

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 10/14/18

Monday – Read Deuteronomy 1:1, 13-17; 24:17. **Judges.** In Israel, the duty of a judge was to maintain harmonious relations and adjudicate disputes between Israelites. Widows were deprived of the support of a husband, yet they could not inherit their husband's estate, which passed on to the deceased man's sons or brothers, so disputes involving widows and orphans were common. Judges were charged with the responsibility of hearing complaints fairly and impartially, a duty that was all the more important because they adjudicated cases without the benefit of a jury. The judge's responsibility within the covenant community was to declare God's judgment and establish peace among God's people. What authority and responsibility has God given you? As you pray, consider how you can use the power and authority God has given you to deal fairly with people.

Tuesday – Read Luke 2:36-38, 21:1-3; Acts 6:1-6, 9:36-43; I Timothy 5:3-8, and James 1:27. **Care for Widows.** The expectation regarding the care of widows was clear. Regard for those in need – including the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner – was grounded in God's mercy on the Israelites when they were in bondage in Egypt. God will vindicate the widows and the orphans. Therefore, those who abuse such powerless persons will surely suffer God's judgement. Widows had a place of honor in the early church, and Luke mentions many widows in his Gospel and in the Book of Acts including Anna who never left the Temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day, the widow who gave two copper coins, and the widows who were present when Peter raised Tabitha who was also called Dorcas. In our church, our Care Committee ministers to widows and homebound people. As you pray, who is God calling you to bless and offer care?

Wednesday – Read Luke 18:1-8. **The Parable of the Widow and the Judge.** Jesus taught by contrast: God is not like this unjust judge. If even a bad judge can be persuaded, imagine how much more God wants to listen to your prayers. The real question is, Will the Son of Man find faith on earth? Luke said Jesus wanted his followers to learn that they should always pray and not give up. Have you ever persisted in prayer? If so, what effect did the experience have on you? What are the things that make you most likely to give up on praying? What experiences or beliefs lead you to persist in prayer? Spend some time thanking God for hearing your prayers and for all of the ways that God has blessed you.

Thursday – Read Luke 11:1-4. **Lord, teach us to pray.** The disciples often saw Jesus praying, and so they asked him, "Lord, teach us how to pray as John taught his disciples." Jesus taught them the prayer we now call *The Lord's Prayer*. He also taught them that God was eager to bless them and give them the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is important for us to continually spend time speaking and listening to God in prayer. This is one of the ways that we grow in our relationship with God. Jesus continually modeled this to his disciples. Jesus prayed regularly. He prayed in the morning to begin his day and in the evening after a hard day's work. When, where, and how often do you pray? How can you make your practice of prayer more like Jesus' practice of prayer? Ask God to help you make prayer a daily part of your life.

Friday - Read Luke 11:5-8; Romans 12:9-13; and I Thessalonians 5:16-18. **Persevere in Prayer.** The Parable of the Widow and the Judge is a twin of the Parable of the Neighbor in Need. Both are used to illustrate the importance of persistence in prayer. Both parables feature a person in need persistently pressing a request. If a neighbor or an unjust judge will respond to an urgent or repeated request, then our gracious God will also respond to those who call out in need. Through these parables, Jesus encourages us to persevere in prayer. Persevering in prayer gives us hope and reminds us that God is bigger than all of our problems. As you pray, spend some time praising God for God's goodness and all of the times God has helped you in the past. Then, make your requests to God.

Saturday – Read Luke 11:9-13. **Ask, Seek, Knock.** When Jesus came to earth, and he saw thousands of weary, beaten-down people losing their daily battles in life he shook his head, and he said to the people, "You should pray more. That's what you should do." Jesus said, "You should ask, and you should seek. You should knock. There's no good reason why you should fend off all of the help that heaven is willing to send your way. There is no good reason why you should be trying to do all these things on human strength alone. You weren't designed to be able to do that. So, why don't you just ask for heaven's help? Why don't you seek heaven's guidance when you need guidance? Why don't you knock if you need God to open a door for you?" As you pray, ask God to help you, and have faith that God loves you and will help you.

Lectionary Readings: Job 23:1-9, 16-17; Psalm 22:1-15; Hebrews 4:12-16; Mark 10:17-31.

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