



- Has there been a time when you were facing something difficult and felt a sense of God's presence and guidance?
- Who or what in the world needs our prayers today? Who or what would you like to pray for in your day-to-day life?

Prayer

God, you promise to always be with us. Thank you for the ways you are present and guide us when we are worried, anxious, and concerned. Thank you for the ways we are reminded of you by other people and by being in creation, attending worship, reading and remembering Bible passages. Help us to be present to one another in this group. Remind us to carry one another in our thoughts and in our prayers today and until we meet again. Amen.

Connecting Faith with Daily Life...

(for individual reflection & action)

- Take home the prayer concerns from the Sunday bulletin and spend time during the week praying for the people listed and for the ministries of Incarnation.
- Find a prayer partner in this group or in your daily life and exchange prayer requests once or twice during the coming month.
- Memorize the passage from 1 Thessalonians listed earlier. Think about what it means to "rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances" in your life.
- Make a list of faith practices that can help you in a tough time (prayer, Bible passages, devotional books, etc.).

Incarnation Mission/Vision/Values: Connect & Worship
Reflection written by Becky Benson



Pray Without Ceasing



INCARNATION CONNECTS

*Connect with God,
Connect with One Another*



Opening Questions

(select 1 or 2 questions)

- What is your favorite local, state, or national park? What makes this your favorite?
- What are some of the things you do to prepare for time away from your normal routine?
- Tell about a time when you overcame a fear or a difficult concern.

What Does the Bible Say?

1 Thessalonians 5:15-22

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.

What Do Others Say?

I recently traveled to the Grand Canyon to backpack with my husband, Mark. After several attempts to obtain permits, we were finally granted permits to hike into the canyon via the Grandview Trail and around the Horseshoe Mesa for four days and three nights. The day before our scheduled descent into the canyon, we visited the backcountry office to learn about trail conditions and other details. If you know the Grandview Trail, you know words like “the trail is steep most of the way” and “tight squeeze with a full pack.” Pointing to the map, Mark asked the ranger, “is this (Grandview Trail) the toughest part of our planned trip?” and he responded with a dry “HA!” and “no, this is way worse” pointing to a DD section of trail planned for our third day. <Gulp> What does THAT mean? I asked the ranger what he meant by “exposure” and with what seemed like glee, he talked about two foot wide ledges (trail), curvature of the wall on one side with shear drops on the other, washed out trails, and...at that point I stopped listening.

The next morning was gorgeous and I thought I was ready to go. But, within a few descending switchbacks, I could see that I was totally unprepared to face what was before me: slushy (slippery) snow on the trail, narrow and steep



ledges, and lots of scary exposure. I melted down: tears of fear (and guilt for ruining the trip), and words (“I can’t do this, Mark”). Mark was a champ, patient beyond measure, and scampered back to the car to get our Yaktraks. The additional traction made hiking OK for me that day, but those nagging words from the backcountry guy still lingered. I kept reading the park literature to see if the description of “the bad part” had changed becoming less scary since the last time I read it. And it sure didn’t help to learn from another pamphlet that Robert Spangler had pushed his wife off the edge of the “the bad part” to her death, 160 feet below on Easter morning, 1993. I was freaking out, completely!

The morning arrived which would include “the bad part”. I was quietly a wreck, knowing before noon, we’d hit “the bad part”. But, not long into the day’s hike, something (or Someone) nudged me to start praying...and not for me, but for others. Thus, I did. I prayed and prayed, focusing absolutely and completely on the needs and trials of others, in detail. More and more and more needs came to the surface and I talked with God about these precious people in my life and around the world who have pain and difficulty, and a wonderful thing happened: I never gave my own fear another thought. God blessedly reoriented my attention from my fear, toward the real needs of others. Before I knew it, we were at our day’s destination and “the bad part” was behind me. Amazing!

I am still reeling from the entire experience of visiting this beautiful and vast park full of rich history, and how God changed my vantage point at a critical moment. I value prayer and try to “pray without ceasing”, but I never before understood or experienced how prayer could change my heart in such a meaningful, TIMELY, and unexpected way. It’s an experience I believe God will remind me of in the future when I again wrestle with fear.

Think About...

(optional, depending on time, select one or more questions)

- Who is someone you pray for or have prayed for in the past? Who is someone who is likely to have prayed for you? How does it feel to be prayed for?
- Is there a time when your own concerns became less important, as you shifted your attention to the needs of others? What brought about the change?



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