



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WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2023 - DAY 25

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 12:3

By the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

Prayer

By Femke Visser-Elenbaas, chaplain at Hamilton Health Sciences, Hamilton, Ontario

As a hospital chaplain, I almost daily meet people in crisis, dealing with the impacts of their health issues on every area of their life. Listening to what someone shares with me, I also seek to understand what sustains them (or not) in the present moment, what they hold as sacred, what familiar spiritual and religious resources they are already drawing from or perhaps could draw from in search of comfort, meaning, encouragement, or whatever it is they need. I do so because I trust deeply that our sovereign God has been at work in this person's life all along in ways unknown to me. I'm simply there to bear witness to that reality and to hopefully be a channel of God's grace. In a similar spirit I'd like to invite us as members of a church in challenging times to join in this prayer of confession, using words adapted from our contemporary testimony *Our World Belongs to God* (para. 40):

Jesus Christ, I grieve that your church,
which shares one Spirit, one faith, one hope,
and spans all time, place, race, and language,
has become a broken communion in a broken world.

God, when I struggle
for the truth of the gospel
and for the righteousness you demand,
I pray for wisdom and courage.
When my pride or blindness
hinders the unity of your household,
I seek forgiveness.

Holy Spirit, I marvel that you gather the broken pieces
to do your work
and that you bless us still
with joy, new members,
and surprising evidences of unity.

God, I commit myself to seeking and expressing
the oneness of all who follow Jesus,
and I pray for brothers and sisters
who suffer for the faith.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Ask God to show you where your pride or blindness hinders unity in the church. And then seek forgiveness and live in repentance.

Think about a time when you received undeserved mercy, grace, and forgiveness rather than being harshly criticized or ridiculed while you were in a situation of distress or regret. What did you experience in that forgiveness? How can you extend similar mercy, grace, and forgiveness to your brother or sister in Christ?



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THURSDAY, MAY 25, 2023 - DAY 26

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit

Suggested Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Prayer (in Samoan)

By Fatu Auau, pastor at Emanuel Church in Santa Ana, California

O se mea ua sili ona taua o le "Aua nei faia se mea e tasi ma le finau vale" (Filipi 2:3) ia mautinoa le galuega o le faafouina e maua i le faatasi mai o le Agaga Paia. 2Korinito 3:17-18 says, "O le Alii foi o le Agaga ia, o le mea o i ai le Agaga o le Alii, o i ai le saolotoga. A o i tatou uma, o loo vaavaai i tatou i le pupula o le Alii ma o tatou mata, e le ufitia, ua liua ai i tatou ua foliga i ai nai le pupula e oo i le pupula, faapei ona maua ai mai le Alii, o ia o le Agaga.

Tatou tatalo mo le faateleina pea le mautinoa o le Atua ia te i tatou.

Le Atua le Tama, le Alo ma le Agaga Sa. Faafetai i lou alofa ua faatumulia i le alofa ma le alofa tunoa. Faafetai le Alii e, i lou auina mai mo i matou le Agaga Paia o le upu moni na te faasino i matou i mea moni. Aoao i matou ia matou usiusitai ia te oe ma ia e fausia l o matou loto le manao ma le galala ia pei o Iesu Keriso. E le mafai ona matou faia se mea e tasi e aunoa ma oe Agaga Paia i o matou olaga, matou te faalagolago i lau faasino tonu ma le faatuatua i le maliu o lo matou Alii o Iesu Keriso i le satauro. E iai taimi matou te le mau tali ai pe a luitauina i matou i faalavelave ma puapuaga o lenei olaga, ona matou saili atu lea ia te oe Agaga Paia ma ua e aumaia le faulai o lou agalelei e tusa o le ole atu ia te oe, pei ona ta'u mai e Efeso 3:20 "O

lenei, ia ia te ia o le na te mafaia ona faia o mea uma e faasilisili lava i mea tatou te ole atu ai ma mafaufau i ai, e tusa ma le mana o loo matua galue i totonu ia te i tatou” Agaga Paia e, foaina i lau Ekalesia le poto ma le atamai e faaauau ai pea le fesootaiga ma atunuu ma malo pei ona molimau le Tusi Paia Galuega 10:35 “a e peitai o le mata’u ia te ia i nuu uma lava, ma fai le amiotonu, ua talia i latou e ia”. Afio mai tatou feoi i taimi uma.

E ala ia Iesu Keriso,
Amene.

English translation:

A big part of laying aside “selfish ambition” and “vain conceit” (Phil. 2:3) is recognizing the transforming work of the Holy Spirit within us. As 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Can we pray today for a growing recognition of God’s presence within?

God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

Thank you for your love full of mercy and grace. Lord Jesus, thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit of truth to guide us to all truth. Teach us, Holy Spirit, how to listen to you. Create in our heart the longing and desire to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. We cannot do anything without you, Holy Spirit, in our life. We rely on your guidance and direction as we move forward with faith in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. There are times when we struggle to find answers to the crises and problems confronting us. Yet as we ask you, Holy Spirit, to help us, you provide the answer more than what we need. As your Word in Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,” Holy Spirit, give our denomination wisdom and knowledge to continue to reach out to all cultures and nations as your Word assures us in Acts 10:34-35: “God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.” Come and walk with us daily.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where are you praying in your life: “Create in my heart the longing and desire to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

Where in your life do you need freedom from fear, conceit, and selfish ambition?
What would freedom give evidence of in your life?



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FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2023 - DAY 27

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Humility

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:5-6

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. . . .

Prayer

By Brian Ochsner, pastor of Faith CRC, Pella, Iowa

Heavenly Father,

We stand amazed at how all through your Word you show us that your throne room is a place of glory, worship, and knees bent in humble praise. We praise you for your majesty, your power, your wisdom, and your beauty.

We ask for a faith that may better know how Christ, when he took on flesh, set this all aside so that we may experience your grace and be transformed in the way we live. Isaiah said that Christ had no beauty to attract us to him. Luke said he grew up like any other child learning from his parents. Matthew said he was seen riding on a donkey, not a horse. John said that he took off his outer garment and knelt before his disciples.

Father, deepen our understanding that Christ set aside every advantage of being God so that we may experience grace. Beauty became marred; wisdom became a child; power became a servant; and the one before whom every knee will bow knelt down to wash our feet.

God, shape in us this attitude of Christ, that all we are and all we have been asked to steward is not used for our advantage but for the sake of making you and your grace known. We ask for a faith that may better respond to Christ, who calls us to offer our lives as a living sacrifice of praise. Father, teach us how to join with Paul and say that “whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ” (Phil. 3:7).

As we wait in silence, Father, teach us what is getting in the way of having this attitude of Christ. We surrender it to you so that you and your grace may be made known.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Sit in silence for a few minutes, listening to the Spirit’s still, quiet voice, teaching you what is getting in the way of having this attitude of Christ.

Jesus set aside his own claim to the privileges of divinity for our sake. Reflect on what this cost Jesus. What is the significance for you that Jesus laid aside his majesty?



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SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2023 - DAY 28

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Humility

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:7

He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Prayer

By Jana Vander Laan, copastor at Sahali Fellowship CRC in Kamloops, British Columbia

Lord Jesus Christ, our Servant King:

You willingly set aside the rich comforts of a heavenly home to be among us on this humble earth.

As you walked through the village streets, you did not assume you got a roof over your head and food on your table because you deserved it. Rather you replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58).

Yet when we walk through a given day, we expect to have our needs met—and more. We think the recliner in our living room and the pillows on our bed are there because we earned them. The indulgence we picked up along the way is ours because we wanted it. Forgive us for selfish entitlements like these. Remind us that we’ve been given what we’ve been given and we are where we are so that we can serve more.

May our churches be places where we practice relaxing our clenched fists and setting aside our entitled expectations. May we together learn to open ourselves more and more to the gift of your sacrificial love and then follow your love through joyful service to others. For it is in our simple and everyday acts of service—in

giving, helping, tending, and visiting—that we will meet you and find our lives to the full.

In your name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In what area of your life can you grow in joyful service and generosity toward others?

Spend some time allowing the Spirit to minister to you, being filled with the love of Christ. What spiritual discipline(s) can you practice this week to open yourself more fully to the gift of Christ's sacrificial love?