

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 9/2/18

Monday – Read Judges 6:1-10. **Sometimes Our Problems Seem BIG.** The Midianites seemed so big when they invaded Israel. The Midianite army and their livestock devoured the fruit of the land and drove the Israelites to hide in caves. When Mr. Rogers' felt scared, his mother told him, "Always look for the people who are helping. You'll always find somebody who's trying to help." The Israelites cried out for God's help, and the Lord sent a prophet to remind them of the way God had saved them in the past and to also remind them that unconfessed sins can lead to God withholding a blessing. When our problems seem BIG, God reminds us that God is a Mighty God who is bigger than our problems and invites us to turn from our sins and put our faith in God. As you pray, confess any sins in your life, and invite God to lead you through any problems or challenges you are facing.

Tuesday – Read Judges 6:11-18. **True Humility.** Like Daniel Tiger, sometimes we feel small, afraid, and alone in the world. Sometimes people make us feel less than we are. They may call us names or even antagonize us on social media, but God sees us as God's children who are made in the image of God. When it comes to humility, we often fall somewhere on a spectrum between insecurity and arrogance. True humility is agreeing with God about who you are. Gideon said that he was too small to do what God was calling him to do, but God saw him as a mighty warrior. What excuses do you make for why you can't be the person God has made you to be? Ask God to help you see yourself the way God sees you so that you can do what God is calling you to do.

Wednesday – Read Judges 6:19-40. **True Dependency.** We live somewhere on a spectrum between self-sufficiency and co-dependency. Most of us do not struggle more with self-sufficiency than co-dependency. We say that we believe in God, and then we live our lives as if God did not exist. Instead of taking the time to pray and invite God to help us, we try to do things on our own strength. Gideon invites God to show up in his life so that he will not lead from a place of insecurity, pride, arrogance, or self-sufficiency. Rather, he can do it out of the wholeness and fullness of the peace of God. God values you and wants to work through your life. True dependency is agreeing with God about who God is. How are you creating pockets of dependency and asking God to show up in your life?

Thursday – Read I Corinthians 1:18-31. **The Virtue of Weakness.** Through Daniel Striped Tiger, Mr. Rogers articulated the fears and anxieties and feelings that he had as a child and that many children have. He never forgot how vulnerable it was to be a kid. Children are little, and everything else in the world is bigger than them. The Apostle Paul teaches us that God can use weakness and smallness to do big and strong things. In fact, when God does something through one of our weaknesses, it points back to God's strength because people see that you have helped do something that you could not have done on your own strength. Ask God to work through your weaknesses to do God's will in the world.

Friday – Read II Corinthians 12:7b-10. **God's Power is Made Perfect in Weakness.** When you look in the mirror, what makes you feel insecure? What situations make you anxious or nervous? What perceived flaws make you doubt yourself? When the Apostle Paul asked God to remove his thorn in the flesh, God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Over and over again God tells us, and over and over again we need to hear that God loves us and will be with us. God sends you and me to be the people who put an arm around another person's shoulder and remind that person that we love and value him or her. As you prepare to pray, think of a child or a young person in your life who needs your love and affirmation. Pray for that person and make it a priority to demonstrate God's love to that person this week.

Saturday – Read Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; and Luke 13:18-19. **Like a Mustard Seed.** Jesus said that a mustard seed is small, but it grows into something great. Pliny the Elder, who lived in Jesus' day, wrote, "Mustard grows entirely wild, though it is improved by being transplanted, but on the other hand, when it has been sown it is scarcely possible to get the place free of it. As soon as the seed hits the ground, it germinates and grows at once." Mustard can take over a place quickly and get out of control. That's what the kingdom of God is like. God's love just spreads into places you would never expect whether it has an invitation or not. God's love changes the entire landscape and brings new life, new opportunities, and new hope. God's love works in our lives when we feel small and helps us to be part of the big things God is doing in our community and our world. Ask God to use you to spread God's love like mustard seed.

Lectioary Readings: Song of Solomon 2:8-13; Psalm 72; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-23.

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