

August 13, 2017

Prayer is one of the ways we communicate with God. It is conversation - talking together - listening together - with a generous, caring Friend. Prayer conversation with God can be many things. It can be:

- praising God's great goodness,
- asking for a particular need to be answered,
- listening to God or listening for God's message or response,
- wrestling and questioning God about a problem we have,
- requesting God's wisdom or presence or healing or . . . ,
- questioning and challenging God,
- thanking God for life or blessings or . . . , and on.

Our congregation has a Prayer Chain Ministry that is praying for your prayer requests. You are invited to fill in the prayer request card on the back of the Welcome card, fill in your prayer request and either put it in the offering plate or give it directly to Pastor Wendee. Following worship, a member of the Prayer Ministry Team will collect the prayer requests, will give Pastor Wendee a list of all the requests and will email them to the Prayer Chain who will pray for your request through the week. Please be sure the check the box(es) designating how and where you want your prayer request(s) shared. Thank you for the privilege of allowing us to share in your life through prayer.

You are invited to pray for the following prayer requests:

- from Marla B - for Alan B, prayer that shoulder replacement surgery works and he becomes pain-free. This is his 4th surgery on the same shoulder.
- from Christal B - for her daughter Theresa for strength in time of turmoil
- from Megan F - for Greg F and family, prayers while he is searching for employment
- from Joan L - for Myranda for healing of an infected tonsil (recurrence)
- for Jim N as he recovers from an appendectomy
- from the Southeast District Office - Edgerton, their pastor Barbara Wells, and their 157 members
- for our shut-ins: Dorothy S, Eileen S, Gwen S, Louise L, Jean F, Dave and Jeanne H, Marge D, Pat S, Donna S, Eleanor P, Jean B
- Prayers of celebration for anniversaries, birthdays, and other special occasions

Exodus 18:13-27

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹³ *The next day Moses sat down to judge the people, and they stood around Moses from morning until evening.* ¹⁴ *When Moses' father-in-law saw everything he was doing for them he asked, "What is this thing you're doing for the people? Why are you alone sitting as judge, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?"*

¹⁵ *Moses replied to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God.* ¹⁶ *Whenever they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I make a decision between one man and another. I teach them God's statutes and laws."*

¹⁷ *"What you're doing is not good," Moses' father-in-law said to him.*

¹⁸ *"You will certainly wear out both yourself and these people who are with you, because the task is too heavy for you. You can't do it alone.* ¹⁹ *Now listen to me; I will give you some advice, and God be with you. You be the one to represent the people before God and bring their cases to Him.* ²⁰ *Instruct them about the statutes and laws, and teach them the way to live and what they must do.* ²¹ *But you should select from all the people able men, God-fearing, trustworthy, and hating bribes. Place them over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.* ²² *They should judge the people at all times. Then they can bring you every important case but judge every minor case themselves. In this way you will lighten your load, and they will bear it with you.* ²³ *If you do this, and God so directs you, you will be able to endure, and also all these people will be able to go home satisfied."*

²⁴ *Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said.* ²⁵ *So Moses chose able men from all Israel and made them leaders over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.*

²⁶ *They judged the people at all times; they would bring the hard cases to Moses, but they would judge every minor case themselves.*

²⁷ *Then Moses said good-bye to his father-in-law, and he journeyed to his own land.*

Welcome to “Faith Connections!” “Faith Connections!” can be used in many ways. Some people may choose to just recycle the paper it is printed on. Others may read it front to back in a single sitting. Others may use it to help guide their meditation of the Scriptures during the week, daily or often. May it be helpful in your reflection of the Scripture as it applies to your faith this week. - Alex C

Sunday – Have you ever been in a performance and made a mistake? Although no one might notice at first, it’s hard not to focus on that mistake, which leads to making more. Recently I faced that situation, only on a much larger scale spanning an entire weekend. Looking back it could have been a perfect weekend, with everything falling into place – a traditional market visit, reliving childhood memories at a church musical, spending quality time with my mother on her birthday, and more. It all started with choosing to fly down to Chicago instead of drive. I still could have done all those other things after making my choice, but I became so focused on the mistake that I kept making more throughout the weekend. As a leader, have you ever found yourself in that predicament? Do you ever feel like you’re hurrying to fix past mistakes only to cause more?

Monday – James 3:2-4 reminds us that none of us is perfect, and we will make mistakes. It is an inevitability of being human. However, unlike the ship used in the metaphor, we have the ability to *choose* to submit to a higher, guiding will. Some find this disconcerting, because as humans (and especially as leaders) we don’t like the idea of losing our free will. Remember, though, that *guiding* is not the same as *controlling*. If you’ve ever ridden a horse, you know that metaphor is apt; the bit and bridle can let the horse know what you want, but it is always up to the horse whether to obey. If you’re feeling like your own mistakes are catching up, I invite you to see what it might be like to seek a little guidance.

Tuesday – When we see mistakes begin to arise in our leadership, it can often become overbearing. Sometimes we reach the point where we want to give up – when we see all the mistakes that we have already done and look ahead to fear those that we know will come. Because we are leaders, though, we know that our followers are always watching us and looking to us. How does that affect you when you’re on the edge of giving up? Does it add to the burden, or does it give you strength knowing they trust in you? Although I sometimes feel the former, I find striving for the latter to be most beneficial to my own leadership.

Wednesday – Yesterday we looked at the times when we focus on the mistakes we’ve made. Such times will occur throughout our faith journey, lows that shape both our life and leadership. These lows are essential to our journeys, giving us perspective that helps us appreciate the higher points on that journey. They also give us knowledge and experience that we can use in our leadership. What ways can you use your past mistakes to help those you lead? It is not something that is always direct or planned. Sometimes it’s as simple as being able to understand where someone is in their life and support them.

Thursday – It is easy to talk about the benefits of experience that come from mistakes, or even to talk about the importance of not focusing on them. It is something entirely different to successfully put those techniques into practice. When the mistakes add up and keep coming, how do we get them to stop? One technique I’ve found to be successful is to stop myself completely and take a moment to “reset”. In a public speech, this might mean physically stopping for a few calming breaths. In leadership, this could mean stepping back for a moment and delegating to a trusted co-leader, someone who can keep things moving forward while I figure out where I want to lead. How might you “stop and reset”? Is there another technique you find helpful?

Friday – At Oak Creek Community United Methodist Church (OCCUMC) part of our mission is to worship God. We do this not only to show thanks and praise for God, but to center ourselves. Yesterday I mentioned a “stop and reset” technique for stopping the succession of mistakes before they get out of hand. Worship is a way to do this for the faith aspect of our lives. There is a song called “Breathe” by Jonny Diaz which talks about taking time away from the rush of life to just be. When we step away from the rush of life to be with God, we can often find a peace that helps us overcome even the most troubling series of mistakes. Take a moment to rest today. Just be.

Saturday – The United Methodist Church has a vision to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As you can see in just about any news source, our world is a pretty chaotic place. It’s certainly good to be out there in that chaos, working towards that transformation. As good leaders, however, there are times we must recognize when the chaos is overwhelming and making us less effective agents of change. Is there a place you can go when that chaos becomes too much? How can you withdraw from the chaos without losing your connection to God’s people?