

Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer section to help you begin your time with God each day.

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, **faithful in prayer**.—Romans 12:12

My prayers this week:

MON 09.06.10 | Proverbs 6:6-11 | Ant-sized Lessons

There is much that we can learn from nature and God's creatures around us. Today, we find that the Hebrew wisdom writers saw diligence in nature. In this bit of wisdom, they encourage all of us to learn from one of the smallest of all God's creatures, ants. Did you know that worker ants, aptly named, move their eggs and larvae deep into the nest to protect them from the cold at night? Not only that, but during the daytime, they move the eggs and larvae to the top of the nest so that the eggs and larvae can be warmed by the sun's rays. If a worker ant finds a good source of food for the colony, it will leave a scent trail so that the other ants in the colony can find it. Scripture uses these creatures to show us how we might fight against the sin of sloth in our lives. Verse 8 tells us that even ants "prepare food in the summer and gather provision during times of harvest." They work not for their own welfare alone but for the welfare of all the other members in the colony. They do so day and night, seeking and providing means for their fellow ants. Where sloth pulls us away from caring, what does God have to say to us today in light of this comparison? "Are you not much more valuable than they?" (Matthew 6:26) God wants to remind us that working against sloth is praying and living out a life of Christ-like concern and care not merely for *me* and *mine* but also for others in our community. Are you working toward *that* end or running out of gas, tired, spent, replete and altogether quietly careless? As you consider your answer to this question, may you hear God's voice: "You are more valuable than they."

Daily Bible Reading Plan: Ezekiel 4-6

WED 09.08.10 | Ephesians 4:4-7 | To Each One's Own

The apostle Paul suggests clearly that the power of the church lies in all Christians discovering and intelligently exercising the spiritual gift that was given to them when they became a member of the body of Christ. In our physical body, there are a variety of cells. The body operates, not by the cells getting together and deciding what might be the best thing to do, but by them simply doing what they individually and particularly were designed to do. The function of the brain is to monitor and regulate the body's actions and reactions in totality, but each individual cell functions according to its own design. Therefore, the body does not operate when the cells revolt. In other words, the body becomes sick and does not operate the way it was intended to. Paul reminds us that the secret of effective, Christ-intended functioning of the church is for each Christian to recognize and fulfill the gift bestowed upon him/her by God. The church begins to live and exercise its impact and influence upon society when you begin to exercise your gift. We learned this past Sunday that the "wicked and lazy servant" was the one who took the talent and buried it. Are you finding that you are sitting on your gifts today or are they actively standing out as God-intended instruments of blessing? What is the gift God has given to you? What does He want you to do as a general area of ministry? Do you know how to recognize a gift? Do you know how to develop it once you know what it is? Your own joy and fulfillment as a Christian depends on how you look at and answer those questions.

Daily Bible Reading Plan: Psalms 109-111

TUE 09.07.10 | Matthew 9:35-38 | Bowels of Compassion

One particular part of Christ's character that often goes unnoticed is Christ's commitment to his mission. He is never one to be mistaken for slothfulness, not in the least. Jesus worked tirelessly at God's work of restoring people to physical, emotional, and spiritual wholeness. He was unavoidably a man on a mission. Arcola Covenant Community's DNA as a congregation springs from Jesus' own actions and teaching. Like Jesus, we believe the harvest is plentiful and ripe for the reaping now. God calls us as a community of faith to bring our true selves to help gather that harvest. When Jesus saw the crowd, he had compassion on them. Literally translated, compassion means that one is moved to one's bowels because the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity. When Christ then had this kind of "compassion," moved to the very insides, he too moved in the direction of the loving mission of his life. To what extent do you think "harassed and helpless...sheep without a shepherd" expresses the spiritual state of your neighbors, co-workers, even people you see in our church? To what degree is your care for their wellness moving you? Is it merely a noticeable inconvenience or a bowel-moving compassion that urges you forward out of sloth and into service? Take time today to meditate over and pray that God move you out of "selfish ambition and vain conceit" (Phil. 2:3) into inner-seat-shifting love. Pray also that ACC might each week more authentically grow into a community of such compassion, for the harvest is indeed full and many are hurting, harassed, and helpless.

Daily Bible Reading Plan: Ezekiel 7-9

THU 09.09.10 | 2 Corinthians 3:1-6 | Covenantal Confidence

One of the factors that lead to the sin of sloth is our uncertainty about ourselves. Today, so many of us try to gain confidence anywhere we can find it. The media constantly gives suggestions on how to become a self-sufficient, confident, capable, well-adjusted person. These messages come in myriad forms: "buy this", "go here", "have them", "get that", "do this". We are inundated with messages that preach that people who lack confidence in life are insecure and will not make lasting impressions on others or in the world. The sheer pressure to not be one of these people can drive many even faster to the sin of sloth. However, Paul reminds us that there is another way. This new covenant that Paul talks about is entirely different from anything the world knows. The world would say that Paul was a success because he was doing his very dedicated best to mobilize all his resources and considerable abilities to serve God with all his heart. But if you asked Paul, he would never say that. He would say in so many words: "The ability that is evident in my ministry and the changes that occur in people's lives because of who I am and where I go have nothing to do with my natural skills or abilities. There is nothing coming from me. Everything is coming from God." The old covenant is Paul's trying to do his best on behalf of God; the new covenant is God's doing His best through Paul. What a profound difference this is! We are all ministers of Christ. We are precious pens in the hand of a fantastic Writer and every page we touch has His voice riddled throughout. Trust in His authorship and leading and find the confidence to get up, go out, and be poured out.

Daily Bible Reading Plan: Ezekiel 10-12

Our passage today gives us a worthwhile tool to help us in our journey of becoming faithful, diligent, and passionate people of God. The writer of Hebrews knew perfectly well that we do not become deeply committed followers of God merely by chance. The letter calls us to be active in living a godly life and not merely drift along with any current that comes our way. Part of that activity is found in verse 12, where we are encouraged to imitate those who have shown great faith and patience before us. Looking back on the heroes of faith (reference Hebrews 11), we see a snapshot of men and women who have gone before us and, amidst challenges and temptations, exercised that faith, leading to more kingdom people living kingdom purposes. Think back for a moment over the names in chapter 11 and what the world owes these men and women: Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets. We owe our laws, our governments, our institutions, our ideals, and our standards to these men and women. They persisted in faith until the whole world was blessed. Had they given up, we would never have heard of them. And yet, they still were unable to witness the greatest thing of all, and the reason why is because God had arranged that we, living now, might share in the race and have a part in the great prize for which these past heroes were looking. Today, we are called to judge the present by the future, to weigh the permanent against the temporary and ephemeral, and to dare to do the impossible against all the arguments of the world around us, keeping on day after day after day, whether or not we immediately see the fruit of our efforts.

Daily Bible Reading Plan: Ezekiel 13-16

Piggybacking off of yesterday's devotional, the ultimate hero of faith we look to is Jesus Christ. If we are going to work faithfully and fight against the sin of sloth, we find in our passage today that we are "to walk as Jesus did." Jesus makes clear that "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me" (John 15:4b). You can be in Christ as a member of the vine and still bear only leaves—this is mere relationship. But if you want fruit in your life, there must be that further attitude of abiding in Him. That is what produces significant results in life. The sign of abiding is to walk in the same way in which Christ walked. That does not mean to do the same things that Jesus did; rather, we are to act from the same principle by which He acted and reflect the same kind of relationship to the Father that Jesus had. That is the sign of fellowship. How did Jesus walk? He walked in total, unrelenting, unbroken fellowship and dependence upon the activity of the Father who dwelled within Him (cf John 14:10-11). But that seems so difficult for us to learn. We are brought up with the idea that God is looking to us to act on His behalf and if we fail Him, the whole program will fall apart; but on the flip side, if we do accomplish something for God, He should be eternally grateful to us for our faithfulness. But this is not what a Christian is called to do. A quiet, unrelenting dependence upon an *indwelling* God to always be at work in us, reproducing the value of His death and the power of His resurrection—that is what Christianity is, what fellowship is, and what abiding in Him means.

Daily Bible Reading Plan: Ezekiel 17-20



What's Sin (*Sloth*) Got To Do With It?

Reverend Matthew Na

Matthew 25:14-29

¹⁴Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.' ²¹His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ²²The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' ²³His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ²⁴Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' ²⁶His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸' 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.

Notes:

Daily Bible Reading Plan: 2 Chronicles 36:9-21; Ezekiel 1-3

The mission of ACC is to build a Christian community where the covenant of God is revealed in our active engagement with the world.

Visit us at www.arcolacovenant.org

Corporate Prayer

Join us as we lift up...

Prayers of Praise:

- Chang-Sun Choi and Jaewon Lee, two of our newest official ACC members, became the proud parents of a healthy baby girl, Casey Lee

Prayers for Comfort and Healing:

- Comfort and peace for Edison Lee & Jeaney Lee's family as they mourn the passing of their grandmother
- Quick and full recovery for David and Paul Kim's father and Michelle Kwon's brother (Paul Kwon) both from surgery

Prayers for Ministry Needs:

- Teachers for Sunday School & volunteers to drive the church van to and from NYC and Rutgers (New Brunswick)
- Securing people to fill in vacant positions in new ACC org chart such as Palah/Philos/Patria Covenant Group Coordinators, Music & Media Coordinator, Fellowship Coordinator, Worship Planning Coordinator, etc.

Prayers for the Ministry:

- Pastoral Staff
- Lay Leadership
- Small Groups
- Ministries
- Congregation (visitors and members)

Prayer Requests Forms are available in the Attendance Booklets. These requests are prayed over throughout the week and may be specified by the following: (1) pastoral visit/call; (2) placed in bulletin for communal prayer; (3) confidential for the pastor only.