

# Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 6/24/18

**Prayer** - Use this prayer to begin your time with God each day.

Lord of all Creation, when you made us you made us very good. You have generously given us the gift of your beautiful creation, and you have called us to partner with you to care for everything and everyone whom you have created. Help us live in right relationships with you, each other, and all of creation. We pray in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Monday** – Read Genesis 3:1-7. **Temptation.** The prohibition which seemed a *given* is now scrutinized as though it were not a given but an *option*. The serpent is the first in the Bible to seem knowing and critical about God and to practice *theology* in the place of *obedience*. The serpent says back God's speech in just enough of a twist to miss the point and to cause Adam and Eve to doubt whether God has been completely truthful with them and has their best interests in mind. The rhetoric of fidelity has given way to analysis and calculation. God is now a barrier to be circumvented. Having taken a bite, the couple stands exposed beyond the safe parameters of *vocation/permission/prohibition*, now having taken life into their own hands. What circumstances tempt you to think that you know better than God what is best for your life? Ask God to help you overcome temptation.

**Tuesday** – Read Genesis 3:8-13. **Naked and Afraid.** The power of guilt takes on its own life and works its own destruction. The Gardener cares for his garden. Everything hinges on that. The serpent had a silly notion of outflanking the prohibition. He thought it was only a rule, but it turned out to be the wise passion of the Gardener. The scene becomes a trial. The Gardener becomes a questioner. The pitiful answer must be given: "I was afraid." The speech of the indicted couple is revealing, for it is all "I." "I heard..., I was afraid..., I was naked; I hid... I ate.... Their own speech indicts them. It makes clear that their preoccupation with the Gardener, with his vocation, his permission, his prohibition, has been given up. Now the preoccupation is "I." Consider the way that sin preoccupies you and keeps you from doing what God has called you to do. Confess any unconfessed sins, ask God to forgive you, and seek the power of the Holy Spirit to repent.

**Wednesday** – Read Genesis 2:16-17; 3:14-24. **Consequences of Autonomy.** Everyone knows that death follows guilt that violates the boundary. As the serpent, the woman, and the man receive the sentence for their actions, the miracle is not that they are punished, but that they live. Graciousness is not just seen in God clothing the man and woman but also in the very sentence itself. The sentence is life apart from the goodness of the garden, life in conflict filled with pain, with sweat, and with the distortion of desire. When the facts warrant death, God insists on life for his creatures. The cursed ones are protected, and God does for the couple what they cannot do for themselves. They cannot deal with their shame, but God can, will, and does by clothing them and giving them new life. As you pray, consider the gracious way God has treated you when you have sinned.

**Thursday** – Read Matthew 6:25-34. **Resolving Anxiety.** Adam and Eve are controlled by their anxiety. They seek to escape anxiety by attempting to circumvent the reality of God, but only God can deal with our anxiety. Our mistake is to pursue autonomous freedom. The advertising of consumerism seduces us into believing that there are securities apart from the reality of God. Jesus shows us that anxiety comes from doubting God's providence, from rejecting his care, and seeking to secure our own well-being. Failure to trust God with our lives is death. To trust God with our lives is to turn from the autonomous "I" to the covenanting "Thou." As you pray, give your anxiety to God and ask God to help you live in God's providence for your life.

**Friday** – Read John 19:38-42; 20:11-18; and Romans 5:6-21. **The Garden of Redemption.** Paradise was lost in the Garden of Eden. Only John's Gospel tells us that the tomb was in a garden, but this time things will be different. Jesus is the Gardener who is recreating and restoring the world. Through his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead, Jesus has defeated sin and death and all of the forces of evil. His resurrection signals that sin, evil, and death will not have the final word. His resurrection will shatter fear and despair. As you pray, thank Jesus for making all things new.

**Saturday** – Read Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5. **Reversing Eden, Restoring Paradise.** The tree of life is an image of loss and nostalgia to which we look back, and an image of hope to which the Bible looks forward. It is an image of immortality and eternal life in heaven. In the end, God will reverse the heartbreak of Eden and restore Paradise by making all things new. To what do you most look forward when God makes all things new? As you pray, thank God that the worst thing is never the last thing.

**Lectionary Readings:** I Samuel 17:1-49; Psalm 9:9-20; II Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41.

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