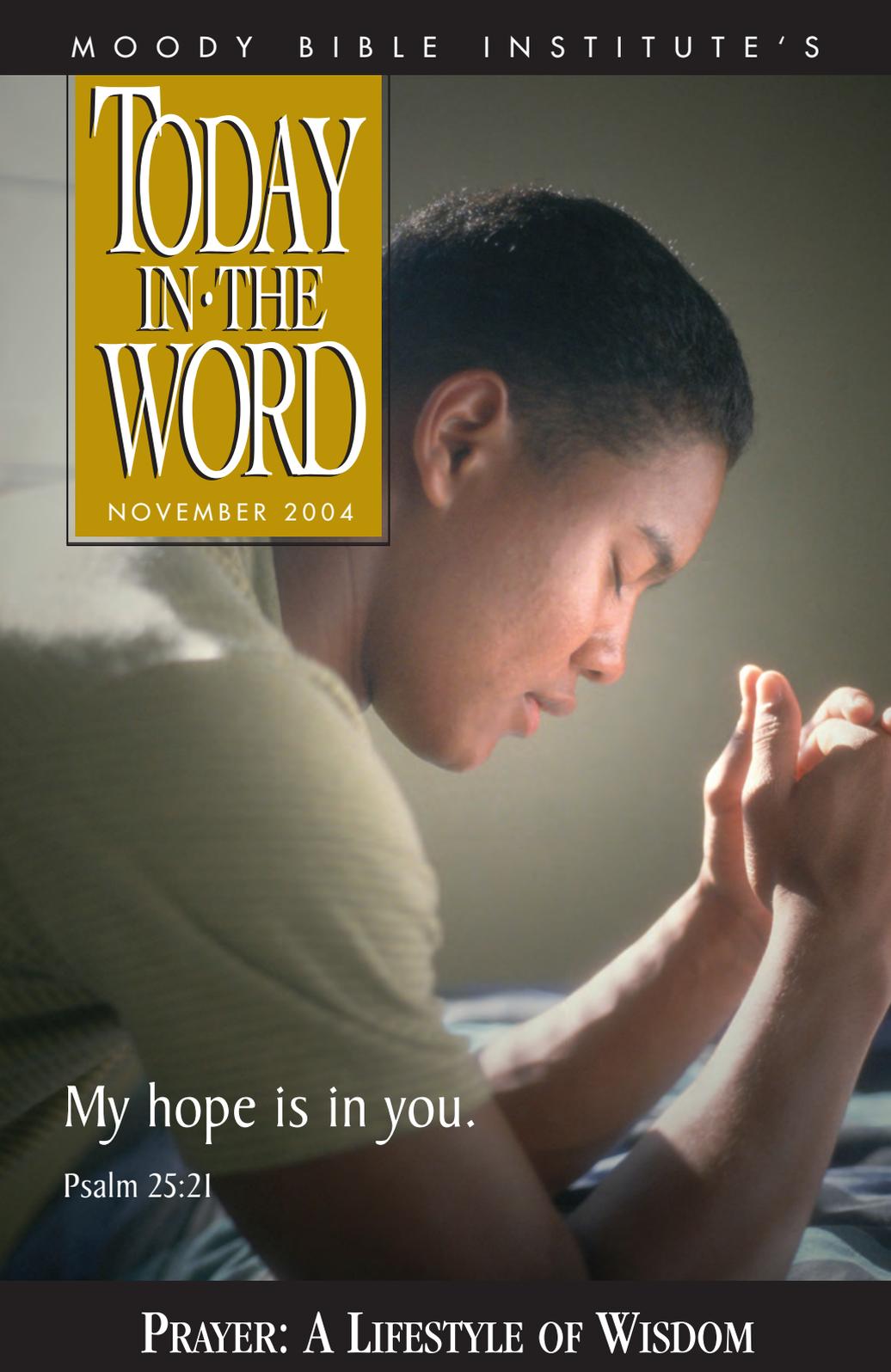


# TODAY IN·THE WORD

NOVEMBER 2004



My hope is in you.

Psalm 25:21

PRAYER: A LIFESTYLE OF WISDOM

# NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP

**F**rom an early age, my parents showed me the importance of prayer. I remember praying at bedtime and joining in family prayers at meal times. We were taught to thank God for all we had been given and to ask for His forgiveness and for His help in times of need.



When we were young, our requests were fairly simple: “Dear God, help me not to have bad dreams tonight” or a half hearted, “Dear God, forgive me for teasing my sister today and making her cry.” As children, we prayed with simple faith that God was listening, that God heard, that God knew what to do and could do it.

That sense of unswerving faith in the power of prayer stayed with me into my adult years. Perhaps the only major difference is that the issues I now bring to God seem to have gotten more complicated. Sometimes I turn to God with prayers that I am not even sure how to express in words. In times when wisdom is in short supply, my deepest prayers are often expressed in one single emphatic word: “What?” “How?” “Why?” “When?” And then, it’s time to listen to that quiet voice in my spirit that God so often uses to direct my thoughts and actions to the wisdom of His Word and His time-tested principles.

It is in these quiet times of prayer that I am glad to remind myself that I am not praying to an unknown entity . . . some mystical force or being.

I am praying to God, the Father, the Alpha and Omega. I am praying to the One who has seen the beginning and knows the end. I am praying to the God who created the universe, but cares enough to understand and to care

for my personal needs. What a gripping and stabilizing reality!

The words of David and the other psalmists that express their thoughts to God resonate deeply in my heart. I love the Psalms, not just because they are familiar and comforting, but because they are achingly honest. The Psalms are the heart cries of David and others, facing some of the most trying circumstances of their lives. Even King David recognized that the only person he could truly trust was his God.

In the first two sections of the Psalms, authored by King David, he repents of sin. He asks for help. He seeks God’s justice. He cries. He rejoices. But over and over again, he asks God for wisdom. David knew from personal experience that life’s problems could not be sorted out by even the best panel of advisors. For the real issues of life, he needed his God.

Some of the best-loved Psalms, echo these same pleas for God’s wisdom:

“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:1–2).

“Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands” (119:73).

Over and over again, the psalmists recognize that it is only from God that true help and wisdom is gleaned. When we face life’s most troubling situations, when we are backed into a corner with nowhere to turn and no one to talk to, we must follow the advice found in James 1:5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

*Stephen Stowell*

## ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

### *Gracious*

When Jonah was commanded to go Nineveh and prophesy to Israel's arch-enemies the Assyrians, he tried to travel as far in the other direction as was humanly possible (Jonah 1:3). The ruthlessness of Assyria's armies was legendary, but actually that was not what bothered Jonah. He was afraid of God's grace. When Jonah finally obeyed and the people of Nineveh repented, God showed compassion to them. "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home?" Jonah complained. "That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity" (Jonah 4:2).

Grace is often defined as "unmerited favor." While a helpful definition, it's important to realize that grace is also an attribute of God (Ex. 22:27). Frequently, this aspect of God's character is linked with His compassion in Scripture. He is repeatedly characterized as "gracious and compassionate" or "gracious and merciful" (cf. 2 Chron. 30:9; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 111:4; Joel 2:13). God's love disposes Him to act in grace toward those who, like the people of Nineveh, do not deserve to experience His compassion.

Jonah was not afraid for himself but for God. He foolishly tried to keep God from acting according to His nature. Fortunately, God's grace was greater than Jonah's folly.

### *Why Theology Matters*

*Although he did not recognize it at the time, God's willingness to extend His grace toward the people of Nineveh was vitally important for Jonah. The fact that God's grace was expansive enough to encompass the people of Nineveh meant that it was also large enough to include Jonah. This is the same grace that He shows to us. We can expect God to show compassion to all those who turn to Christ in faith: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).*

#### *For Further Reading*

For a perspective that looks at the story of Jonah as someone who has been called by God, read Eugene Peterson's book *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Eerdmans).



# MBI Today

NEWS OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS AT MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE  
NOVEMBER 2004

## What I'm Thankful For...

**MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE** might be located in the urban environs of downtown Chicago, but it's also situated in the heart of the Midwest. During this time of year the fields and farms that surround the city are bustling with activity as this year's crop of corn and soybeans is harvested from the fields. It's a spectacle that reminds us Thanksgiving is around the corner and that we do indeed have many things for which to be grateful. With this in mind, we decided to ask people around the MBI campus what they're thankful for.

By Lisa Ann Cockrel

I'm thankful for the opportunity to live and study in a community that is intensely focused on God, and I'm thankful for the relationships I have developed here with people who sincerely care about me spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

*JoEllen Veldt, senior, applied linguistics major*



I am so grateful for the team in Broadcasting that I've worked alongside for many years. They have sharpened me professionally, encouraged me personally, and will be lifelong friends. God has given us great community together as we serve Him by creating radio programs that honor Christ and His Word.

*Wayne Shepherd, manager of broadcast programming*

I'm thankful for the way that being at Moody has shown me the awesome sovereignty of God over my life. It's a recurring theme for me, and a somewhat humorous one—I make all kinds of seemingly brilliant plans, and then the Lord does something completely unexpected and wonderful. Being at Moody is just one more example of that for me.

*Amber Cummings, senior, print media major*



# Prayer: A Lifestyle of Wisdom

God works in mysterious ways, and prayer just might be the most mysterious of them all. It's so simple, a child can do it. But it's a concept so vast, the wisest scholars can't fully comprehend it.

Can that child really kneel down, close his eyes, and influence the plans of our Almighty God? Or does prayer simply open our eyes to the ever-present grace of our sovereign Father?

What we can all understand is that prayer is a lifestyle of depending on God, giving Him His due respect, and aligning our hearts with His. That is a lifestyle of wisdom, and this month in *Today in the Word*, we'll focus on the rewarding, indispensable practice of prayer.

We are blessed by God because, in addition to prayer, we have God's Word to us. Ours is not a one-way conversation. God expects us to hear His voice, and we encourage you to use the Scripture passages this month to enrich your prayer and direct your life.

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MANAGING EDITOR

Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Adam Kellogg

Elena Mafer

WRITER

Brad Baurain

DESIGN

Nancy Rudd

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Paul Currie

PERMISSIONS

Renee Oommen

1-800-DL MOODY

(356-6639)

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*Lord, teach us  
to pray.*

LUKE 11:1



## TODAY AT MOODY

While studying the wisdom of prayer this month, we invite you to join us in prayer for the Moody family as we lift up the needs of each department to the Lord. Rexton Baker, Melissa Davis, and William Gleason at Moody Aviation will appreciate your prayers today.

*Read: Matthew 6:5–15*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



The U.S. Census Bureau recently reported that 103 million American households, about 98 percent of the total, have telephone service at home. The press release also noted that Americans annually made 515 billion local and 98 billion toll calls, as well as logging 540 billion interstate long-distance minutes. An average family's phone bill ran \$914 per year. That's a lot of communication!

Do we invest the same kind of time and energy in communication with God? Prayer should certainly be a common part of our daily lives, as common as the telephone often is. In keeping with this year's overall theme of wisdom, our study this month focuses on Prayer: A Life of Wisdom. Following today's introduction, the bulk of the month will be spent in Book I of the Psalms (Psalms 1–41), then in the last week or so we'll add examples from elsewhere in Scripture. We want to flesh out a vivid picture of a life of prayer, to examine its many moods, forms, and variations. It is truly a discipline for all seasons.

The key to a satisfying prayer life is to have a personal relationship with God. Only then can we honestly say, "Our Father in heaven," as Jesus did in today's reading. His model prayer (vv. 9–13), which many congregations recite every Sunday, includes three key elements: (1) It's based on a personal relationship. (2) It centers around God's glory and

kingdom and an overwhelming desire for His will to be done.

(3) It includes petitions or requests, especially for daily needs, forgiveness, and protection from temptation. Note that Jesus specifically comments on the aspect of forgiveness at the conclusion of the prayer (vv. 14–15).

If we can learn biblical ideas and practices of prayer (vv. 5–8), we can take better advantage of the powerful privilege we have of going to God anytime about anything. May this month's study boost our prayer lives and increase our intimacy with Him!

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



No matter where we are in our prayer lives, there's always room for improvement. As we begin this month's study of prayer, search for some personal goals to set along the way. Ideally, these goals would flow from a Scripture or devotional reading that the Holy Spirit brings to your special attention. For example, you might choose to increase the time you spend in prayer and pray more regularly, to expand your range of prayer topics, to imitate biblical prayers, or to start a prayer journal as an aid to meditation.

*Read: Psalm 3*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



During His ministry on earth, Jesus put a great deal of time into training twelve special disciples. He taught them, told them parables, prayed for them, and answered their many questions. He had called them from many different walks of life to follow Him as friends. Imagine, then, how much it must have hurt Him to know that one of them would betray Him; what pain must have filled His final words to Judas: “Friend, do what you came for.” He was betrayed not by an enemy or a hostile religious leader, but by someone into whom He’d poured His best efforts (Matt. 26:14–25, 47–50).

That’s the way David felt in today’s psalm. His son, Absalom, had betrayed him and led a rebellion against his throne (see 2 Sam. 15–19)—David had bottomed out personally (as father), professionally (as king), and spiritually. At this lowest of low points, he fled to God in prayer.

The situation seemed hopeless. Enemies surrounded him and it appeared God had deserted him. Nonetheless, David’s faith remained strong. Even the lament of the opening verses is framed within the prayer, “O Lord.” Why? Because God was greater than the terrible situation David was in, even greater than the betrayal of his own son. He trusted that God would be his protection and seized on the picture of the Lord as a shield, an image also

found in Moses’ final blessing on the Israelites (Deut. 33:29). David declared his confidence that God would not only save him but give him the victory (v. 3). He was sure enough of God’s answer that he could sleep peacefully under the Lord’s protection, and sure enough to keep courage when foes were drawn up on every side.

The psalm closes with an emotional climax. David prayed that God would arise, sustain and rescue him, and strike down the wicked. He understood God’s character and demonstrated complete faith that He would deliver His anointed king.

Has someone close to you ever turned on you and betrayed your trust and love? The Lord will always be faithful, and you can take your heartache to Him in prayer.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Yesterday we mentioned that you might want to start a prayer journal as a possible goal this month. What do you write in such a journal? Here are a few suggestions: Keep a list of prayer requests and answers. Copy down powerful phrases from biblical or other published prayers. Jot down new prayer habits, goals, and ideas. Try to compose your own psalm or write out a prayer for a public occasion, such as Election Day. Write a diary entry on your perceptions and feelings about your current prayer life.

*To the Lord I  
cry aloud, and  
he answers me  
from his holy  
hill.*

PSALM 3:4



## TODAY AT MOODY

Today, please continue praying for the Moody Aviation Administration and the service of Evelyn Hawk, John Jordan, Mary McBee, and Jerry Thomas. Ask for God’s help and blessings for them as they help organize the learning process at Moody Aviation.

*Answer me  
when I call  
to you, O my  
righteous  
God. Give  
me relief from  
my distress.*

PSALM 4:1



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Please add to your prayers the staff of the Legal department under the leadership of General Counsel, Robert Gunter. All Moody ministries benefit from their knowledge and experience in legal matters. Our prayer today is that their service at Moody would always be pleasing to God.

#### *Read: Psalm 4*

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



Three-year-old Gabby Gingras suffers from a nerve disorder called hereditary sensory autonomic neuropathy Type 5. It's so rare that only about 25 people in the entire United States are thought to have it. In this disorder, pain sensations are blocked from reaching the brain. Gabby might break a tooth or skin a knee, but she would feel nothing. As a result, she doesn't know when she's injured herself, and her parents must keep a watchful eye on her at all times. The pain that would warn another child doesn't exist for her.

Gabby's condition shows us that pain has a purpose in the natural world. The same is true in the spiritual world—God can use difficulties to teach and transform us. But it's still not easy or pleasant, and so we cry out for comfort as David did: "Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer" (v. 1). When we pray, there's no need to tiptoe around our real thoughts and feelings—we can urgently and directly call on God. Such boldness is a sign of faith. It shows we believe He's the kind of God who wants and is able to respond to our prayers, just as David believed God was righteous and merciful and would come to his aid. "Give me relief" literally means "make a spacious place for me," a picture of freedom and security.

Whatever the exact situation was that prompted David to

write Psalm 4, the crisis clearly had a public dimension. Some people had turned to false idols and other delusions, which for their king meant his God-given glory was turned to shame (v. 2). They had made a huge mistake, though, for God keeps the promises He's made to the people He's chosen; therefore, He will surely answer the prayers of the godly. Godly people are ready to search their hearts and repent (v. 4), trust steadfastly, and worship rightly.

This prayer proclaims that God can be trusted despite painful and uncertain circumstances. Even beyond that affirmation, it confidently describes the answer to prayer, including a sense of God's presence, His joy, and His peace (vv. 6–8; cf. Isa. 26:3).

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we continue reading different psalms, you'll notice that the psalmist's body language is an important part of his prayer life. We might be used to kneeling or folding our hands. Such body language is meant to indicate humility, submission, and worship, though it sometimes becomes merely an unthinking habit.

Why not try to incorporate new body language into your prayer time today? What's one posture David used that you've never done in prayer? Make sure you understand what it means, then give it a try!

*Read: Psalm 5*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



In 1932, musician Thomas A. Dorsey experienced a shock. While singing in a revival meeting, he received a telegram saying his wife had just died in childbirth. A few days later, anguished and depressed, he sat down at a piano. As he toyed with the keys, a song emerged: “Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand. I am tired, I am weak, I am worn. Through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light. Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.” Today, Dorsey is considered the father of gospel music and “Precious Lord” is considered one of the greatest gospel songs ever.

Like “Precious Lord,” Psalm 5 is a prayer for help and refuge in times of trouble. As he had done in earlier psalms, David began by describing his situation. He felt discouraged and was waiting in faith for God to act (vv. 1–3). In his prayer, he described not only his own state but the “state of God” as well: God loves righteous and humble people, but abhors and judges the proud, dishonest, and violent (vv. 4–6).

Because of God’s character, David had a valid basis for confidence that God was on his side (vv. 7–12). He was humble and worshipful. He honored God’s lovingkindness, sought His presence, pursued righteousness with His help, and tried to live blamelessly before his enemies. They, on the other

hand, were untrustworthy, destructive, deceitful, and malicious. In a striking metaphor, their throats are compared to open graves (v. 9). They were on the side of death, not life. David loved God’s justice so much that he boldly called on Him to judge and punish such people. In the meantime, he would remain safe and glad, enjoying God’s favor and praising His blessings (cf. Ps. 30:5).

The differences in this prayer all revolve around the relationship with God. The wicked fall because of their rebellion against Him, while the righteous stand because He is our refuge, shield, and covering. Our defining quality should be love for His name (v. 11). Think about that the next time you pray “in Jesus’ name”!

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



One resource that can help you grow in your prayer life is the book *A Journey to Victorious Praying: Finding Discipline and Delight in Your Prayer Life*, by Bill Thrasher (Moody Publishers, 2003). Dr. Thrasher is a professor of Bible and theology at Moody Graduate School in Chicago, where he has taught a course on prayer for many years. Chapter titles include “Transforming Fear Into Faith,” “Realizing the Struggle of Prayer,” “Experiencing the Joy of Waiting,” and “Cultivating a Lifestyle of Worship.”

*Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.*

PSALM 5:11



## TODAY AT MOODY

Continue to keep MBI President, Dr. Joseph Stowell, in your prayers during this time of saying farewell to Moody and looking ahead to a new ministry. But today, he is at the Walk Through the Bible Conference in Florida—and we pray for safe travel and a spiritually rich time in the Word.

*O Lord, our  
Lord, how  
majestic is  
your name in  
all the earth!*

PSALM 8:9



#### TODAY AT MOODY

As you pray today, would you mention the MBI Trustees before the Lord? Join them as they ask God for wisdom and discernment in the search for Moody's next president. You can check the progress of the search at the Presidential Transitions section of [www.moody.edu](http://www.moody.edu).

#### *Read: Psalm 8*

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



William F. M. Buscombe had a passion for the stars. After his doctoral studies, he worked in Australia and was a pioneer in studying and classifying stars in the southern hemisphere. Later he taught at Northwestern University near Chicago. Since this is a difficult place to do astronomy, he compiled data from other researchers. The star catalog he published, *MK Spectral Classifications*, is considered a standard reference work in the field. He was working on the sixteenth edition when he died early last year.

As a young man, Buscombe left his agnosticism to become a practicing Quaker, or Friend, a faith he retained throughout his life. He studied the stars, and he studied their Creator. So can we! Today's psalm is a familiar one, perhaps so familiar you didn't realize it's a prayer addressed directly to the Lord. This prayer exalts God's "majesty," a term that can also be translated "noble," "magnificent," or "glorious." David perceived God's majesty in His creation, especially humanity, creation's crown jewel (vv. 3-5; cf. Heb. 2:6-8). Recognizing God's power and artistry displayed in the natural world, he marveled that He used His own "fingers" to set the stars in place.

Even more astounding than the galaxies of stars is what God has done with and for humanity. He has been "mindful" of us, that is, remembered

us in the sense of loving and caring for us. He created us, "crowned" us by making us in His image, and appointed us as rulers or stewards over the rest of the created world (cf. Gen. 1:28-30). As amazed as he is by the splendor of nature, David was even more amazed by the relational love God has shown and proved towards us. Even children must be able to see and respond to such an obvious truth, a fact that heaps coals on the heads of those who oppose God (v. 2; cf. Matt. 21:16; Rom. 1:19-20).

In modern times, the increasing ability of science to explain the natural world does not alter the substance of Psalm 8. If anything, all we now know should lead us to even greater praise for the orderly and intricate work of God, the creator and sustainer of the universe.

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Step outdoors for your prayer time today, and revel in the glory of God as seen in creation. If you're in an urban area, this application may take extra effort, but perhaps you can find a park or other natural setting.

You might even choose to do this at night, so that you can pray under the stars. "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" (Isa. 40:26).

*Read: Psalm 9*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



In *The Godhood of God*, A. W. Pink wrote, “To speak of the Godhood of God

is to say that the Helm is in His hand, and that He is steering according to His own good pleasure. To speak of the Godhood of God is to say that He is the Potter, that we are the clay, and that out of the clay He shapes one as a vessel to honor and another as a vessel to dishonor according to His own sovereign rights . . . To speak of the Godhood of God is to give the mighty Creator His rightful place; it is to recognize His exalted majesty; it is to [acknowledge] His universal scepter.”

In today’s reading, David praised God for His sovereignty over the nations, especially as seen in judgment on the wicked (which is unspecified but might have referred to an Israelite military victory). The language seems harsh—“rebuked,” “destroyed,” “blotted out their name,” “endless ruin,” “uprooted.” Are we really allowed to pray like this? The psalmist does use hyperbolic language, but clearly these sentiments are acceptable because they are rooted in the truth that God hates sin and judges righteously.

This core truth is seen clearly in verses 7 through 10. God is the eternal king of the universe, the righteous judge, the just sovereign. But this does not make Him distant or uncaring—He is also a “refuge for the oppressed.” His righteousness

and justice, expressed through love, mean that He is a protector and champion for the needy. He is faithful and more than worthy of our trust.

The best response to God’s sovereignty is to say and sing wholehearted praises, to “proclaim among the nations” the “wonders” of the One who rules us all with both authority and lovingkindness. And like David, we can pray that He will do more of the same—that is, pass judgment on the wicked and give them their just desserts. In their pride, they may “forget,” neglect, and disrespect God, but the psalmist is sure He will act to put things in right perspective (v. 20).

Understood properly, all truths about God’s character and actions are occasions for praise. Let this fact add new dimensions to your prayer life!

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Prayer that shows faith in God’s sovereignty is as close as your daily newspaper. If you wish, pray with it open in front of you today. Was a child rescued from danger? Praise the Lord. Are you concerned about foreign policy? Ask for God’s will to be done. Are unemployment rates climbing? Intercede for the needs of the poor. As you pray your way through the headlines, do not become anxious, but rather remember that God is in control and rest in that truth.

*He will judge  
the world in  
righteousness;  
he will govern  
the peoples  
with justice.*

PSALM 9:8



## TODAY AT MOODY

As Moody’s Provost Dr. Charles Dyer can attest, through all the administrative transitions the goal of MBI education remains the same—training young people of today for the ministry and Christian leadership of tomorrow. Please pray together with Dr. Dyer for the future of MBI.

# Question & Answer

**Q** *Why do Christians believe that theirs is the only true religion?*

**A** We Christians are not the only ones who believe that ours is the only true religion. Many Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and adherents of other religions also believe that they alone have the truth, that they alone know God and the way of salvation. That conviction is inherent in religious belief.

However, Christianity is unique. It claims to be a revelation from God, and explains other systems of religious belief as distortions of the truth (Rom. 1:18–32). Because they refused to honor God as God, the pagan mind became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Hence the invention of religions that have warped, absurd concepts of God and that cannot adequately define or explain sin or offer a Savior from its terrible consequences.

Christianity's view of human nature is bright and dark at the same time: though made in the image of God, we are innately sinful. But God has provided a way of salvation that does not require a self-improvement plan, as do man-made systems of belief. Such plans are doomed from the start. Instead, God offers a free pardon and an irrevocable promise of eternal life.

Anyone who *really* needs assurance that Christianity is superior to all other systems has never believed the gospel. True belief includes the

conviction that “there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

**Q** *Isn't God unfair to save millions of westerners and only a tiny percentage of Asians and people living in the Middle East?*

**A** The first truth to fix in our minds is that God is *not* unfair. To say that He is unfair is to confuse *perception* with *fact*. The general perception is that not many non-westerners have been saved. However, we have precious few facts about the history of salvation throughout the world. *We do not know* how many westerners or Asians have been and are being saved.

What we do know is that first, God so loved *the world* that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16); second, Christ “is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2); third, God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4); and fourth, God is “not wanting anyone to perish” (2 Peter 3:9).

These verses mean that God has

provided a remedy for the spiritual needs of *everybody*. Furthermore, the way to salvation is the same for everybody in every age: by faith. God could not ask less of anybody, nor does He ask more. He is not unfair. Why the response to His provision of salvation seems to have varied and continues to vary around the world is puzzling to us, but the issue is human response, not divine fairness.

#### *Why did Mary Magdalene*

**Q** *not recognize Jesus when He appeared to her at the tomb (John 20:10–18)?*

A couple of explanations are possible:

**A** first, it was not yet light enough to recognize Him. Second, He was changed. The pair on the road to Emmaus also failed to recognize Him (Luke 24:18).

As for Mary, additional factors may have been her overwrought state of mind and the peculiar circumstances: she was weeping and being confronted by angels dressed in glistening clothing. She was perturbed, possibly frightened, and when—after answering the angels—she turned around, Jesus was there standing in the shadows. It was probably a relief to her mind to think that He was

the gardener. Then He spoke her name, and the rest is one of the most beautiful scenes in the Bible.

**Q** *I don't have any friends. What can I do to make friends?*

**A** Evidently you are very lonely; you have had no luck in finding friends, not even in the church you attend. That, I think, is an indictment of your church. A New Testament metaphor for the church is *family*. One of my African friends always signs his letters with his name, adding “a member of the family of Jesus.”

There must be a solution to the loneliness of friendless believers. Maybe God expects you to take the initiative. Look for someone who also needs someone to reach out, maybe a person incapable of helping herself. Recently, I heard about an old man who began to write personal letters to people on his church's mailing list. Within a few months, his life was more satisfying than he could have imagined.

*Christianity's  
view of human  
nature is  
bright and  
dark at the  
same time.*

*Arise, Lord!  
Lift up your  
hand, O God.  
Do not forget  
the helpless.*

PSALM 10:12



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Our faculty is the driving force behind the excellence of Moody education. Thank the Lord today for leading godly teachers to come and teach here. Today our prayers focus on the Sports Ministry faculty: Kirk Baker, Dana Daly, Daniel Dunn, Joseph Harding, and Jean Penfound.

#### *Read: Psalm 10*

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



The United Nations recently estimated that 25,000 people a day die of hunger around the world. Every year, six million children under the age of five suffer from hunger. There are about 840 million malnourished people globally, with 95 percent of them in developing nations. While the number of such people has decreased in Asia, it has actually increased in Africa. In addition, as many as two billion people are said to be undernourished—that is, they are technically getting enough to eat, but their diets lack key nutrients.

The hungry are often victims of war, corruption, or greed. When we hear about the poor and the powerless, we should be moved to prayer, as the psalmist was in today's reading. Many commentators think Psalms 9 and 10 were originally a single composition, and indeed a running thread through both is that a sovereign and just God upholds those who cannot stand on their own. Yesterday we focused on God's sovereignty, today we'll look more at how He cares for the victims of the world.

In this prayer, the oppressors are described as arrogant, powerful, wicked, self-confident, and self-centered. They hunt, trap, lie, threaten, ambush, plot against, and crush those who stand in their way or have something they want. Their attitude toward God is even worse. They

pay no attention to Him or His laws, and when they do they slander His name, claiming that He either doesn't see or won't do anything (vv. 11, 13). Their sinful appetites are the center of their lives (v. 3; Phil. 3:18–19).

Although such observations might make it feel as though God is far away (v. 1), David prayed for Him to teach the oppressors a severe lesson and break their power. He believed that God does see and will hold the wicked accountable. After all, He is the “helper of the fatherless” (v. 14). He hears and encourages the afflicted and steps up to defend the victim—there's a special place for them in His heart (Isa. 61:1). Why? Justice must be done, and people must understand their finite place in the order of things (v. 18).

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Let today's psalm inspire you to pen your own prayer for the powerless.

You might pray for a specific group—babies who are aborted, addicts trapped in their own desires, or people victimized by unjust social structures.

You might pray in general, calling on God to help anyone in need today. Or you might pray evangelistically, asking the Lord to save powerless individuals in bondage to sin. As you compose your prayer, be sure to include descriptions of God's love for such people.

*Read: Psalm 12*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



The summer of 2003 set a record for tornadoes. In the first ten days of

May, over 400 tornadoes were reported in the midwestern and southern United States. President Bush issued disaster declarations for Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kansas, and Missouri. In Oklahoma alone, more than 130 people were injured, more than 300 homes and businesses were destroyed, and storm-caused damage hit \$100 million.

“We just don’t have a down day,” said a meteorologist at the time. “It just doesn’t seem to stop.” That’s what David must have felt like in Psalm 12. All around him, evil seemed to be winning the day. It appeared as though the godly had vanished from society. That wasn’t literally true, of course, but it reflects the psalmist’s very human fear and depression at that moment. “Help, Lord,” sounds like a feeble cry under the circumstances! But David was looking in the right direction (v. 1).

His prayer is refreshingly straightforward. He told God what he saw and asked Him to do something about it. He saw people lying, flattering, and boasting, and prayed for God to cut off their tongues. He saw people living for themselves first, and prayed for God’s perfect Word to be revealed. He saw people oppressing the weak, and prayed for Him to watch over the needy. David

fully trusted God to answer these prayers. After all, His Word is enduring and pure, like silver repeatedly refined in a furnace (Isa. 40:8). And yet . . . it did seem that the wicked were running the show, and on that note the prayer ends (v. 8). David honestly portrayed the situation at that time—all was not well with the world. But his faith was strong enough to look the facts full in the face and still believe God would act.

How might we pray when it seems evil is prevailing? Like David, we can be honest and straightforward in describing how sinful people act in sinful ways. Like David, we should put our confidence in the flawless Word of God. And like David, we must trust absolutely in the Lord as our protector and body-guard (v. 7).

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Today might be a good point at which to reflect on what you’ve learned in this first week of Prayer: A Life of Wisdom. Have you noticed any differences between David’s prayers and your own? Has the Spirit convicted you about anything specific? Do you feel burdened in any area? Are there topics about which you’d like to find out more?

Take time to reflect on what we are reading, as the Holy Spirit often uses these times of prayerful thoughtfulness to guide and encourage us.

*Help, Lord,  
for the  
godly are no  
more; the  
faithful have  
vanished from  
among men.*

PSALM 12:1



## TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Thomas Shaw, Vice President of Student Services, oversees the work of the Registrar’s and Admissions Offices, Student and Career Development, and the Alumni Association. Your prayers will be an encouragement and a blessing for him through all these numerous work responsibilities.

*How long  
must I  
wrestle with  
my thoughts  
and every day  
have sorrow  
in my heart?*

PSALM 13:2



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Today, please join us in prayer for the Moody Alumni Association staff: Walter White, Byron Fujii, Patrick Brydline, and Mildred Benson. Their ministry to thousands of Moody alumni around the world helps our multi-generational Moody family stay connected.

#### Read: Psalm 13

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



A little more than a year ago, Jane Barbe of Georgia died of complications from cancer. For the previous forty years, she had recorded messages for telephone companies nationwide. We've probably all heard her say, "We're sorry, your call cannot be completed as dialed" or "The number you reached has been changed. The new number is . . ." Her voice was heard by 22 million people a day!

Hearing Barbe's voice meant that you would have to wait or try again to make your call. Sometimes it can feel that way with God. Does He plan to keep us "on hold" forever? The forceful "How long?" that opens Psalm 13 even sounds mildly accusatory. Does He know what He's doing? Does He have a plan? Has He forgotten us? "Forget" is an even stronger word in Hebrew than it sounds in English, suggesting neglect and lack of care (v. 1).

In his prayer, David described his feelings of abandonment through poetic repetition, hyperbole, strong word choices, and evocative imagery. He felt forgotten. He couldn't sense God's presence. He wrestled internally with loneliness, doubt, and sorrow, and externally his enemies seemed to be triumphing. Some commentators believe the king was suffering from a serious illness because of the "sleep in death" reference (v. 3), but it's more

likely that David spoke hyperbolically, exaggerated for effect in order to show his desperate state of mind.

These are strong feelings, but faith is always more than feeling. David's prayer continued by calling on the Lord to "Look on me and answer." Despite God's apparent silence and inaction, he still believed in God as "my God" (v. 3) and he still desired God's presence most of all. That's why his first request was "Look on me"—the opposite of God hiding His face. He closed his prayer on a strong note of faith and joy—for him, the bottom line was God's unflinching love, and so he could say God "has been good to me" or "dealt bountifully with me" (NASB) as if it had already happened.

Waiting on God can make us feel like we are alienated from Him. Prayer is our lifeline!

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



By now we see clearly how psalms can be a rich resource for our personal prayer lives. Prayers from church history can also inspire us as we see the faith and insight of those who have run the race before us. A book of such prayers can be an encouraging resource, for instance, *Classic Christian Prayers*, edited by Owen Collins (Random House, 2003). This inexpensive volume can be ordered through your local Christian bookstore or a Web site such as [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com).

*Read: Psalm 15*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



One of the classics in the devotional literature of church history is The

Practice of the Presence of God, by Brother Lawrence, a seventeenth-century French monk. He learned to sense and enjoy God's presence no matter what he did, whether praying or washing dishes. He recounts his experience through the book's collection of letters and conversations. He once said, "I walk before God simply, in faith, with humility and with love; and I apply myself diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease Him. I hope that when I have done what I can, He will do with me what He pleases."

To dwell in God's presence was also David's purpose and joy. We saw yesterday how much God's presence meant to him, and today's psalm focuses entirely on seeking this blessing (cf. Ps. 24:3-6). The question of verse 1 defines the theme and is addressed to the Lord, and the answer that follows is a sort of descriptive prayer. The answer not only describes the person who dwells in God's presence, it is also a prayer to be or become such a person. When we seek to deepen our prayer lives and draw closer to God, as we're doing in this month's devotional study, we should pray to be made into this kind of person.

So, what kind of people can enjoy God's presence? What

qualities does God love? The list is daunting. They must be blameless, upright, righteous, and truth-loving. They must love those who love God and keep their promises no matter what the cost. They need to control their tongues, avoiding lies, slander, and gossip. They should be generous, just, and compassionate, certainly not selfish people who flout God's commands or trample on the poor. They should hate sin as God does (v. 4).

"He who does these things will never be shaken" (v. 5). This is a picture of someone in a strong position, standing firm—not thanks to his own greatness or might, but because of the greatness and might of God to whom he has drawn near.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



David desired above all else to enjoy God's presence:

"One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple" (Ps. 27:4). Using today's psalm as a model, pray to become or to be made into this kind of person—one who wants intimacy with God above anything else life has to offer.

*Lord, who  
may dwell  
in your  
sanctuary?  
Who may live  
on your  
holy hill?*

PSALM 15:1



## TODAY AT MOODY

MBI's Educational Resources under the leadership of Dr. Michael Kane brings the cutting-edge technology into our classrooms, as well as introducing students to our global classroom on the Internet. Dr. Kane welcomes your prayers for his staff.

*I have set the  
Lord always  
before me.  
Because he  
is at my  
right hand,  
I will not  
be shaken.*

PSALM 16:8



#### TODAY AT MOODY

For the next three days, please continue to keep Educational Resources in prayer, specifically its Educational Technical Services department. Thank the Lord today for the dedicated service of Steven Albrecht, Michael Arman, Timothy Canfield, and Konrad Finck.

#### Read: Psalm 16

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



Early American theologian Jonathan Edwards wrote that believers should have “a real sense of the excellency of God, and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things . . . a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He [does not] merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart. There is not only a rational belief that God is holy, and that holiness is a good thing; but there is a sense of the loveliness of God’s holiness.”

In today’s reading, the psalmist has this sense of God. God was all the world to him: “Apart from you I have no good thing” (v. 2; cf. Ps. 73:25). This didn’t mean that David wasn’t thankful for his family, kingship, and other blessings. It simply meant that God Himself is incomparably greater than any of His gifts—that He was the all-sufficient, all-satisfying joy, truth, and purpose of David’s life. The king delighted to worship with other believers who thirsted after God in the same way (v. 3).

What had God done for David? He had given him wisdom and strength. In contrast to

the “libations of blood” poured out by pagans to their idols, the true Lord had given the king a cup of blessings and a generous portion of His goodness. The pictures of land and food pictures communicate feelings of peace, prosperity, and safety, all grounded in a personal relationship with God. Only as a child of God would David have been able to speak of the “delightful inheritance” from and of his heavenly Father (v. 6). Part of that inheritance was eternal life (vv. 9–10; cf. Acts 2:25–33).

The prayer’s final verse summarizes how the psalmist personally experienced the greatness of God. God’s wisdom showed him the path of life, and His presence brought eternal pleasure and joy.

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



What is your favorite verse from this psalm? Study and meditate deeply on each word, each phrase, then say it to the Lord as your own heartfelt prayer. Don’t just recite the verse, but rather explore its meanings and implications, paraphrase it in modern terms, or pray it back in relation to your own circumstances.

If you’re not sure which verse to select, we encourage you to consider verse 2, 6, 8 (printed in the sidebar), or 11. Praying through Scripture is a good habit to develop!

*Read: Psalm 17*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



The room is quiet and dark, save for a small lamp on a stand by the door.

A wooden crib stands against one wall, near a changing table. A few toys and books lie scattered on the floor. The mother sits quietly in a rocking chair, cradling her baby girl and singing softly. It's bedtime. The child snuggles closer and closes her eyes.

At that moment, all is well and right in that child's world. She is completely secure and at peace in her mother's arms. Our hearts should rest so securely in God's love—a key attitude of prayer we see in Psalm 17.

The early verses of this psalm are a faith-filled call for God to hear and answer. As we've seen elsewhere, David was confident in God's justice—He would vindicate him. David could have this confidence because he had been righteous in thought, word, and deed. He humbly invited God to test and examine him, so this was not a prideful claim. He was willing to submit to the perfect Judge. And he didn't claim to have achieved righteousness on his own, but freely admitted he had avoided the path of sin through following God's Word (vv. 3–5).

David prayed that God would show His love and power in order to demonstrate their special relationship to outsiders. His confidence flowed primarily from this personal relationship,

described in various ways: God was his place of refuge. He was to God the “apple of your eye,” that is, the pupil, especially valuable and worthy of protection. God was to him a mother bird, covering a chick with her wings (vv. 7–8).

The psalmist went on to describe and to condemn the wicked who were attacking him. Their reward was in this life only, whereas David looked forward to seeing the face of God (vv. 14–15; cf. Matt. 6:19–21). Secure in God's love, he desired no more than this, and so he prayed in serene faith, knowing that “the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer” (1 Peter 3:12).

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



How does it feel to rest securely in God's loving strength? Our

illustration gave a picture of a mother holding her baby. David used images such as hiding in a strong tower, walking on a straight path, and a mother bird covering her chicks with her wings. What about you? What does it feel like to you personally? If you wish, make a metaphor or word picture to express your answer. This can be a creative way to express your love and trust in your heavenly Father.

*Keep me as  
the apple  
of your eye;  
hide me in  
the shadow of  
your wings.*

PSALM 17:8



## TODAY AT MOODY

Again, we'd like to pray for the Educational Technical Services staff: Martin Hartley, Scott Karow, Robert Rutherford, and Frederick Schultz. Thank the Lord for their work of facilitating the learning process and enriching our students' experience at Moody.

*I call to the  
Lord, who  
is worthy  
of praise,  
and I am  
saved from  
my enemies.*

PSALM 18:3



#### TODAY AT MOODY

In conclusion of our prayer time for the ETS department, please add to your prayer list the names of Thomas Csora and Julie Kistenich who celebrated their second anniversary at Moody this year. We also congratulate Gregory Skorik on 15 years of serving Christ at MBI.

#### *Read: Psalm 18*

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



The legendary Civil War General “Stonewall” Jackson was once accidentally hit by “friendly fire” from his own Confederate soldiers. At a field hospital, they amputated his shattered left arm. General Robert E. Lee commented, “He has lost his left arm, but I have lost my right,” and the army buried the arm in a family plot near the hospital. Today, visitors can find there a plaque reading simply, “Arm of Stonewall Jackson, May 2, 1863.” The rest of General Jackson, of course, went on fighting until his death after the Battle of Chancellorsville.

As strong and famous as “Stonewall” Jackson’s left arm was, God’s “right hand” is even more powerful and glorious (v. 35). Today’s psalm is a prayer of praise to God the mighty warrior who rescued David and made him king (cf. 2 Sam. 22). Its main theme is the saving character of the Lord and how He exercises His power to protect and deliver those who love and follow Him (vv. 1–3).

The heart of the prayer is a narrative that symbolizes salvation, through David’s testimony of what God had done for him (vv. 4–19). He vividly pictured his situation as one of bondage, drowning, or similar miserable and life-threatening circumstances. In his distress, he prayed for help, then watched as the incredible Divine Warrior rushed to his aid and won the battle in awe-inspiring fashion.

God snatched him from danger and set him in a “spacious place,” both secure and free.

God answered David’s prayer because He delights in His worshipers, so Psalm 18 goes on to explain what such people are like (vv. 20–29, see also Nov. 10). David also returned to the theme of God’s greatness and mighty perfection and described how He had empowered him to win even more victories. Though David claimed amazing strength and extraordinary speed, he wasn’t boasting in himself, but in the Lord: “You stoop down to make me great” (v. 35).

The bottom line is that God is worthy of praise because He’s faithful to His covenant, watches over His people, and controls the destinies of the nations (vv. 46–50).

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, He has rescued you just as surely and powerfully as He rescued David in today’s psalm.

Praise Him by praying today through your personal testimony. Remember your salvation and all the factors through which God led you to Himself. Reflect on what your life might have been like without His mighty help. You can do the same with any personal experience in which the Lord acted to overcome a “powerful enemy” or pull you out of “deep waters.”

*Read: Psalm 20*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



In September 2002, recounts the syndicated News of the Weird column, a New York art student “painted randomly chosen words on about 60 meandering cows to see if they would inadvertently line up to form poetry. At about the same time, in England, [a writer] did the same thing with sheep (except that she chose the words of only one poem, to see if the sheep could form another poem). An arts council granted [her] about \$3,400 for her project, which she said would break down the boundaries between ‘literature’ and ‘quantum mechanics.’”

These bizarre ideas of what constitutes a poem contrast with the beautiful linguistic artistry we’ve been seeing in the Psalms. It’s especially apparent in Psalm 20, a public prayer for the king and his army as they headed into battle. Commentators aren’t sure exactly who’s speaking when, but the first five verses were probably spoken by the people (or the army) to the king, then the next three by a priest or Levite (or possibly the king himself), with the last verse essentially being the people’s closing amen.

The people prayed for a series of requests. They asked God to answer the prayers of His anointed king, just as He promised to do. They asked Him to protect, send help, and grant support in the battle to come. They asked Him to

remember and accept the sacrifices and worship offered to Him by His people—an acknowledgment of their covenant relationship. And they prayed that He would give David the desire of his heart and make his plans succeed. This “desire” was not merely for a battle to be won, but for the name of the Lord to be glorified and exalted among the nations.

The respondent assured those gathered that yes, God is a God who answers prayer, gives victories, and is faithful to His people. The nation was right to trust in Him rather than in military strength; those who rely on the latter fall, while those who walk in God’s strength stand firm. With glad shouts and flag-waving, the people praised God in anticipation of receiving these requests (v. 5; cf. Ps. 21).

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



A New Testament application of today’s psalm may be found in 1 Timothy 2:1–2: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority.” On this basis, we encourage you to pray today for our political leaders, including those at the local, state, and national levels. In light of Psalm 20, you might also remember the armed forces engaged in the ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere.

*Some trust  
in chariots  
and some in  
horses, but we  
trust in the  
name of the  
Lord our God.*

PSALM 20:7



## TODAY AT MOODY

Today’s performance of Handel’s Messiah presents a great opportunity to pray for our students—those performing, working behind the scenes, as well as those in the audience. Please uphold them in prayer—and may the name of God’s Son shine in our students’ hearts.

*Guide me in  
your truth  
and teach  
me, for you  
are God my  
Savior; and  
my hope is  
in you all  
day long.*

PSALM 25:5



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Your prayers are especially important for Edward Cannon, Executive Vice President, and for the leadership team of the Institute at this time of transition and paradigm changes, which call for important executive decisions and reliance on God's leading.

#### *Read: Psalm 25*

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



Are you too busy to pray? Well, then, hire someone to do it for you! Believe it or not, prayers-for-hire is a growing business in the Philippines. If people want something—for example, to pass a bar or medical exam—they pay a “prayer lady” to ask God for it while they continue working or studying.

No doubt God is appalled when He hears these prayers-for-pay. One reason is because at the heart of true prayer is a personal relationship between God and His people. We've mentioned the relational aspect of prayer several times already this month, and we'll give it special attention in today's psalm.

David opened his prayer with a simple but profound statement about the relationship between himself (as the king) and God (as the King). God is the righteous protector of His people who would bring their enemies to shame. He is worthy of the wholehearted trust David placed in Him.

A series of petitions and praises made in the context of this relationship follow, many of which focus on David's desire to know God better. He prayed that God would teach and guide him in the way of truth and obedience, the only way that he could have any genuine hope. He also prayed that God would “remember” him—meaning, as we've seen before, that God would remain loving and faithful

to him. Only God's mercy and love could cover and cleanse his sins. The psalmist was confident that God is the sort of God who can and will answer such requests. He affirmed that God instructs sinners and forgives wrongdoing. He loves people who are humble, repentant, and obedient, and who revere Him. Best of all, “The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.” In this relationship, God Himself has taken the initiative and shared His “secrets,” as friends do (v. 14; cf. John 15:14).

David prayed about his circumstances toward the end of the psalm, but he kept his eyes fixed on God, his Friend for all seasons (vv. 20–21).

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we see in Psalm 25 and elsewhere, the idea of a personal relationship with God is a key facet of the life of prayer.

We sometimes imagine ourselves presenting a petition to a king, forgetting that we are the king's beloved child with constant access to His presence. Reflect on this truth of your personal relationship with God, especially considering the relationship between David and the Lord we've seen in Scripture so far this month.

*Read: Psalm 26*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



Constant complaining can injure a person's health, according to Dr. Matthew Budd of the Harvard Medical School, "There is no action, just anger and hostility. Chronic complainers put themselves in a heightened mood state that disrupts the physiology of the body. There is a higher risk of heart disease associated with anger and hostility. . . . People who complain a lot see themselves as victims. They are prone to an increased sense of hopelessness, which is tied to [stress and] depression."

The antidote for a complaining or bitter spirit is trust in the Lord, especially in His justice. Rather than worrying or becoming angry, we should follow David's example in today's reading and pray for vindication. His prayer is neatly summarized in verse 1, which is also our verse for today. The request—justice. The doer—God. The basis—the innocence and faith of the psalmist.

The plea of innocence was not a proud or blind one, for David confessed his sinfulness in other psalms. Here he invited God to examine him, preferred God's house over the "assembly of evildoers," and cited righteous actions as evidence of his worshipful heart. He didn't claim perfection, only a certainty that what he was suffering was undeserved.

Assuming God accepted his claim, and assuming His

sovereign power as well, David renewed his prayer for vindication. David's righteousness could not save him—he needed the mercy and redemption of the Lord (v. 11). Verse 12 is a beautiful, confident conclusion: "My feet stand on level ground; in the great assembly I will praise the Lord." Level ground is smooth; there are no hidden holes or stumbling blocks. In the same way, God's justice is the most secure place to take a stand.

Modern Christians are sometimes afraid to be as bold as David. Somehow we feel more comfortable asking for grace to endure, but hesitant to use David's strong language. Actually, though, this is a trumpet fanfare of David's faith (cf. Pss. 7 and 35). It's biblical, and it should be part of the life of prayer.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If even secular researchers can see the danger of a bitter or critical attitude, so should we.

Is there anyone you need to forgive today? Some grudge you've been nursing in secret? Let it go, forgive that person, surrender your wrong and hurt to the Lord, and trust Him to make it right and see that justice gets done (Rom. 12:19). No one is saying this will be easy. You may need to wrestle in prayer. But God will give you the grace to do what you should do.

*Vindicate me,  
O Lord, for  
I have led a  
blameless  
life. I have  
trusted in the  
Lord without  
wavering.*

PSALM 26:1



## TODAY AT MOODY

Please include Keith Hadley from the Training department in your prayers today, as he helps all our employees to enhance their professional knowledge and understanding of various processes in the workplace. We never stop growing!

*Praise be  
to the Lord,  
for he has  
heard my cry  
for mercy.*

PSALM 28:6



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Will you please pray for Vice President of Publications, Greg Thornton, and all the work that his staff has done to create and distribute life-changing, faith-building literature? God empowers their efforts, and your prayer support is vital.

#### *Read: Psalm 28*

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



An annual survey by Massachusetts Institute of Technology asks

Americans what invention they hate most but can't live without. This year, the cell phone earned this dubious distinction, with the alarm clock and television as runners-up. A full 30 percent of the survey's respondents named the cell phone as the top "love it, hate it" part of their lives. They like the freedom it gives them to communicate, but dislike the feeling that they are never away from work or truly alone.

Just as we may hate it but feel still we need a cell phone, because of pride we hate to ask for God's mercy, even though we know we need it. In today's psalm, we find a model prayer for mercy. It begins with a call to the Lord. He's the only one who can hear and answer, and encouragingly, He certainly will answer—He's a dependable Rock. To David, an unanswered prayer would be like death (v. 1). He went on to acknowledge God's justice with fear and trembling. Evil people show no respect for the Lord and would be torn down. David knew that he had done wrong, but he still honored and worshiped God and prayed not to share their terrible fate.

The psalmist had such confidence in answered prayer that he immediately rejoiced in the gift of God's mercy: "My heart leaps for joy and I will give

thanks to Him in song" (v. 7). Why did God say yes? Because it is in His nature to do so. He is the strength and shield of His people, a "fortress of salvation" for His chosen king. When we as weak people need help, forgiveness, protection, and so much more, God delights to answer our trusting prayers with His power, wisdom, and love.

As the psalm's closing verse says, the Lord is indeed our shepherd who carries us forever. "He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart" (Isa. 40:11; cf. Isa. 46:3-4). "He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul" (Ps. 23:2-3).

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In response to the final line of today's psalm, sing "Savior, Like a Shepherd

Lead Us" to close your time of personal devotions and prayer. Singing hymns and choruses as part of your devotions can add another dimension to your walk with the Lord. If you don't have a hymnbook at home, you can buy one at your local Christian bookstore. Because they are printed in large quantities, many are quite inexpensive. Purchase one soon and begin putting it to good use!

*Read: Psalm 30*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



When the United States imprisoned Japanese-Americans during World War

II, some of them coped through music. In fact, swing bands popped up in all the internment camps. “The music got our minds off the war and what was happening to us,” said one bandleader. “Because we were so concerned about the music, it took our minds off of the bad things. I’m sure prisoners of all kinds do this kind of thing—find some way to take your mind off of your misery. Otherwise, you’d go crazy.”

Making music helped Japanese-Americans endure their difficult and unjust situation. At one level, it transformed grief into happiness, at least for the younger people. At a spiritual level, transforming weeping into dancing is what God is all about, as David testified in today’s psalm of thanksgiving. He had wanted to replace the tabernacle with a permanent place of worship, but God had determined it would be David’s son who would be given this privilege, not David (cf. 2 Sam. 7). For someone who loved the Lord as passionately as he did, this must have been a cause of grief. Later, God gave the king an opportunity to buy the land for the future temple as part of his public repentance for numbering the army, and he prepared selected building materials as well (see 1 Chron. 21–22).

How thrilled David must have been that God allowed him to do this! His sorrow was turned into joy. His heart was so much in this project that he even composed a psalm for a day he would never see—the day his son Solomon dedicated the finished temple.

In this psalm, David admitted that God had been angry with him, no doubt due to his sin mentioned above. But once he repented, God’s favor had been restored (v. 5). Anger is implied to be something like a guest in this verse; it wasn’t the normal state of the relationship. God’s abundantly merciful response to David’s repentant faith transformed the situation from weeping to dancing, from extreme sorrow to exuberant joy, and from His hidden face to restored intimacy.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



What do you want God to change in your life? What do you know that He needs to change? We serve a God who transforms weeping into dancing, so pray in faith about this issue today. There is no need to whine, demand, or doubt. He already knows your need and wants His very best for your life. You can step forward boldly in prayer and believe that He will do whatever is necessary to clothe you with His joy (v. 11).

*You turned  
my wailing  
into dancing;  
you removed  
my sackcloth  
and clothed  
me with joy.*

PSALM 30:11



## TODAY AT MOODY

Moody Publishers  
Sales staff—Gene Eble,  
Vicki Lange, Laurence  
Rogers, Damien  
Trimuel, and Roger  
Williams—will be  
grateful for the prayer  
support of the Moody  
community for the pub-  
lishing ministry of the  
Institute. We ask that  
the Lord would con-  
tinue to bless Moody  
Publishers.

*Let your  
face shine on  
your servant;  
save me in  
your unfa-  
iling love.*

PSALM 31:16



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Today, as we still keep Moody Publishers in our prayers, please include its General Management staff—William Thrasher and Judy Bertucci—in your time with God. Thank God in prayer for their ministry of spreading the Word in print.

#### *Read: Psalm 31*

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



North Korea is the country that most intensely persecutes Christians, according to a World Watch List updated annually by the Open Doors organization. Other areas high on the list include Saudi Arabia, Laos, the central highlands of Vietnam, and Iran. In the isolated Communist nation of North Korea, tens of thousands of believers have been executed or imprisoned for being Christians—to practice one’s faith openly is very dangerous. Yet reports indicate the church there continues to grow!

How can we pray about this persecution? The psalmist showed us a way in today’s reading. Though we don’t know the exact situation, David seemed to be faced with a murderous conspiracy (v. 13). In the face of trouble, he took refuge in the Lord and proclaimed his faith in God’s strength, trustworthiness, loving care, and ability to rescue and guide him. He believed that God saw and understood the anguish of his soul and had already responded with grace (v. 8).

David’s faith enabled him to rejoice, but his pain was real and he didn’t pretend otherwise. He spoke of sorrow, grief, groaning, and affliction. Both body and soul were in agony—he compared himself to broken pottery. Socially, he was an object of contempt. His friends had deserted him. His joy was

not a smiley-button pasted on over the pain—rather, it was deeper than the pain. That’s why he was able to say, “You are my God,’ My times are in your hands.” He trusted God’s lovingkindness to display itself at just the right time to save him (vv. 14–16).

Jesus quoted verse 5 of this psalm on the cross: “Into your hands I commit my spirit” (cf. Luke 23:46). By doing so, He identified with the situation and feelings expressed and encouraged persecuted modern believers to claim Psalm 31 as their own. How encouraging! “The Lord preserves the faithful . . . Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord” (vv. 23–24). And the truth of the matter is that sooner or later we can all expect persecution as part of our Christian life (cf. Matt. 5:10–12; 2 Tim. 3:12).

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Are you in a situation in which you or your family feel directly or indirectly persecuted for your faith? Or perhaps are you experiencing other sorts of troubles and difficulties? God sees and cares about your circumstances and feelings. Like the psalmist, cry out to Him. Describe the situation, affirm your trust in Him, and call on Him to rescue, vindicate, and give you hope. As Paul said: “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12; cf. 2 Cor. 4:7–12).

*Read: Psalm 38*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



A leading Boston Puritan, Samuel Sewall, was one of the judges during

the notorious Salem witch trials in early American history. Afterwards, his conscience began to eat at him. One day he heard his son reciting Matthew 12:7: "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent." Sewall knew he had to repent. On January 14, 1697, he stood before his church with head bowed while his pastor read out his humble confession.

Confessing our sins before God is another type of prayer we should practice often. Psalm 38 is traditionally considered one of the seven "penitential psalms," with the others being Psalms 6, 32, 51, 102, 130, and 143. The main point is found in verse 18: "I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin." Thus, when the psalmist asked the Lord to help him, we understand that he was talking primarily about forgiveness.

David's soul was sick, and he described these feelings in intense bodily terms. He had no health, his bones were unsound, his back ached, his wounds festered, he was mute and deaf, he felt crushed and helpless. All these symptoms afflicted him because he knew he had offended God (v. 4). God was disciplining His child, exercising holy wrath to bring him to the painful point of repentance. The physical imagery is so vivid

here that some commentators actually think the psalmist had a life-threatening illness! Have you ever confessed your sins with this kind of spiritual intensity? In addition, because David was Israel's king, God had made his sin and its consequences public. As a result, his friends had dropped away and his enemies were waiting to pounce.

Now David saw his behavior as foolish and sinful, and mourned before God over his wrongdoing. He sighed with longing to be reconciled to the Lord and restored to unhindered fellowship with Him (v. 9). This sighing implied a resolution to turn away from sin and toward righteousness and obedience. After all, a desire for God's presence is the same as a desire for personal holiness (v. 21; cf. Ps. 139:23–24).

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we see in Psalm 38, there's nothing heavier than the burden of sin, and nothing sweeter than a draught of God's forgiving love. 1 John 1:9 says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Ask the Spirit to search your heart and bring you into unhindered fellowship with the Lord. If there is unconfessed sin, as well, repent before the Lord. Renew your commitment to righteousness and enjoy even closer fellowship with Him!

*I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.*

PSALM 38:18



## TODAY AT MOODY

Please pray for Kenneth Evans and James Seffinga as they work on the Moody grounds in every weather. We are thankful for everything they do to make the Institute's campus look clean and attractive.

*He lifted me  
out of the  
slimy pit; . . .  
he set my feet  
on a rock  
and gave me  
a firm place  
to stand.*

PSALM 40:2



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Richard Epps, Vice President of Stewardship, welcomes your prayers today for the sustained support of the ministries of Moody Bible Institute, especially as we look forward to a bold, bright future of serving Christ globally in partnership with you.

#### *Read: Psalm 40*

##### TODAY IN THE WORD



In the Scripture reading today, you may have been puzzled by the beginning of verse 6: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but my ears you have pierced.” Put aside all thoughts of jewelry—the explanation is found in the Mosaic Law. “But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life” (Ex. 21:5–6).

In other words, to have one’s ear pierced symbolized a voluntary, lifelong commitment to service. Verse 6, then, is King David’s declaration that he is God’s servant for life. In the prayer of Psalm 40, he explained why he made this choice—God’s saving actions and character.

Who is God and what does He do? He hears and answers prayer. He saves and redeems people in trouble, giving them a secure place to stand. He even puts a new song in their mouths to praise Him for doing so—and if anyone was ever qualified to write that verse, it was David! Even beyond the mighty wonders God had done, though, the psalmist was amazed at the personal relationship God had made possible between Himself and mere humans. He has revealed to us personally His love, truth, and faithfulness.

The psalm includes a description of our appropriate response. We should see and fear and put our trust in the Lord (vv. 3–4). We should pray for God’s help and mercy, and testify to His glory when He answers. We should walk humbly before Him, confessing our sins and worshiping Him alone. We should obey Him, not as the fancy takes us, but in the all-out, sold-out way intended by the ear-piercing allusion. We should study the Scriptures, just as David studied his personal copy of the Law (v. 7; cf. Deut. 17:18–20). And above all, we should imitate Christ, the perfect model of how to do what matters to God (cf. Heb. 10:5–10).

##### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Let’s imitate the psalmist and make a better effort to let praise dominate our prayer times.

One idea is to exalt the Lord attribute-by-attribute, for as many as you can remember. Or choose just one attribute, naming as many examples of it as you can. Or think of at least one divine quality for each letter of the alphabet, then praise God through these theological ABCs. The letters Q and X may be challenging, but the time spent contemplating who God is and glorifying Him will be well worth it.

*Read: 1 Kings 18:30–46*

TODAY IN THE WORD



On August 27, 1883, the volcanic Pacific island of Krakatoa, located near present-day Indonesia, erupted with colossal and terrible force. Over a course of five hours, there were four separate explosions that could be heard as far as 3,000 miles away. The final explosion is one of the biggest in recorded history. Six cubic miles of rock and ash were hurled more than twenty miles into the air, and the resulting giant tsunamis destroyed much on the nearby islands of Java and Sumatra. Riverboats even sunk 2,000 miles away in Calcutta, India. In fact, Krakatoa blew itself completely to bits, as well as the island it sat on—it's literally not there anymore. People thought the world was ending.

Awesome. And yet the power of Krakatoa is nothing compared to the power of God on display in today's reading. Though we move out of the Psalms for the rest of the month, our study's purpose remains the same—to explore the life of prayer and how to live it.

You probably know today's story: Israel was ruled by Ahab and Jezebel, a pair so stubbornly idolatrous that even a three-year drought and famine had not changed their behavior. Against this backdrop, Elijah made a mountaintop challenge to the gathering of prophets of their favorite Canaanite idols—a winner-take-all challenge for the spiritual heart of Israel. Despite the circumstances, his

prayer resisted the temptation of showmanship. He was quiet, confident, deliberate, and sad over Israel's hardness of heart. He prayed simply, on the basis of God's promises and glory (vv. 36–37). There was never a doubt about the awe-inspiring answer, and the prophet seized the moment for a decisive spiritual cleansing of the nation.

But the praying this day was not yet done. Elijah's second prayer was done in private, humbly and persistently, but the answer was equally dramatic. God sent rain to end the long drought, and with a truly divine flourish, He empowered His prophet for a supernatural sprint back to the city.

Do you think prayer like this is beyond you? Think again (James 5:16–18)! The point is not the person who prays, but the God who answers.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Think of an overseas missionary or another Christian worker supported by your church or family. Why not pray for their ministry as Elijah prayed in today's passage? Ask that God's power would be clearly seen and that the hearts of the people would turn to Him.

The people in question might be hardened prisoners, traditional Buddhists, or skeptical materialists, but God can answer your prayer as unmistakably as He sent fire from heaven that day on Mount Carmel.

*Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God.*

1 KINGS 18:37



TODAY AT MOODY

The Broadcast Programming department pours their time and talent into making the MBN broadcast ministry as effective and inspiring as it can be. Will you lift up to the Lord the work of Marie Bailey, Mercida Garcia Rojas, Tracy Haney, Douglas Hastings, and Mike Kellogg?

*The  
Sovereign  
Lord is my  
strength, . . .  
he enables  
me to go on  
the heights.*

HABAKKUK 3:19



#### TODAY AT MOODY

We once again ask for your prayers for the staff of Broadcast Programming. Please praise the Lord for Anita Lustrea, David Oseland, Joel Swan, Shepherd, Joel Swan, and Greg Wheatley and the extensive scope, both geographically and spiritually, that their ministry entails.

*Read: Habakkuk 3:1–19*

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



Physicist Stephen Unwin recently wrote a book entitled *The Probability of God*. “I don’t consider anything to be understood until numbers have been applied,” he said. “I have made a career of understanding and analyzing uncertainty and probabilities. Therefore, it seemed obvious to apply these methods to the ultimate uncertainty—whether God exists.” Using something called Bayes’ Theorem as well as other equations, he reviewed evidence from observation and experience in an attempt to assign a mathematically rigorous number to the probability of the existence of a personal God. He concluded that the probability of God’s existence was 67 percent.

People wrestle with their spiritual doubts in many different ways—the prophet Habakkuk took his questions directly to God. Habakkuk ministered around the same time as Jeremiah. In his book, written mostly as a dialogue, he asked and argued about the comprehensibility and justice of God’s ways—especially regarding His punishment of Israel through conquest and exile—and God answered. This prophecy encouraged the faith of the godly remnant of Israel.

Today’s reading is a prayer or psalm that was Habakkuk’s concluding response to God’s answers. His central petition was for God to do what He had done in the past, that is, to show

His power and love in the lives of His people in order to make His name known in present times: “Renew them in our day, in our time make them known” (v. 2). His poetic recounting of the Exodus in verses 3 through 15 described God’s unstoppable power exercised on Israel’s behalf—it was a faith-boosting recollection of what God could do. These memories made the prophet’s heart pound with excitement, even though he would have to wait for God’s judgment on Babylon (v. 16).

The prayer’s foundation and conclusion is unconditional faith in God (vv. 17–19). It’s okay to ask difficult questions and to tell God how things look to us—as long as that’s not the final word. We must remember to come before Him in humility and faith, as we have seen through reading Habakkuk, Job, and the Psalms.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Did you know you’re allowed to ask God tough questions? Even to express doubts? God is far bigger than all your questions and doubts—He can handle them, and your faith will be strengthened as a result.

So take that issue that’s been troubling you, the one you secretly think He can’t answer or deal with, and do what the prophet Habakkuk did. Speak your thoughts openly before Him (He sees them anyway!), and close your prayer with verses 17 through 19 from today’s reading.

*Read: Daniel 9:1–19*

TODAY IN THE WORD



The National Day of Prayer takes place the first Thursday of every May, as designated by President Ronald Reagan since 1988. Prayer events involving millions of people are organized at courthouses, city halls, parks, and other public places. This tradition of public prayer dates back to the Continental Congress's nationwide call to prayer in 1775. The vision is "to communicate with every family the need for personal repentance and prayer, and to mobilize families to personal and corporate prayer, particularly on behalf of the nation and those in leadership on all levels of local, national, church and educational areas of influence."

Daniel understood and acted on a similar vision in today's reading. As a young man, he had been taken in exile to Babylon and had a long career there as a civil servant and prophetic interpreter of dreams. In chapter 9, the Medes and Persians had just conquered Babylon, confirming God's prophecy through dreams from chapters 2 and 7. This encouraged Daniel to search for more information. When he found Jeremiah 25:11–12, which prophesied the Exile as lasting seventy years, he knew the time must be drawing to a close and he got on his knees.

Earnestly, he pleaded for God to relent and bring the punishment of Exile to an end. This punishment had lasted his

entire adult life, and the whole time he had kept the faith, and wasn't bitter or self-righteous. He identified with the sins of his people and repented on their behalf. The sackcloth, ashes, and fasting show us the deep intensity of his prayer. He admitted the fairness of God's judgment and praised Him for His covenant-keeping faithfulness, righteousness, justice, and love. He knew that God's character was the only effective basis for his petition to be granted: "We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy" (v. 18).

God graciously answered this prayer and sent the angel Gabriel while Daniel was still praying (vv. 20–21)! And within a year, Cyrus had issued his first decree for the rebuilding of the temple (cf. Isa. 44:28–45:13).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Pray today with the nationwide vision of Daniel. Though his personal situation was relatively secure, he identified with his people, confessed Israel's rebelliousness and disobedience, and acknowledged the justice of God's judgment. In the same spirit, we might confess America's various sins—including abortion, pornography, adultery, homosexuality, and racism—and plead with God for mercy and revival. Like Daniel, we can pray motivated by love both for the people around us and for God's holy standards.

*O Lord,  
listen! O  
Lord, forgive!  
O Lord, bear  
and act!*

DANIEL 9:19



TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Joseph Henriques, Dean of Moody Graduate School, requests your prayers for the students of MGS and the many lives that each student touches with their individual ministries. May their training at MGS enhance their work for Christ with power and depth!

*I pray also  
that the  
eyes of your  
heart may be  
en-lightened . .  
. that you  
may know  
the hope to  
which he has  
called you.*

EPHESIANS 1:18



## TODAY AT MOODY

Why not commemorate this Thanksgiving Day with an extended period of prayer, thanking God for His limitless grace and endless blessings in your life? On behalf of everyone at Moody, we thank God for you!

*Read: Ephesians 1:15–23*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



National Geographic magazine has reported that wild turkeys are now here to stay. A century ago, their population had dwindled to an estimated 30,000, because settlers had moved westward, cleared land that was the turkeys' natural habitat, and overhunted them for food. Today, however, due to various factors, wild turkeys number at least 5.4 million. "The recovery of the wild turkey is definitely a success story," said one environmental leader. "They are part of America's heritage, and the American people came together to recover the species."

That's good news this Thanksgiving Day! In today's reading, Paul gave thanks for the Ephesians and characterized them as a church filled with faith and love. In his epistles, he often told churches what he was thankful for about them and what he was praying for concerning them. We can make these our prayers as well, both for ourselves and for our churches.

The apostle's main prayer for the Ephesian believers was that they would come to know Christ even better. This would happen as they gained wisdom from the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures (v. 17). The word wisdom here is not primarily intellectual but relational—it suggests personal knowledge.

Paul also prayed that through this godly and God-given wisdom—our Today in

the Word theme for this year—believers' eyes would be opened to two truths. First, the hope that is our rich inheritance in Christ (v. 18). As "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ," we have been reborn "into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade" (Rom. 8:17; 1 Peter 1:3–4). The Spirit is a deposit on this inheritance of salvation (v. 14).

Second, God's incomparable power, which guarantees our hope (vv. 19–23). The best proof of this is how God's power and authority worked in Christ to accomplish His mission of redemption. Paul closed his prayer with an eloquent statement of praise for the Christ to whom he wanted himself and others to draw near.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The irony of Thanksgiving is that so many people give thanks only in a vague, feel-good sort of way. They fail to thank the Giver of all good things. When you are gathered with your family this Thanksgiving Day, be sure to spend extra time praising and thanking the Lord for His blessings this past year. Your thankfulness might take the form of testimonies, Scripture readings, or songs, but don't let it take second place to football games or more pumpkin pie.

*Read: Philippians 1:9–11*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



The New Testament uses the metaphor of fruit to teach several key truths. For example, Jesus taught that you can recognize people, especially false prophets, by the “fruit” of their lives, that is, by what they do and with what results. He also characterized Himself as a vine, His Father as the gardener, and His disciples as branches that need to abide in Him in order to “bear fruit,” that is, to do God’s work successfully. And Paul gave the Galatian church his famous list of “fruit of the Spirit,” that is, qualities the Holy Spirit cultivates in obedient believers (Matt. 7:15–20; John 15:1–8; Gal. 5:22–25).

Along the same lines, Paul spoke in today’s reading of the “fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ” (v. 11). These verses are a second example of how Paul prayed for the churches under his care. He gave thanks for the growth of the Philippian church, and especially for their partnership with him in the work of spreading the gospel.

He prayed for their love to grow—or actually, not just to grow but to become plentiful, abound, multiply, and overflow to others. But Paul finished this phrase differently from how we might do so—“in knowledge and depth of insight.” This means that love is not primarily a feeling or sentiment, but rather a spiritual quality and action—eyes that see in tandem with a heart willing to do.

Therefore, Paul prayed that such love would result in discernment and holiness. Godly discernment is the ability to see what is best, the path of obedience. Choosing obedience is the only way to righteous and pure living on our spiritual journeys, and for it we will be held accountable for our obedience on “the day of Christ” (v. 10). When we stand before God, our lives will be the evidence of His love at work in us. What will this look like? If we have followed Him, we will be “filled with the fruit of righteousness”—our actions will show love, service, and devotion to Christ and His gospel. Such righteousness comes not through ourselves but through Christ, and earns glory not for ourselves but for God.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



During your prayer time today, pray Paul’s words in today’s reading for the people in your church or small group. Insert their names in place of the words “you” and “your.” Don’t pray only for your friends or those who are easy to get along with, but pray as well for that sister or brother in Christ who seems difficult or even out of line spiritually. Praying for God’s will to be done in their lives is a great way to see them through God’s eyes!

*And this is  
my prayer:  
that your love  
may abound  
more and  
more.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:9



## TODAY AT MOODY

Please pray for Heidi Hartley, Vice President of Corporate Communications, and her staff as they work to communicate the mission of Moody and the message of the gospel with clarity and passion. Ask the Lord to shine His light upon them and through them.

*Rejoice in  
the Lord  
always. I will  
say it again:  
Rejoice!*

PHILIPPIANS 4:4



**TODAY AT MOODY**

Would you please spend some time today in prayer for Lawrence Beach in Copy Center?

Ask for the Lord's protection and provision for him and his family this weekend. Remember that your prayers are uplifting and important.

*Read: Philippians 4:4–7*

**TODAY IN THE WORD**



When John Donne, a seventeenth-century English pastor and poet, fell seriously ill in the days of the Black Plague, he was sure he was going to die. A prayer he wrote at the time (as edited by Philip Yancey) concludes, "I see your hand upon me now, O Lord, and I ask not why it comes or what it intends. Whether you will bid my soul to stay in this body for some time, or meet you this day in paradise, I ask not. Curiosity of mind tempts me to know, but my true healing lies in silent and absolute obedience to your will, even before I know it. Preserve that obedience, O my God, and that will preserve me to you; that, when you have catechized me with affliction here, I may take a greater degree, and serve you in a higher place, in your kingdom of joy and glory. Amen."

Under the most harrowing of circumstances, John Donne did what Paul commanded in today's reading—he took his anxieties to God's throne of grace. If you've been a Christian for awhile, you may have memorized today's reading at one time or another. But it's all too easy to ignore or forget these verses.

Anxiety is worry that consumes one's time and attention. It shows both self-centeredness and a lack of faith (cf. Matt. 6:25–34). When something makes us anxious, we

need to take it to the Lord in prayer. This is important because Paul told us to "Rejoice in the Lord always." "Always" means under all circumstances, including all the situations we've seen this month (cf. James 1:2). We're to rejoice when we're suffering, doubting, facing opposition, and when we've been unjustly accused or have sinned and need to repent. When we pray over our anxieties, we're to do even that with an attitude of thanksgiving. The result will be not only restored joy but also a deep inner peace. This is both an emotional state and a spiritual truth (peace with God); this feeling of peace is based on the reality of God's peace.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY**



Today, apply Philippians 4:6 to your own situation. That is, take whatever is currently causing you anxiety or worry and turn it over to the Lord in prayer. "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Then you'll be able to say with the psalmist, "When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul" (Ps. 94:18–19).

*Read: Revelation 5:1–14*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



“Your only Son, no sin to hide,” sang Twila Paris in “Lamb of God.” “But you have sent Him from your side to walk upon this guilty sod and to become the Lamb of God . . . Your gift of love, they crucified. They laughed and scorned Him as He died. The humble King, they named a fraud and sacrificed the Lamb of God. O Lamb of God, sweet Lamb of God, I love the holy Lamb of God. O wash me in His precious blood, my Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.”

In the last days, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and Lion of Judah, will stand before His Father’s throne, ready to break the seven seals and usher in the end of history. Our purpose today is not to explore the symbolisms or meanings of this passage, but to focus on the prayer and praise that occurs here. Revelation provides excellent guidance for our prayers—what the angels, people, and others say, shout, and sing in heaven in this book can indeed instruct and encourage us.

The four living creatures and twenty-four elders began the praise. Their song expanded outward as thousands upon thousands of angels joined the second verse, then all of creation thundered out the grand finale. It’s the grandest concert creation has ever seen!

Their theme remains constant: Christ’s worthiness. He is

worthy to reveal and execute God’s plan for the end times because of the redemption He bought for us with His blood. He saved us “from every tribe and language and people and nation” both to reign and to serve. He is worthy of all honor and glory and praise forever, superlative upon superlative, as far and as fast as tongues can express them (cf. Phil. 2:9–11).

A spirit of joy, exhilaration, and victory fills and overflows these verses. A spirit of humility and submission pervades as well, as the four living creatures and twenty-four elders demonstrated by bowing prostrate before the throne. This joy, this humility . . . this is the spirit of prayer and worship!

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Perhaps beginning with the Twila Paris song cited at the top of this devotion, go ahead and include several hymns or choruses in your devotional time today.

Meditate on the lyrics and enjoy the music. If you’ve bought that hymnbook we mentioned back on November 17, you’ll be especially well-prepared, but singing along with cassettes or CDs or from memory are also good ways. Let your singing become another form of prayer that stays with you through the day.

*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!*

REVELATION 5:12



## TODAY AT MOODY

Chief Financial Officer Richard Campbell appreciates your prayers today for the fiscal stability and sound stewardship of MBF’s resources. Please thank the Lord today for the creative and wonderful ways that He blesses ministry done in His name!

*Let us rejoice  
and be glad  
and give him  
glory! For the  
wedding of  
the Lamb  
has come.*

REVELATION 19:7



## TODAY AT MOODY

The staff of WKES would like to thank you in advance for praying for Moody Radio for the Heart of Florida.

Please remember Katherine Bruington, Pierre Chestang, Annette DiMarco, and Ruth Dinwiddie and ask the Lord to impart His wisdom on their hearts as they spread His Word to so many.

*Read: Revelation 19:1–10*

## TODAY IN THE WORD



In the early 1900s, James Fraser, a missionary to China, wrote about the importance of prayer in world missions. “I am feeling more and more that it is after all just the prayer of God’s people that calls down blessing upon the work, whether they are directly engaged in it or not. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God who gives the increase, and this increase can be brought down from heaven by believing prayer, whether offered in China or England. If this be so, then Christians at home can do as much for foreign missions as those actually on the field. I believe it will only be known on the last day how much has been accomplished in missionary work by the prayers of earnest believers at home.”

On that day, believers will celebrate at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, and there will be people there from every language and tribe and nation shouting, “Hallelujah!” Did you know the “Hallelujahs” in today’s reading are the only four recorded in the entire New Testament? Derived from Hebrew, the term simply means “Praise the Lord.” It’s also found in the Psalms, of course, especially Psalms 113 through 118. Often referred to as the Hallel Psalms, these are likely what Jesus and His disciples sang after the Last Supper. How fitting that “Hallelujahs” will ring out again at His Wedding Supper!

In these “Hallelujahs,” a great multitude glorified God for His just and sovereign judgments, particularly His judgment in the previous chapter on “Babylon” for its wickedness, idolatry, and persecution of God’s people. With this great evil destroyed, it will be time to celebrate!

At the divine Wedding Banquet, Jesus Christ will be “married” to His chosen bride, the church. The wedding picture suggests union, consummation, joy, intimacy, love, and faithfulness. The bride “has made herself ready” through suffering, and will also have been made ready by Christ’s sanctifying work (cf. Isa. 54:5–8; Matt. 22:1–14; Eph. 5:25–27). The “wedding dress” or “fine linen” will be her righteousness. “Blessed are those who are invited!” (v. 9).

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY



What are you most looking forward to about heaven? Tell God as part of your praise time today! Of course, seeing Him face-to-face and dwelling in His presence will be the greatest joy, but no doubt you’re also looking forward to seeing your loved ones again, or meeting King David, finally coming to perfect spiritual understanding, or something along these lines. It’s comforting to know this promise: “Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4).

## Pray continually.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

### Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:1–18

#### TODAY IN THE WORD



A little more than three years ago, someone bought a ticket in the Megabucks lottery in Massachusetts. The number picked turned out to be the winner of \$4.6 million! Yet this person never showed up to claim their prize, and the ticket expired after one year.

The money was already there; it belonged to the person who had the right ticket, it just needed to be claimed. But he or she did nothing and so received nothing. In the same way, the treasure of prayer is already ours—it belongs to us by virtue of our faith in Jesus Christ—it just needs to be claimed. Seen from this perspective, to neglect prayer is spiritual foolishness of the highest order!

When we develop a lifestyle of prayer, we tap into the inexhaustible riches of the God who sovereignly rules the universe and loves us personally. Our final reading this month is a short one with three clear points which we would do well to meditate on and allow to guide our inner lives: Always rejoice. Always pray. Always give thanks. No buts, no conditions, no exceptions. As the Nike commercials used to say, “Just do it.”

Why? Because “this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (v. 18). In our humanness, we often make the question of “finding God’s will for our lives” too complicated or subtle. Here’s a piece of it, plain and simple: Always rejoice. Always pray. Always give thanks. We

should spend our lives pursuing this will of God, making choices which orient our thoughts, words, and actions to joy, prayer, and gratitude. Prayer is at the core of an intimate walk with God, and abiding there is the true and only source of lasting joy, which inevitably yields forth thankfulness for God’s blessings.

The phrase “pray continually” does not mean that we spend every moment of the day on our knees. Rather, it means that prayer should be an ongoing practice or habit, an attitude of the heart (cf. Eph. 6:18). At any moment of the day we can bring praise and petitions before our heavenly Father. What a privilege!

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY



As we wrap up this month’s study of Prayer: A Life of Wisdom, take a look back at “Today Along the Way” for November 1. What personal prayer goals did you discover or did the Spirit put on your heart?

If you have not yet done so, set some specific goals, then commit before the Lord to pursue them wholeheartedly. To strengthen the commitment, you might join with a likeminded friend and hold one another accountable for achieving these goals.



#### TODAY AT MOODY

Once again, would you bring the staff of WKES to the Lord in prayer? The hard work and faithful service of Mike Gleichman, James Johnson, Paul Porter, and John Stortz help focus people’s hearts on the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Your prayers are an integral part of that.

I'm thankful for a number of things at MBI. One is, there seems to be a genuine effort to promote diversity. Every company pays lip service to the idea, but I love looking around and seeing such a variety of God's people. I also am grateful for MBI's commitment to being Christ's "hands and feet" in the city. Finally, I really appreciate the fact that I, as an employee, have always been treated with care and respect, even during challenging times.

**Betsey Newenhuyse**, *senior acquisitions editor, Moody Publishers*

I am thankful for MBI's desire to focus on the centrality of the church, rather than set itself at the center of the Christian life and community. MBI partners with churches to encourage and strengthen them without forcing them to be dependent upon us. We are there to serve them.

**Adam Reece**, *customer service representative*

I am thankful for my salvation and God's sanctifying working in my life. I am thankful that He has placed me in a church that upholds the truth. I also am thankful for Inner City Impact (a youth outreach center in Chicago), where I got saved. I am also very grateful to the Lord

for the many ways He has provided for me each semester so that I can study at Moody.

**Juanita Santiago**, *senior, print media major*

God sends students with deeply committed hearts to Moody. It is such a joy to teach them, even on the days when they have deep and difficult questions about life and faith. I see God bringing them through to maturity that they can then use in leading churches, in Christian education, and in missions all over the world. I am convinced that God selects and sends every one of them for His own chosen purposes. That makes every day of teaching a day that I am thankful for.

**Billie Sue Thompson**, *professor and assistant dean of First Year Experience*



I am most grateful for the consistency that MBI maintains to focus on Jesus. Many ministries whose origins were there have drifted, divided and have become diluted.

MBI has stayed the course by staying true to the Person. May God help us hold to that focus.

**Mark Elfstrand**, *host of Mornings on WMBI*

## What I'm Thankful For.

During this time of thanksgiving, I want to thank the Lord for the family that the body of Christ has become. The “Unity of Spirit,” as talked about in Ephesians 4:1–16, has been a source of continual encouragement throughout the year. When the love of Christ permeates, mighty things happen, and that has been the story of my year.

*Linda Janney, senior, double major in communications and evangelism and discipleship.*



At MBI we often use the term *partners* when we speak of donors. This term is not used lightly. The ministries of MBI—training future Christian leaders and broadcasting the good news to over

one million listeners—could not and would not happen without the faithful support of donors. Every individual who sends a gift, regardless of the amount, is a partner in ministry with those of us who serve the Lord day by day at MBI. We are eternally thankful for their partnership.

*Richard Epps, vice president of stewardship*



## This Month at MOODY

**November 12**

**Friday Night Sing**

Moody Memorial Church,  
Chicago, Illinois

**November 14**

**Handel's Messiah**

Torrey-Gray Auditorium, MBI Campus  
Chicago, Illinois

**November 20**

**SEMINAR—Toward a Growing Marriage with Dr. Gary Chapman**

Calvary Baptist Church  
Dothan, Alabama

**November 27**

**SEMINAR—Toward a Growing Marriage with Dr. Gary Chapman**

Community Pentecostal Church  
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

**December 3–4**

**Candelight Carols**

Moody Memorial Church  
Chicago, Illinois

For more information, please call  
1-800 DL MOODY (356-6639).

# Do You Need More Income?



*The continuing low interest rates have a positive effect on some parts of the economy, but not for people on a fixed income.* If you depend on fixed income investments for a part of your income, these low interest rates are a problem. A possible alternative to fixed income investments is establishing a **Moody Gift Annuity**.

**MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE** has issued charitable gift annuities for 97 years. A Moody Gift Annuity provides you with a stable, lifetime income at an attractive annuity rate based on your age. You also benefit from an income tax deduction, if you itemize deductions, and a part of the income is tax-free for your life expectancy. The best part is the satisfaction of knowing your gift to Moody will help continue preparing young men and women to serve Christ throughout the world.

You can get more information about the Moody Gift Annuity from the informative brochure, *A Giving Partnership*. This **FREE** information is available by simply checking the box on the attached reader reply panel, or call us at 1-800-DL MOODY (356-6639) and ask for *A Giving Partnership*.



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