



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Psalm 139:23-24, Matthew 6:5, Romans 8:26, Acts 8:9-25, Hebrews 11:6

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

God created us to be in relationship with him. What makes a relationship healthy and vibrant? Love, trust, and communication. Without communication, relationships tend to break down. This is part of why prayer is so important. Prayer is simply talking and listening to God. There is nothing you can share with God that he doesn't already know, and God wants you to listen too – He wants to be heard. From the beginning of time, he's had a lot to say to us. In prayer, you are in the presence of God as you lay before Him your complete self in confession and dependence. There is nothing to hide when we are reaching into the deepest part of ourselves and admitting our needs and failures. In doing so, our hearts are quieted and pride is stripped and we can enjoy the presence of God. **Read James 4:8.**

- Do you talk with God as you would with your closest friend?

Spend some time praying today. Make an effort to share your thoughts and yourself with God as you would with a friend.

DAY 2

Read Psalm 139:23-24. When we ask God to search us and know our thoughts, what are we really asking for? Think of it this way, "Lord, you understand and know me in my conscious life. You know when I sit down (meaning my passive life) and when I rise up (my active life). When I am resting or when I am acting, you know me. You also know me in my subconscious life -- that level of life from which my thoughts arise. You understand them even before they get to the surface. You know how I think and what I think about. You even understand the thoughts which come unbidden, in a constant flow to my mind."

- Does it change your help you to stay more mindful of your thought life when you realize God knows your thoughts?

Today's Prayer: Thank you Lord for knowing me fully and loving me just the same. Search me Lord and know my thoughts. Show me where I am in error, reveal any destructive thinking and lead me to the way everlasting.

DAY 3

Read Matthew 6:5. Do you ever get nervous praying with others? Sometimes when we pray aloud, it's hard not to wonder what other people are thinking about our prayer. Did I say the right words? Did they notice that I had trouble finding that perfect phrase? Did they think it was too long? Or maybe they thought it wasn't long enough! Did I embarrass them? Or did I just embarrass myself? All in all, praying aloud is a lot of pressure. The people described in Matthew 6 may be claiming to talk to God, but in reality, they're talking to the people around them. Their motive is not to worship God, but to impress people. So God says, they'll get just what they're looking for: **"I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full."** When we pray aloud our motive must be only to communicate to God with our prayer.

- So you have difficulty praying aloud? If other people stumble while they are praying aloud what tends to run through your mind?

Thank God for the privilege to pray with others. Ask God to help you focus on Him when you are praying with others.

DAY 4

Read Romans 8:26. You may have heard the term "Intercessory Prayer." But do you know what it means? Have you ever felt a sudden, inexplicable sense of heaviness in your heart? Have you felt the emotions of another person so deeply that it could've been your own? Or perhaps you've felt so strongly about a certain issue that it seemed like your heart would burst? Sometimes this is God placing the burdens of His heart in yours. Intercession involves bringing a person, or a circumstance that seems to be crashing in on you, before God in prayer. People describe intercession by saying, "It is putting yourself in someone else's place." In fact, intercession is putting yourself in God's place; it is having His mind and His perspective. God cares so deeply for all of us, for all the hurts in the world. As we intercede for others, we are not just lifting them up to God, but we are also drawing closer to Him ourselves as we share His compassion, His burdens and His love for others.

- Are you sensitive to the prayer needs of others?
- What is your experience with the burden of prayer?

Faithfully intercede for friends, family and others as God brings them to mind.

DAY 5

Read Acts 8:9-25. If money can't buy love, then it certainly can't buy salvation. Simon of Samaria thought that he could buy the power of the Holy Spirit. Simon doesn't want the Spirit so that his own life may be transformed. He wants control over the Spirit. He saw the activity of the Spirit as a form of magic and perhaps thought it would make him powerful and bring him fame. But no person has control over the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who empowers us. The Spirit comes to humanity as a gift from God, to enable us to be God's people and to give us a foretaste of life in God's kingdom.

- Close your eyes and imagine the Spirit as a gift that God gives to you, to help you to be his. How should you respond to this gift?

Thank God for His Holy Spirit. Ask Him to fill you with the gift of the Spirit's power and guidance.

DAY 6

Sometimes we may set aside a specific moment to pray: before meals, during worship, before bed, and confine our relationship to God to these specific times. Instead, try offering God your heart throughout day, at every moment if you can. Do not burden yourself with rules, but act with faith, love and humility. We can't receive God's best for our lives, and we can't push back the things that were never God's will for us, except through prayer. We can't leave our life to chance. We have to pray all the time, not just when things go wrong. We have to pray over anything that concerns us, no matter how big or how small. The more you pray, the more you will find to pray about, and the more you'll be led to pray for others. Don't allow discouragement over unanswered prayer to cause you to doubt that God has heard you. We must accustom ourselves to an intimate, humble and loving conversation with Him. **Read Hebrews 11:6.**

- How can you improve your prayer life today?

Try to break any "prayer habits" you may have today and pray throughout the day , or about things you usually wouldn't pray for. Expand your conversation with God beyond its usual limits!

DAY 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.