



# prayer *life!*

## Weekly Prayer Focus

January 31, 2016

### Truth to Stand For

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. —Hebrews 1:1-3a*

More often than not, truth is the first casualty of popularity and the cost of unity is compromise. There is also a shorthand approach to logic that reflexively looks for the truth to lie “somewhere in the middle” of two sides in a disagreement. But when Jesus said, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me* (John 14:6), He left no options. No “wiggle room.”

The gates of hell have assailed the Church from its beginning, and popularity has been its greatest temptress. No doubt there was great rejoicing 1700 years ago when Emperor Constantine made Christianity legal in Rome, but with its popularity came the danger of laxity. Believing became popular and taking a stand seemed unnecessary. When being a Christian became easy, what it meant to be a Christian turned fuzzy, and the exact nature of the Christ we worshiped varied from church to church.

But Jesus promised to build His Church, *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, and the Church’s one Foundation is the truth that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of the living God* (Matthew 16:16-18). Who we are as the Church depends on who Christ is as our Founder. If Christians let our foundation crack, our faith will crumble, our identity fade, and the only hope in this world will disappear.

Seventeen centuries ago, the nature of Christ was in debate. Popular preachers proclaimed that Jesus was like God, while theological sticklers insisted that He is God. Two Greek words, nearly identical, captured the two views. *Homoiousias* is the view that Jesus was like God the Father, and *homoousias* maintains that our Savior is God in essence, come to earth in human flesh.

Emperor Constantine, being a politician, saw little significance to the controversy and wanted the debate settled. He was fine with the idea that Jesus was “like the Father,” but he called for a council of the entire Church to settle the issue. The Council of Nicaea, in AD 325, established the truth that Jesus Christ, is “the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God.”

The leaders of the Nicene Council insisted that Jesus is the same as God the Father (*homoousias*) and rejected the compromise that Jesus was merely like God (*homoiousias*), refusing to add one tiny letter—the Greek letter *iota*—to the word for the sake of convenience. They wouldn’t give one *iota*. Since that day, the entire Christian Church, both East and West, has stood on the solid foundation that the Savior is one with the Creator and that the One true God indwells all who put their faith in Him.

When dealing with eternal matters, one inch of error misses the truth by an infinite distance. Only the absolute truth can create true unity among God’s people. But the unity Christians have in Christ—the unity that compromise misses eternally—is staggering. Just before He was arrested in the garden, Jesus Christ—the One who created the universe with a word—prayed for His people who would believe in Him. As He approached His rejection by both God and Man, Jesus prayed to His Father to grant *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me* (John 17:21).

Christ brings a unity based on the truth of who He is. What we miss when we compromise the truth is unity with each other and with the Godhead. The invitation Jesus extends to weak and faltering sinners is a unity with God Himself—an eternal hope that’s worth standing for, even against the gates of hell.

*To the praise of God’s glory*

## The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## Who Christ Is and What He Has Done According to Scripture

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. —John 1:1-5*

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. —Philippians 2:5-11*

*After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire." But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. —Hebrews 1:3-8*

## Prayer for the Week

**Sunday (Church):** Pray for God's guidance for a Pastor of Worship who will lead us to worship God and give ourselves to Him in faith, joy, and love.

**Monday (Home and Family):** Pray for your spouse and children or your closest friends. May God keep them and teach them to walk in the Spirit.

**Tuesday (Job/School):** Pray for those you serve where you work. Ask God to bless them with every spiritual blessing in Christ, and pray for their specific needs.

**Wednesday (Neighborhood and Community):** Pray for the families of your children's friends. May they come to know Christ as Lord and Savior. Ask God to use you.

**Thursday (The Nation):** Pray for Godly influences in the businesses of America. Pray that Godly principle will guide their practices, not just the dictates of the marketplace.

**Friday (The World):** The liberation of North Korea and the conversion of its people to Christ. Pray that God's light will shine brightly in that dark land.

**Saturday (Praise and Rejoicing):** Praise the Lord for the blessing of being in a healthy church. Rejoice in the "church family" God has given you.