



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2023 - DAY 29

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Humility

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:5-8

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; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Prayer

By Richard Jones, pastor of Bridgeway Community CRC, Haledon, New Jersey

Many of us are familiar with these words written by the apostle Paul. We immediately see the stark contrast between Jesus and us. As the New Living Translation puts it, Jesus willingly gave up his divine privileges by taking on the humble position of a slave and even humbling himself in obedience to God and dying a criminal's death on a cross. The word that comes to mind is sacrifice. He willingly gave up everything for us. In doing so, Jesus models for us the essence of what it means to truly love someone—being willing to sacrifice everything for them.

Sadly, we are looking out for ourselves and how we can be number one. This passage reorients our perspective on how believers should live their lives.

Father God,

As I reflect on the words contained in Scripture and the sacrifice of Jesus, unfortunately I find that I focus more on myself and less on others. There are times, if I am honest, that I seek to gratify myself and live oblivious to the wants and needs of others. Forgive me for being selfish. Forgive me for not seeking to follow the example of Jesus. Forgive me for desiring glory but not being willing to embrace

suffering. Help me to live a life that ultimately glorifies God and edifies others. Help me to make sacrifices and demonstrate agape love like Jesus.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What might God be calling you to give up in order to truly love others?

C.S. Lewis wrote, "Humility isn't thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less." What's the difference? In which relationships do you think about yourself a lot? Ask God to reveal how to put your trust in him rather than in the relationship.

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MONDAY, MAY 29, 2023 - DAY 30

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Humility

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:5-7

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

Prayer (in Farsi)

By Mahkam Sadjadi, deacon at Willowdale CRC in North York, Ontario

ی باختنا، باختنا نی ا هک منک یم فارتعا و ما هدرک باختنا ار وت نم، ینامسآ ردپ یا
رد زور کی یلو تشاد دهاوخ دوجو یی ا هب بی شن و زارف ریسم نی ا رد مناد یم، تس ا هنهاگ آ
رد و ندوب ناریرش هدی شک کلف هبرس ی ا ه خاک رد زور نارازھ زا رت هب، ندوب وت رانک
تسا ندشن تفای رگی د و ندش مگ ای ند

و مینک کرد یتسرد هب ار وت لالچ و تمظعات نک اطع ناوارف کرد و شنیب ام هب ادنوادخ
میریگب دای لد و ناچ قمع اب ار وت هنانتورف ندرک تبحم هوحن

میشاب نی مز یور رب وت مان لالچ و یدونشخ هی ام هک زاسب ینادرگاش و ناریفس ام زا

نم سپ، دنک یم شنادرگاش ی ا هاپ نتسش هب مادقا و دنزی م وناز دنوادخ رسپ یتقو
و هناصل لاخ نی نی ا ار ادخ قلخ هب تمدخ هک مناد یم مزال مدوخ رب، متسه و دنزرف هک
مهد ماجنا هنانتورف

صولخ یور زا الماک منک یم تمدخ وت قلخ هب هکی نامز ات هدب تقایل نم هب ادنوادخ
دوشن ربخ اب مپچ تسد زا متسار تسد و دشاب یتشاد مشچ چی ه ندوب و تین

نم، یهاگ آ ام لامعا و راکفا مامت هب و یتسه ام رانک رد هظحل ره وت هک مراد نیقی نم
ار تاندن زرف ام یزور، یناسر یم ار هانپ یب و کچوک ناگدنرپ یزور هک روطنامه مراد رواب

وت هب اهناسنا ام هک تسى فاک طقف ، دناسر رى هاوخ مىتسه وت تاقولخم فرشا هک مه
مىراپسب وت رهم رپ ناتسد هب ار نلم تشونرس و نامدوخ و مىشاب هت شادى بلى نامى

مدرک اعد حىسم سى ع لال ج رپ مان هب

نىم آ

English translation:

Heavenly Father, I have chosen to follow you, and I admit that this choice is a conscious choice. I know that there will be ups and downs on this path, but one day by your side is better than thousands of days in empty palaces of the wicked, being lost in the world, and never being found again.

O Lord, give us broad insight and knowledge so that we can deeply understand your greatness and glory and learn how to humbly love you from the depths of our hearts and souls. Make us ambassadors who glorify your name on earth, and make us disciples in whom you delight.

When the Son of God kneels down and washes the feet of his disciples, then I, who am his child, consider it necessary to serve God's people in such sincere and humble ways.

Dear Lord, grant me humbleness so that when I serve your people, it will be completely out of pure and sincere intentions, without any expectations and without even my right hand knowing what my left hand is doing.

I trust that you are with us every moment and that you know all our thoughts and actions. I believe that just as you provide for small and helpless birds, so will you provide for your children, who are the crown of your creation. We need only to put our faith and trust in you and to commit ourselves and our future to your loving hands.

I pray all this in the glorious name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

How does understanding God's greatness and glory lead to humility in your life?

Reflect on your interactions with others over the past couple of days. How have they reflected the attitude of Christ? In what ways does the attitude of Christ shape your own posture as a parent, employer, ministry leader, spouse, or friend?



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TUESDAY, MAY 30, 2023 - DAY 31

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Look to the interests of others

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Peter 4:8-9

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Prayer

By Daudi Mbuta, council president at African Community Fellowship Church, Kentwood, Michigan

Our heavenly Father,

We thank you for the love you have shown us. You are the loving God who gave his only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins to be forgiven. Through this love we are forgiven our sins. As you loved us when we were sinners, we pray that you will give us a loving heart for others. As your followers, we pray that we will love others. Help us to love our neighbors, those who are different from us, and those from other parts of this world.

Jesus, your love has no boundaries. When you were in this world, you did what was good, and you showed love to the people you met. Your word tells us to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. We pray that you will give us a heart that accepts new ways to engage others.

You created all people, and you love us all without discrimination. Remove from us anything that would stand in the way of radiating your presence. Lord, lead us to engage with others and invite them into your kingdom. Stir our hearts to move out of our comfort zones and engage with others. Where we disagree, give us the wisdom to reach others and share your Word. Lord, you are a God of hospitality. Lord Jesus, you welcomed all who came into your presence. There is none like you

who invite all to come. May we reflect that same spirit in our denomination through this ministry of hospitality. May your light shine in our hearts this day. Speak to us now!

In Jesus name,

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where do you need to show the same gracious hospitality that Christ showed to you?

Hospitality is rooted in respect—valuing another as an imagebearer of God who deserves our love, care, and attention. How does considering each human being as an imagebearer of God affect the way you treat them? What gets in the way of showing others respect and love?



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WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 2023 - DAY 32

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Look to the interests of others

Suggested Bible Reading: Galatians 6:2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Prayer

By Jonathan Averill, U.S. Army chaplain serving in Belgium

With the words of Galatians 6:2, Paul commands us as Christians to help each other in our Christian walk. After serving three years in Belgium, I have received orders to return to the United States. My position is now changing from one of independence and setting my own schedule to one of dependence and intense connection with other chaplains. This change is one I am looking forward to. It was hard being separated from a community of fellow workers. With hearts attuned to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can support, and be supported, in true community.

Dear Lord,

Soften our hearts and souls to hear your voice as we walk the new paths you have designed for us. Use us to be a channel in which you can pour out your grace to help others. Expand our hearts so that only Christ is seen in our lives as we walk along with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Healing Spirit, renew our confidence in your power and in the power of love to change our lives, and give us courage to fully follow you as we are challenged to do. We ask this, knowing that only through your strength can we flourish spiritually.

Assist us, heavenly Father, in living hopefully and bearing one another's burdens day by day. Help us to set our petty, present fears aside and to look instead to a future

full of potential. Be with us as we remember past joys, and keep us focused on the heavenly delights that await us.

All this we ask in the name of our resurrected Savior who died for us, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where have you seen God lead you into new paths? How has God prepared you for those unseen turns in your life?

In what areas of life have you traded dependence on God for self-reliance? Ask the Holy Spirit to search you and to reveal to you what you might not see.



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THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2023 - DAY 33

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Look to the interests of others

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Prayer (in Dutch)

By Syd Hielema, regional pastor for Classis Hamilton, Ontario

Lieve Heer,

Uw liefde, uw agape, strekt zich uit zo ver als het oosten is van het westen, zo ver als de hemel is boven/van de aarde (PS 103). We kunnen de hoogte, de breedte, de diepte en de lengte niet bevatten (EPH 3). We hebben gezien hoe de grootste liefde, Jezus, zijn leven gaf voor de hele wereld (Johannes 15).

We verlangen ernaar onze ogen op Jezus te richten (Heb 12), omdat we zo vaak alleen een wazig beeld zien dat wordt weerspiegeld in een slechte spiegel. De afgelopen drie jaar waren zo chaotisch, zo verwarrend en hebben ons met zoveel angst achtergelaten. Help!) We verlangen naar zekerheid, we verlangen naar duidelijkheid, we verlangen naar een einde aan conflicten in de kerk. We verlangen naar de vrede die ons verstand te boven gaat (Fil. 4).

Schenk ons de genade om Jezus met ons te zien wandelen in de storm (Hebr. 2). Schenk ons de genade om ons angstige verlangen los te laten om standvastig te staan in de liefde van Christus (Fil 4). Schenk ons de genade om afstand te doen van onze eigen dreunende gongen en schellende cimbalen om instrumenten van Jezus' liefde te zijn: geduldig, vriendelijk, niet snel boos, volhardend.

Vernieuw ons met dat wat blijvend is: geloof, hoop en liefde.

Amen.

English translation:

Dear Lord,

Your love, your agape, stretches as far as the east is from the west, as far as the heavens are from the earth (Ps. 103). We cannot grasp its height, its width, its depth, nor its length (Eph. 3). We have seen the greatest love, Jesus, giving his life for all the world (John 15).

We long to fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12), because so often we see only a blurry image reflected in a poor mirror. The past three years have been so chaotic, so confusing, and have left us with so much anxiety. Help! We long for certainty, we long for clarity, we long for conflict in the church to end. We long for the peace that passes understanding (Phil. 4).

Grant us grace to see Jesus walking with us in the storm (Heb. 2). Grant us grace to release our anxious longings to stand firm in the love of Christ (Phil. 4). Grant us grace to relinquish our own resounding gongs and clanging cymbals to be instruments of Jesus' love: patient, kind, not easily angered, persevering.

Renew us with those things that remain: faith, hope, and love.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where do you need to show love in your conversations and relationships so that you are not a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal?

Agape love is described as pure, sacrificial love that intentionally desires another's highest good. How does the agape love of God help to frame the current challenges we are facing?



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FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2023 - DAY 34

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Look to the interests of others

Suggested Bible Reading: John 13:34-35

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Prayer

By Sheila Holmes, pastor of Northside Community CRC, Paterson, New Jersey

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your lovingkindness, grace, and mercy in not only showing us how to love but also commanding us throughout Scripture to love. As you commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves, we continue to fail to show the agape love you desire. Please forgive us for allowing the sins of pride, selfishness, and worldly influence to distort and harm others in the name of love.

Thank you for your gift of grace and mercy through the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You showed your sacrificial love by giving us new life in Christ. Your new command to “love one another” calls us to love the way Jesus gave all of himself for us, even to death on a cross.

We cannot follow this new command in our own strength but through the power of your Spirit, who dwells in every believer. The fruit of your Spirit enables us to express love for one another in many ways:

- accepting one another amid diversity
- bearing one another’s burdens as we grow in relationship

- loving one another sincerely
- greeting one another
- forgiving one another as you have forgiven us
- serving one another with humility
- encouraging one another by building one another up
- being kind and compassionate to one another
- speaking the truth to one another in love
- comforting one another

As we submit ourselves to the love and guidance of your Spirit, help us to see that we are the body of Christ and need each other. May others know we are Christians truly by our love.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where is God possibly revealing your need for others, especially people who may differ from you? And how can you be the body of Christ to them?

What does it mean to love others? How do we love people with whom we disagree?



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SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 2023 - DAY 35

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Taking the very nature of a servant

Suggested Bible Reading: Matthew 20:26-28

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Prayer

By Cecil van Niejenhuis, retired pastor attending West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta

Gracious God,

We marvel at the persistent way you pour yourself into our well-being.
How fully you emptied yourself, Jesus, when you became flesh-and-blood human.
You became not only one of us, but our Servant:
focused on our needs, our deliverance, our life.

How utterly unselfish you are, dear Lord:
your heart overflows with love for others, longing and leading toward our shalom.
And the cost!
What you suffered—because of us, and for us!

We pray to you on this day, O Lord, aware, as ever, that we are people made in your image.
How overwhelmingly wonderful that is.
And how daunting.

May the presence of your Holy Spirit be fruitful in us and through us. May your Spirit empower us to follow Jesus in the way of serving:
eyes that recognize the worth of every other,

ears that listen for another's heart,
and a holy, lasered focus on the well-being of those around us.

Forgive us for imagining we have it all sorted out.
And even more, Lord, forgive us our reluctance to take on the servant role,
and our instinctive inclination to assert ourselves with more confidence
than is fitting.

We turn to you, the Lord and Giver of life, and we see how you use all that you are
for the sake of others.

We long for that same pattern to describe our way with each other—
when we speak of each other,
when we speak to each other,
and when we act toward each other.

In the name of Jesus, and for the sake of Jesus, we long to serve.
Humble us, gracious God, so that we may look like—
and live like—our eldest brother.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

How might you grow in living for the sake of others in speech and action?

Can you think of a person in your life who exemplifies this type of servant heart?
Reflect on which of their characteristics and behaviours inspire you.