PRAYER GUIDE
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WRECKERS
January 2020

MEMORIZATION

Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.

Proverbs 14:26

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

January 5th

***Colossians 3:20-21** - Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.*

For the month of January, we will specifically focus on and pray over our marriages and families. Nearly all of us can relate to the pain associated with a strained relationship with a spouse, child, parent, sibling or other relative. These relationships have the capacity to influence – positively or negatively – our outlook on all of life. That's why it's imperative to search God's design, through Scripture, for healthy home relationships. We don't have to go any further than the Book of Genesis to discover the consequences of serious family dysfunction. Murder was the outcome of Cain's angst against his brother, Abel. Betrayal and theft defined the relationship between Jacob and his twin, Esau, for most of their lives. Unchecked envy and jealousy in the hearts of Joseph's brothers led them to sell him into slavery, but only after their plan to kill him didn't work out. Is it any wonder that the devil's first line of attack, after the Fall, was on families? The ripple effect that can be achieved by destroying these fundamental attachments is almost limitless. Even the home life of King David, a person described as "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:33), was disastrous, proving that there's no guarantee for a happy home even for followers of God. The Bible doesn't include these stories, however, intending to relate moral dictates like beware of this or that or else your children will turn against you or each other. Rather, the Bible is letting us know that there are forces working against us, and unhappiness, tragedy and regret are going to be part of living in a family, even the best of them. Ephesians 6:12 makes it clear that our battles are not with each other, but "against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil." So, let's focus our prayers about any strained relationships in our midst, in the direction where the battle will be won. Jehovah Nissi (The LORD My Banner/Victory), we enter this spiritual war room with You as our Leader and the reason we contend for our families. We pray for Your supernatural protection over each one and Your will for families to manifest in each of our lives. We confess and turn from our failures as spouses, children and parents, and ask for Your love to be the cover for every shortcoming. We surrender our fighting with each other in favor of Your contending on our behalf. Thank you for the victory that can only be found in You.

Personal Reflection: _____

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January 12th

***Mark 7:20-23** - He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorali-*

ty, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

It's been said that our habits form our habitat. It's the idea that the little things - our routines and everyday choices - will determine the big things like the health of our home life or our character. When we consider this principle in relation to nurturing our marriages, parenting our kids, or living out our position within a family, the Bible affirms that what we cultivate within ourselves and those relationships will heavily determine the strength or weakness of those bonds. According to our verse today, the potential for healthy relationships starts with the substance of our own hearts and minds. For example, that sarcastic wit that makes you feel superior in most social interactions may also be breaking your wife's heart when it's directed at her. Or, those unconfronted emotions that grow with every imagined conversation may also be draining your husband's spirit when you make him responsible for your happiness. And, the personal regret that never gets resolved could be transferring to your kids in the form of too-high or too-low expectations. So, today's prayer focus is on ourselves. What is being cultivated within our hearts through the small, daily choices that seem insignificant? In Psalm 51, David prayed, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me," when he found himself at an all-time relational low. There was no rationalization, excuse or minimizing the damage that came from the impurity and selfishness from within him. He simply confessed and surrendered himself to the mercy and regenerating power of God. May we come before the Lord with the same humility and openness to examination. El Roi (The LORD Who Sees), we recognize Your great power to know our innermost thoughts and secret deeds. We confess that the environment we create comes from what we cultivate within our minds and hearts through small habitual choices. We pray that the power of your Holy Spirit within us would continually untwist and purify our corrupt nature that forms our native language and feels so instinctive. With gratitude, we thank You for using every surrendered hardship and victory to mold us into the likeness of Your Son.

Personal Reflection: _____

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January 19th

Philippians 4:8 *- "...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think on these things."*

We were fortunate to welcome Jay and Laura Laffoon to our church this weekend. The main message of their ministry – and our focus for today – is for couples to offer what is constructive and life-giving to their spouse. The consequences of destructive actions within marriage can sometimes get the majority of our focus. While those discussions are necessary, today's emphasis is what we should do to nurture a tighter bond with our marriage partner. The following is borrowed from Jay and Laura's weekly blog:

> I love to meditate on Philippians 4:8. This verse really speaks to me about my marriage. Aren't we quick to notice when our spouse screws up? When they are having a bad day, act selfish or speak harshly? Yet the times they display love, self-sacrifice and Christ-like character are overlooked or taken for granted. We must make an effort to see the good in our spouse. I will admit that

sometimes I have to look really, really hard. But whatever I dwell on in my marriage, tends to grow bigger and bigger. So am I growing love, tenderness, and appreciation? Or resentment, betrayal, and doubt? Pick one quality about your spouse right now that you love – that you are thankful for. Dwell on it, thank God for it, and then thank your spouse today for showing you God's character.

Personal Reflection: _____

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January 26th

Ephesians 5:21 - Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Our focus today is understanding and turning from the destructive views of and practices within the intimacy of marriage. It's not a comfortable topic, but a definite home wrecker that should be acknowledged if God's glory has any chance of being displayed through our unions. So, we must begin with a biblical view of marriage: it is a flawed person married to a flawed person in a fallen world, but with a faithful God. So, the first destroyer of a good marriage is to expect something from our spouse that he or she is not designed to provide. For example, romance is never the cause of a good marriage, it is the product of a good marriage. If we look to romance to form for us good marriages, we will be left discouraged, disappointed and hopeless. We are never going to have paradise within marriage. Paradise is to come. Our spouses will never be perfect people. So, they have no ability to save us from anything, no capacity whatsoever to change our heart, or to bring satisfaction and contentment to our existence. And so, a good marriage is a good marriage because people in that marriage realize they are not a Savior or Sustainer to one another. However, we have been given an adequate and sufficient Messiah who can permeate our marriages by His grace and give us everything we need to be who we are supposed to be and to do what we are supposed to do within marriage. In terms of setting intimate expectations, this means that we never get our capacity to love from the person we were called to love. We get our capacity to love at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ. In fact, we already have it. It is God's gift of grace to us. We don't need to look to the other person for what we have already been given in Christ. So today, invite Christ into the most intimate parts of your marriage through prayer. Praise Him for His design for marriage and ask Him to create a beautiful display of His commitment to His church through your marriage. Surrender any unfair expectations you've placed on your spouse with thankfulness that Christ is sufficient to fill every need.

Personal Reflection: _____

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