

Let us pray:

Calm us now, O Lord, into a quietness that heals and listens. Open wounded hearts to the balm of your Word. Speak to us in clear tones so that we might feel our spirits leap for joy and skip with hope as your resurrection witnesses. Amen.

Our Old Testament Reading comes from the Prophet Isaiah, chapter 40: verses 21-31, found in the Pew Bible on page 1120-21 if you would like to follow along.

21 Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

24 No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

25 'To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?' says the Holy One.

- 26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.
- 27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"?
- 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.
- 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
- 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
- 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Epistle

1 Corinthians 9: 16-23

¹⁶ If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! ¹⁷ For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸ What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

¹⁹ For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²¹ To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ²² To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. ²³ | do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Power of Prayer

I. What is prayer for you?

A. Examples of prayer I've seen

1. Heads bowed and hands folded.
2. Hands lifted up in the air.
3. Hands resting on knees.
4. Eyes closed or open
5. Whispered under breath. – my Mom used to say “God give me strength.” I thought it was an expletive like “Good grief” – until I became a parent.
6. Shouted above a crowd.
7. Silent meditation

B. Explanations of prayer

1. Jesus said that prayer should be a private time between God and the worshipper. Jesus does not mean that it is wrong to pray with others, but the prayers should be sincere and for the right motives.
2. Through righteousness and the grace of God, **we are able to use the power of prayer in every aspect of our lives.**
3. God asks us to abide in Him through our Bible and prayer life,

4, we can ask Him for anything that is good.

5. Prayer is giving our attention to God in a two-way spiritual relationship where we talk to God and also listen to Him. Prayer is like a child's conversation with their father. It is natural for a child to ask his father for the things they need, or to ask for advice or guidance.

C.7 Benefits of Prayer—No Matter the Outcome

- 1) Silence. Sometimes it feels like I'm surrounded—assaulted, even—by noise. ...
- 2) Stillness. Similarly, my prayer times become an oasis amid an ever-racing heart, mind and body. ...
- 3) Presence. ...
- 4) Perspective.
- 5) Balance. ...
- 6) Peace. ...
- 7) Hope.

II. Where do we pray?

- A. At church, Sunday School, meetings, worship services
- conversation between a mother and her reluctant son:

He says to his mother, “Mom, I don’t want to go to church today.”

The mother says, “Oh, son I really think you should.”

“But Mom,” he says, “I don’t think anybody likes me there, and I don’t want to go. Give me three good reasons why I have to go to church.”

“Okay. First, I’m your mother, and I want you to, and you should be obedient to your mother. Second, Sunday is the Lord’s day and you know what Jesus said about giving unto the Lord what is the Lord’s.

Third, you have to go to church because you’re the pastor!”

B. At home before meals, going to sleep, leaving for a trip

C. In the car

D. Outside - Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, **where he prayed.**

E. Everywhere

III For whom do we pray

A. Friends- The Savior prayed for unity among His disciples: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21). The gospel creates a unity of faith with our Father, our Savior, and our fellow believers (see Ephesians 4:13)Family

B. Self

C. Enemies

D. People we don’t know

E. Everyone

Paul said, "I have voluntarily become a servant to any and all in order to reach a wide range of people: religious, nonreligious, meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists, the defeated, the demoralized—whoever. I didn't take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view. I've become just about every sort of servant there is in my attempts to lead those I meet into a God-saved life. I did all this because of the Message. I didn't just want to talk about it; I wanted to be in on it!"

IV What does God say/do about prayer?

- A Prayer helps you develop a relationship with God. Just like your parents here on earth, your Heavenly Father wants to hear from you and talk to you. When you pray, He listens. Then He answers your prayers in the form of thoughts, spiritual feelings, scripture, or even the actions of other people.
- B God searches for us – Adam & Eve, Elijah, Jonah, Mary & Joseph
- C God gives us what we need, not necessarily what we want.
- D God asks us to abide in Him through our Bible and prayer life
- E God makes it clear who is God - Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends

of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

V Why is unity important to God?

Unity is rooted in the gospel, itself. We create a picture of the unified nature of God and our union with him by living in a unified way in the church. In the local church, we are “incarnating” visibly the invisible reality of our union with Christ. This is the core purpose of why the church exists.

Our unity is not in our wisdom, our behavior [conformity] our background, but in Christ Jesus. Our unity is in Jesus Christ. It is God’s power in the cross of Jesus Christ that has formed us into a community, that sustains us on our life’s journey, that makes such disparate and unlikely folks brothers and sisters of one another in the Lord. We are one in Christ through faith; we are one with each other since we have One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism. If we come together in one mind and one purpose, then we live out what we already are, Christ’s Church, and then we become truly the people God wants us to be. As we accept each other, speak well of each other, interpret the actions of each other in the kindest way, love each other, we come closer to Christ. As we learn and study and pray, we come closer to the cross of Christ and to each other. Amen. —Copyright 2005, James D. Kegel. Used by permission.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen