

Pathways Weekly Reading & Prayer Guide

Week 1: Foundations – Grace and Faith

February 12-18



Welcome and Journey Details

Welcome to the Pathways Journey! Before we begin, here are a few details about what lies ahead:

1. The weekly Reading and Prayer Guides will be written by different FPC Pastors. We each have unique experiences and perspective, so the format will likely be different each week.
2. Don't forget that the 2-Part Prayer Seminar with Bob Allums begins this Sunday, Feb. 12th at 9:15 a.m. in room A and resumes with Part 2 on Wednesday, Feb. 15th from 6-8 p.m. After this first week, you will choose either Sunday morning (9:30 a.m.) or Wednesday night (6 p.m.) for the Pathways Class.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, I am looking forward to the journey that lies ahead. You created and saved me so that we might enjoy a relationship that is much more personal and meaningful than I can imagine. Give me a childlike faith in you so that I might learn to pray with more humility and confidence than I ever have before. I also ask for a renewed and deep assurance of your love for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God's Word for the Path

Read the following Bible passages and consider how they might apply to your life of prayer
Isaiah 6:1-8, Hebrews 4:14-16, 10:11-25

Reflections by Kenny Ellis

When you pray, how do you picture God? Is He an old man in a rocking chair or throne? Is He a cosmic judge with a raised gavel of judgment? Is He some version of what Jesus may have looked like stroking a baby sheep? Is He shrouded in bright light or mysterious smoke? Does it matter? The image only matters in that it may help us better understand our beliefs about how God feels about us when we come to Him in prayer.

The Bible offers several images of God that might influence how we picture Him as we pray. A short list might include a father, shepherd or friend. One of the consistent images that God uses of Himself throughout the Bible is that of a majestic, sovereign King. In Isaiah 6, the prophet is given a vision of the heavenly Temple where God is seated on a throne and His royal robe fills the room. There are singing angels, smoke and thunder.

Understandably, Isaiah is filled with fear, mostly because he realizes how unfit he is to be in God's presence given his sin. That is a fearful scenario. However, God makes a way to forgive his sin and offer him grace, which opens up the door for dialogue and partnership in God's mission. God's grace changes everything. Without it, Isaiah would be left trembling in the presence of an unapproachable King.

Does prayer ever feel like you are somewhere you don't belong talking to someone who deems you unworthy? We will never make progress in prayer if we are not confident that God's grace has covered our sin and welcomed us into His family – which means unlimited access to Him.

One of the primary purposes for the author of Hebrews was to demonstrate that the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice and finished work of Jesus Christ on

the cross. In chapter 10, the author points out that Old Testament priests would offer daily and annual sacrifices over and over again – a grueling, unrelenting cycle. But, when Jesus, the perfect priest offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice, He “sat down”, a simple, yet profound way of saying that no other sacrifice was needed for mercy and forgiveness to be offered to us. He had forever secured God’s love and grace for those who put their trust in Him. This is why the author could describe God’s throne as a “throne of grace” which we should approach with “confidence” so that “we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” (4:16)

If we forget that our Heavenly Father sits on a throne of grace, we will allow our sin, shortcomings, distractions and painful memories to keep us on the outside looking in. We will feel more like Isaiah did, trembling and feeling like we don’t belong. Instead, Jesus died so that we might pray often and with a childlike confidence that our Heavenly Father is eager to offer us mercy and grace in our time of need. He is not reluctant or unmoved when His children come to Him. He delights in you and loves to hear your voice.

Do you believe that? Do you pray that way? Or, do you find that when you begin to pray, self-doubt creeps in and you allow your sin and shortcomings to convince you that God doesn’t want to hear from you? If so, you are forgetting the gospel (good news) and trading it for a counterfeit religion based on your goodness and performance. In a sense, you are declaring that Jesus’ sacrifice was not enough to cover your sin completely and that He needs you to contribute enough of your own goodness to make up for His lack.

Otherwise, you would lay hold of the gift as He has offered it and dare to believe that you are forever forgiven, loved, accepted and invited to come to Him in childlike confidence. He loves to hear you and speak to you – you are His beloved. Pray like it!

Prayer Paths

As we will talk about in the coming weeks, our prayers should be shaped by what God is speaking to us through His Word (the Bible). For the rest of this week, set aside 5-10 minutes each day to read a few of the passages below and in your own words, offer prayers along these lines...

- Ask your Heavenly Father to give you a deeper confidence and experience of His love
- Respond to Him with praise, gratitude and your own expressions of love for Him
- That you would be a conduit of His love to others

Romans 8:37-39

John 3:16

Romans 5:6-11

Galatians 2:20

Ephesians 2:1-10

Ephesians 3:14-20

1 John 4:9-11

Zephaniah 3:17

Psalms 86:15

1 John 3:1-3

Jeremiah 29:11-13

Lamentations 3:22-23

1 Peter 5:6-7

Titus 3:3-7

Psalms 36:5-7

Psalms 136:26

Jeremiah 31:3

Isaiah 1:18

Isaiah 43:25

Romans 8:1

1 John 1:9

Colossians 1:13-14

Psalms 103:8-12

1 Corinthians 2:9

Wisdom from Others

Book Suggested Readings

Too Busy Not To Pray (Hybels) - Introduction & Chapter 1

A Praying Life (Miller) - Chapters 1-2

Prayer (Yancey) - Chapters 1-2