

theskitguys

THE SERENITY PR^YAYER

LEARNING TO LET GO

7 DAY DEVOTIONAL

God grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world
As it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
If I surrender to His Will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with Him
Forever and ever in the next.

Amen.

DAY 1 - WHAT IS SERENITY?

The first line of this prayer acknowledges that serenity is not something we can attain on our own. As broken people in this broken world serenity can only be a gift from God. Therefore, we need to go to Him if we are going to find serenity.

What is serenity anyway? When we think of serenity, we may picture a calm lake where nothing is moving. There is no wind or waves. A serene picture. And that is a good picture to have in mind because serenity is “the state of being calm, peaceful, and untroubled.”

You may think, “My life is just one storm after another. There is no way I find a moment of serenity.” If that is the case, remember this: Jesus is the one who meets you in the storm and sees you through the storm.

He can calm your storms. However, if He does not, then He is more than happy to see you through it.

READ: Mark 4:35-41

On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s go across to the other side of the lake.” So after leaving the crowd, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat, and other boats were with him. Now a great windstorm developed and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was nearly swamped. But he was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care that we are about to die?” So he got up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Be quiet! Calm down!” Then the wind stopped, and it was dead calm. And he said to them, “Why are you cowardly? Do you still not have faith?” They were overwhelmed by fear and said to one another, “Who then is this? Even the wind and sea obey him!”

- When you think about serenity, what words come to mind?
- What are some of the “storms of life” you are going through right now?
- The disciples asked Jesus if he cared. Have you ever questioned the Lord’s concern for your circumstances? Explain:
- Ask the Lord to help you find the quiet and calm that he can bring to your life.

DAY 2 - “GOD GRANT ME THE SERENITY”

Acknowledging that God is the only place where we can find this serenity is so important. If we don't do that, we will go looking for it in other places. While we may find moments of escape from our hurts somewhere besides God, we will never find real peace anywhere else.

READ: Philippians 4:6-8

Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things.

Anxiety is one of the primary enemies of serenity. They tend to mix about as well as oil and water. Paul encourages the Philippians to pray instead of worrying. Good news, that's exactly what we are doing here. Taking our problems to the one who can do something about it.

He tells us that if we do that, we can experience a peace that passes all understanding. So if peace in the midst of whatever you are struggling with doesn't make sense to you, good news...His peace doesn't make sense...so you are in a good place to receive it.

This peace guards your heart and mind. That peace is exactly what we need. Our mind begins to roam away from the security that we have in Christ, and we open the door to worry. Our hearts join in and the next thing we know, we are in full blown anxiety.

This passage encourages us to replace our anxious thoughts with good thoughts. In other words, instead of thinking about what might happen, take the time to think about the amazing attributes of God and the blessings and the grace he offers us.

- What are some places or things you can turn to for temporary serenity other than God?
- Why are those places of things not the best choice?
- What are the primary things that worry you?
- Ask the Lord to guard your heart and mind in Christ and help you find his peace that passes understanding.

DAY 3 - “TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE; COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN; AND WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.”

Have you ever heard the old saying, “If “if’s” and “buts” were candy and nuts, wouldn’t we all have a wonderful Christmas?” We can spend a ton of time talking about the “if’s” and “buts” of life. Many times it goes something like this, “**IF** I could only change this one thing my life would be much better...**BUT** I cannot.”

That brings me to the things you cannot change. When you hear that, do you think of the phrase, “It is what it is.” That’s frustrating. It feels almost defeatist.

However, it is a simple truth that there are things in this life that no matter how hard we try, we will not be able to change them. So what good does it do to try? That only causes more strife in your life.

Instead of wasting our energy on changing the things we cannot, we should pour that energy into the things we can change. That is why we ask for courage to change the things we can.

Yes! And not courage in ourselves, courage in God to give us the power to change. Whether it is changing ourselves, changing our setting, changing our habits...all of that courage is in God’s power, not our own.

And change is tough. It takes great courage to change because staying the same is comfortable and easy.

READ: John 5:2-9

Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool called Bethzatha in Aramaic, which has five covered walkways. A great number of sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed people were lying in these walkways. Now a man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and when he realized that the man had been disabled a long time already, he said to him, “Do you want to become well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up. While I am trying to get into the water, someone else goes down there before me.” Jesus said to him, “Stand up! Pick up your mat and walk.” Immediately the man was healed, and he picked up his mat and started walking.

- What are five things you wish you could change but cannot?
- What are five things you could change but haven’t even tried?
- The man near the pool of Bethzatha simply made excuses for why he couldn’t do anything. What are the excuses you make when you don’t want to try?
- Take some time to ask the Lord to help you understand the difference between the things you can and cannot change.

DAY 4 - “LIVING ONE DAY AT A TIME; ENJOYING ONE MOMENT AT A TIME;”

One thing that keeps us from experiencing serenity, God’s perfect peace, is that we fast forward the tape of our life. We waste so much time thinking about what might happen. Mark Twain once said, “I’ve had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened.” Isn’t that the case in our lives? We worry about tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day.

That is why we ask God to help us live one day at a time.

You may be familiar with Psalm 118:24 that says, “This is the day the LORD has brought about. We will be happy and rejoice in it.” That is great wisdom. We need to remind ourselves that while we don’t know what tomorrow holds, we do know who holds tomorrow. And the same God who holds tomorrow in His hand gave you today to live for Him. Choose to live one day at a time.

And on those days that you don’t feel like you can make it....choose to take one moment at a time. Be present in this moment. Accept this moment as it is. Know that it will pass. Know that hardship may be just minutes away, but I can be in this moment now and accept it as a gift from God.

READ: James 4:13-15

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into this or that town and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” You do not know about tomorrow. What is your life like? For you are a puff of smoke that appears for a short time and then vanishes. You ought to say instead, “If the Lord is willing, then we will live and do this or that.”

- What are some of the things that keep you from living life one day at a time?
- List some of the worries you have had that never happened.
- Does it encourage you when James says that your life is a “puff of smoke?” Why or why not?
- As you talk to the Lord today, take some time to talk with him about this moment in time. Express to him what it means to you to have a moment in time with him. Breathe this moment in and truly enjoy it.

DAY 5 - “ACCEPTING HARDSHIPS AS THE PATHWAY TO PEACE;”

Living one day at a time is not overlooking the struggles of life. It is putting the difficulties in perspective. It is acknowledging that hardship has a purpose in life. Hardship, difficulties, struggles all can be used by God to take us to a place of peace.

Imagining, hiking through a dense forest. It is hot, muggy, and you have to climb steep mountains and through treacherous valleys. This journey is not for the faint of heart. You have to keep going, hacking at the overgrown dense foliage. But you keep going because you are on a journey. Your destination is a place of peace.

On the other side of the forest of hardship is the place where the waters are calm, and the wind is a gentle breeze. That is how we can accept hardship as a pathway to peace.

READ: Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of God’s glory. Not only this, but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance, character, and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

In this passage, Paul reminds the believers in Rome that the hardships they experience produce character in them. This character reaches its pentacle with hope. This is no normal hope. This is a hope that is rooted in the fact that we have been given peace with God. The hardships we go through cause us to lean more on our faith. This, in turn, helps develop our peace. This is why some say that God never wastes a hurt.

- What are the top hardship, difficulties, and struggles you are experiencing in life right now?
- How have you seen God use difficulties to develop peace in your life?
- Describe what rejoicing in suffering would look like to you.
- Take some time today to talk to the Lord about the hardships you are experiencing. Ask him to help you see them as a pathway to peace. Ask Him to use these hardships in your life.

DAY 6 - “TAKING, AS JESUS DID, THIS SINFUL WORLD AS IT IS, NOT AS I WOULD HAVE IT; TRUSTING THAT HE WILL MAKE ALL THINGS RIGHT IF I SURRENDER TO HIS WILL”

If the world wasn't the way Jesus wanted it, then why do we tend to think it should be the way we want it to be? The short answer is that we are insecure people who worry when things don't go the way we want. The longer answer is that we seem to feel better about ourselves when we complain about the messed up world around us. Looking at everything that is wrong with the world helps keep my mind off what is wrong with me. Maybe we would be better off to accept the world as the broken place that it is and start focusing a little more on letting go and letting God.

Now make no mistake, to accept something as it is does not mean that we are satisfied with it. Jesus wasn't satisfied with this world. But He was satisfied with His followers. He was satisfied with His father. He was satisfied with the knowledge that his father held the future in his hands. That is why Jesus is the place where we can know that eventually things will be made right. Maybe not today, maybe not in my lifetime, but in His good and perfect time.

For any of this to happen, I need to surrender to His will. Easier said than done. I want what I want when I want it. Surrendering to God's will is not taking the easy path or even doing what I want at the moment. To surrender is to “take my hands off the wheel” and to give control of things over to God. Which by the way, He already has control. We are just fooling ourselves when we think we are the ones in control.

The gospel of John contains what some people have called “the Farewell Prayer” or “the High Priestly Prayer.” In it, Jesus prays asking God not to take his disciples out of the world. But He does ask God to “set them apart in the truth.” This is the key to accepting this world as it is. We must know the truth that sets us free. Free from the worries of this world. Free from the burdens of keeping up with this world. Free from the social media hype that causes us to judge our insides by looking at everyone else's outsides.

READ: John 17:15-20

I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but that you keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to the world just as I do not belong to the world. Set them apart in the truth; your word is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I set myself apart on their behalf, so that they too may be truly set apart. “I am not praying only on their behalf, but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their testimony.

Did you catch that last verse there? Jesus prays for “those who believe in (him) through their testimony.” Guess what? That is you and me! We believe in Jesus because of the testimony of his disciples. When you find yourself struggling to accept this world as it is, remember that the Savior of the world prayed for you!

- What are some of the things in the world that you struggle to accept?
- List some things you are having trouble giving control over to God. Be specific.
- Describe how it feels to know that Jesus prayed for you.
- As you talk to God today, mention the things of this world that you have trouble understanding and accepting. Then take some time to thank God for accepting you as you are.

DAY 7 - “SO THAT I MAY BE REASONABLY HAPPY IN THIS LIFE AND SUPREMELY HAPPY WITH HIM FOREVER AND EVER IN THE NEXT.”

There is an old hymn that says, “This world is not my home I’m just passing through My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.” As we mentioned yesterday, we are called to be in this world but not of this world. And if we are not of this world, then we should not expect to find supreme happiness here. We can find some happiness. We may even say we can be reasonably happy here. However, supreme happiness comes later.

We waste so much time trying to find supreme happiness in this life. No wonder we struggle with feeling let down and disappointed. No wonder we find ourselves looking for contentment and satisfaction in the wrong places. We are asking this lifetime to provide us with something that only comes in the afterlife. We can keep trying to find supreme happiness in this life, but the simple truth is, It just isn’t going to happen.

“Reasonably” means that something is fair and sensible. We need to be sensible in knowing that while we can experience some happiness here....we’re not going to experience supreme happiness until we hear “Well done good and faithful servant.”

The apostle Paul seemed to understand this. That is why he writes to the church at Philippi “For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.” In other words, in a life that offers reasonable happiness at best, why not just go all out and live for Christ?

Think about this; supreme happiness is only found in the presence of the supreme. He is the source of all good things in this lifetime and in the life to come.

If I can be reasonably happy in this life, isn’t that enough?

READ: 1 Timothy 6:6-8

Now godliness combined with contentment brings great profit. For we have brought nothing into this world and so we cannot take a single thing out either. But if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that.

- Where have you looked for happiness or contentment in the past when life wasn’t as good as you wanted it to be? How did that work out for you?
- What things do you need to live a reasonably happy life?
- What does “to live is Christ” mean to you?
- Take some time today to thank God for how he has blessed you. Dig deep and ask him to help you to see the blessings that you may overlook. Then thank him for the supreme happiness that he has waiting for you.