

**First Fifteen: October 11-15**  
**Scripture for Sunday October 17 – Hebrews 5:1-10**

**Monday: Deuteronomy 10:12-22**

**Going Deeper:** What does God want from us? What if we flip the question around, what do you want from God? I am not sure which question is easier to answer. These verses lay out what God asked of the Hebrew people. The list sounds daunting, but as we take it apart and analyze it, I think all God truly wants is our attention. Some might say God wants our heart, and I agree, but what does that mean. When you give someone your heart what are you doing? Does this not mean you have chosen them over all others? It also means you give them your attention and make them a priority in your list of things to do and people to spend your time. In these verses from Deuteronomy 10, the people of God were to keep all the LORD's commandments, and in doing so this behavior would benefit them. Doing so most likely did not make their lives easier but certainly richer, filled with a greater sense of meaning, purpose and ultimately providing them with a deep sense of peace. I suspect we can sum up what God wants from us is more attention to the things God wants... from which we will experience God's love flowing back to us, allowing us to live and share from a heart that is more than full! So, what do you want from God?

**Prayer:** Often I am asking you to provide for me, but today I want to begin by asking what you want from me. You are my source, your love makes our world bearable, your grace enables me to keep going. Thank you! Lord my God, open my eyes to what you want from me, so I may know you better and live from a place that may not always be easier, but will always be rich with meaning, purpose, and peace... Help me to live this day as you have called me to as your child. Amen.

**Tuesday: Luke 18:9-14**

**Going Deeper:** As we read this parable, it's meaning appears to be straight forward, it is a critique of self-righteousness. Although I wonder if there is more for us to discover. These two, the Pharisee and the tax collector may also represent the divisions we create within our culture. The Pharisee was behaving exactly as he had been trained and conditioned, even the wording of the prayer was not uncommon from other prayers that have been found from first century Judaism. It is an unfortunate trait of our shared humanity that we compare and evaluate ourselves against one another. I wonder if the intent of Jesus' parable was also to reveal to us the shifting priorities of the Kingdom of God in relation to our preconceived understanding. Through this parable Jesus presents the Kingdom not based upon merit or status or even our understanding of morality. Instead, the Kingdom in Jesus' parable welcomes and includes those who are open to receive it as a gift rather than a reward. Jesus does not criticize the Pharisee, he simply points out that the Kingdom of God is not found through comparison and merit, but simply with humility and possibly greater self-awareness.

**Prayer:** Jesus, you always seemed to see what we often miss. Help me to see myself and others today with your eyes as my guide. Help me let go of my need to see others through my lens of comparison, and by evaluating them based upon my understanding. Open my eyes, mind, and heart so I may humbly and honestly see myself. I invite you to lead me to where I need to see more clearly so I may better care for others, as part of meeting my own needs. Amen.

**Wednesday: 2 Chronicles 7:12-16**

**Going Deeper:** Recently I have seen these verses from 2 Chronicles 7 on Roadside signs. I have noticed throughout my life they seem to come to the forefront of our minds when we find ourselves in societal conflict and crisis. I think anytime we are encouraged to humbly pray, seeking God's guidance and desire for our lives is a great idea. The call for prayer found in 2 Chronicles is both personal and communal. As individuals we are instructed to seek guidance on what we need to do, as well as recognize our personal responsibility in both the cause and remedy of the situation. This is the same guidance that is given to us as a community, or society... realizing no one individual or group is to blame, or the sole source of the conflict we are experiencing. I also hear within these words the realization that comes to us as we gather as a community to pray, we all are in this together. We didn't get here by ourselves, and to find our way out we must all pull in the same direction. The other thing I hope you hear is God's eyes are open and God's ears are listening, not just to a few or the select ones, but to all who cry out.

**Prayer:** Jesus often said his teaching was for those who had ears to hear... I thank you that your eyes are upon me, and your ears are listening to my prayers, my God, and my Savior. Today I will hear about needs and issues we face as a community, nation, and church. As I hear them help me to be open to your call to pray in humility seeking not who is to blame, but how I can become part of the solution. Help me my God of love and mercy to not merely seek forgiveness for my sin, but to understand both my need to and your desire that I also cry out for the sin of our society so we may all find healing and your path toward hope. Amen.

**Thursday: Matthew 6:7-14**

**Going Deeper:** We know this prayer well. In Luke's Gospel (chapter 11) Jesus shares this with his disciples because they asked him to teach them, but here in Matthew's Gospel it is included as part of Jesus' more comprehensive teaching we call his Sermon on the Mount. This situational difference doesn't really matter, I suspect Jesus spoke often with his followers about prayer and its importance. What is significant about this model for prayer is that Jesus used it to create the foundation for our understanding of how to pray. It is simply and yet deeply penetrating as it calls us to turn our attention toward the One who is the source of our lives and all our blessings. Jesus uses this prayer to help us see ourselves in relation to God, our need, and our community. For me the one phrase that always draw me to come closer is when he instructs us to seek God's Kingdom. He teaches us to ask for God's will to be completed in our lives, in yours as well mine. In fact, he teaches us to ask God's will to be done everywhere as it is carried out in heaven. Often as I pray this prayer, I find myself wondering if I really understand what we are asking for, and yet I think we do... How about you?

**Prayer:** Loving and benevolent God, you know my needs before I ask. You who are so far beyond me, help me honor you in all I do today. Show me where your kingdom is breaking into my life and help me to allow it to grow beyond me so your will spreads beyond me and opens far beyond my life... as it is in heaven. Help me trust you have given me what I need for this day. God of mercy, forgive me what I owe to you, and help me be as gracious as you in forgiving those who owe anything to me. Finally, you who are everywhere, and in everything lead me away from temptation, and save me from my selfish intentions. Amen

**Friday: Jeremiah 31:1-7**

**Going Deeper:** These words from the Hebrew Prophet Jeremiah are filled with hope as they proclaim God's presence for the people of God who are still in captivity! The day is coming as it has in the past, when our time of hardship will end, and rest and rejoicing will begin again! I encourage you to consider Jeremiah 31:3-4a *"The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying... 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again, and you will be rebuilt."* (NIV) The word loving-kindness is from the Hebrew word *"hesed"*, it really does not have a true equivalent in English. It is rich in meaning and speaks directly to God's unwavering compassion for us. It is a word that truly describes both God's and Jesus' heart, and you and I are invited to open ours so our heart can be shaped and transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit so we too may learn to live with *"hesed."* How does this happen? Over time, with much learning and falling, and even more grace. But finally, it asks of us to pray the prayer of Jesus... *"into your hands I commit my life."* (Luke 23:46 – NIV)

**Prayer:** You who know my needs better than me, you who sees me better than I see myself, thank you for guiding me through this week, thank you for your loving-kindness toward me and those I love. Help me to keep my heart open and focused on your unfailing love that continues to draw me. Lift me, you who are my God of Loving-Kindness, so I may start this day and then throughout this weekend know your rest, as well as find some time to dance with joy! Amen.