



prayer *life!*

Weekly Prayer Focus

March 1, 2020

Turning Back

"Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent and leave behind a blessing — grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God. —Joel 2:12-14

Being Christians in the mightiest, freest, and most prosperous land on earth has distorted our perspective. We don't see how sinful sin is and easily we airbrush fatal blemishes in our lives. We don't experience the true evils that sin carries with it, so we toy with behaviors that lead to hell on earth as well as in the afterlife.

What's worse is we develop no true love of righteousness and value God for the blessings He gives, rather than for who He is. Holiness becomes transactional—a way to a life that's pleasing to us more than to God. Our spiritual condition is far worse than we like to imagine. Giving Jesus a nod rather than bowing before Him as Lord, we see Him as friend and have no awe for His majesty, respect for His authority, or fear of His just judgment. Our cries for justice reject the grace that's the only way we can stand before the only God there is. He's more frightfully holy than we can possibly imagine—a *consuming fire* (Hebrews 12:29).

We, the people of God in the United States of America—well-churched and Bible-believing Christians—need to repent and return to the God we worship, looking to Him as the One True Lord and our only hope for salvation. Joel led God's people of his day in repentance, which is essential for His people in any day. Repentance that turns us from our own way and keeps us walking with our God involves:

Return: Turning back to God, acknowledging that we've strayed, doesn't come naturally. But confessing our sin is the essential first step to true fellowship with God as He is, and not as we imagine Him to be. Ask God, through His Spirit and according to His Word, to define for you who He is and what He expects of you.

Fasting and weeping and mourning: In His grace, God produces genuine regret for sin. Ask Him to reveal our sin to us and make us so horrified by it that we turn from sin back to God, begging for His forgiveness.

Rend your hearts and not your garments: Outward expressions of confession and mere emotional regret don't fool or impress God. He looks for a genuine turning of the heart that makes changes in our lives. Jesus' words about fasting and praying *to be seen by others* (Matthew 6:5, 16) go to the crux of the matter. Are we trying to impress God or people? A close walk with Him, truly seeking Him in prayer to follow Him according to Scripture's high and holy standards, pleases God and makes us like Him.

Return to the LORD your God. God binds Himself to His people in a covenant relationship that's much like a marriage. With Israel, the Old Covenant (or Testament) was expressed in the blood of sacrificial bulls and lambs, and goats. With Christians, the New Covenant/Testament is in the blood of Christ, shed on the cross to pay the penalty for all sin. The strains and stresses of daily life, and our tendency to stray into sin, pull us away from our covenant bond with the Good God who made and bought us for Himself. "Returning" means repenting and turning back to Him. Repentance as a regular habit keeps us close.

He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity. God's grace and compassion make it safe to come before Him, despite our sin. Right after receiving the Ten Commandments, including *you shall have no other gods before me* (Exodus 20:3), Israel made the golden calf and began to worship it. God was ready to destroy the entire nation for their blatant disobedience. But in His *steadfast love* (the Old Testament precursor of New Testament grace) God repented and spared His wicked people.

By this grace we live. Our only hope and the only way we can turn back to the God who saves, is the grace of God in Christ Jesus. To Him alone be all praise and glory.

Prayer for the Week

Ask God to make prayer central to the ministry of Northpoint as we proclaim and receive to truth of His Word.

- Sunday (Church):** Pray for the committee selecting new elders to lead our church. Pray for wisdom to ask good questions and guidance to the men God would have to lead our church.
- Monday (Home and Family):** Ask God to lead future generations of your family to Himself. May God establish a dynasty of faith that seeks His will.
- Tuesday (Job/School):** Pray for the movement of God’s Spirit among your school or employer. Ask God to use you for His purposes.
- Wednesday (Neighborhood and Community):** Pray for Corona Life Services: May God redeem the lives of abortion vulnerable mothers and their children. Pray for the banquet this Saturday.
- Thursday (Our Nation):** Confess Christ as the true Lord and Leader of this great country, so His truth shines through His people to the ends of the earth.
- Friday (The World):** Ask God to lift up Jesus Christ and draw all men to Himself throughout the world, from East to West and North to South.
- Saturday (Praise and Rejoicing):** Rejoice that God created music and every form of beauty (Psalm 104).

Prayer for Our Leaders

Pray that God’s hand will be on our leaders, to give them His strength and protection.

1. **Our Pastors and Directors:** Tony Chute, Taylor Mendoza, Terilyn Brown, and Marti Wiegman.
2. **Our Lay Elders:** Tim East, Steve Flood, Mark Kiker, Vinoj Zechariah, and new elders who will soon come onto the board.
3. **Our Church Staff:** Michelle Balga, Bob Brown, Carolee Jefferson, Amber McEwen, Tamene Menna, Mark Norland, Corie Saunders, Karen Sherwood, and Dani Tiqui.

Prayer Record

Record specific prayers you have below. Note when and how God answers your prayers. It will help you to see that He really is paying attention.

Date	Request	Date	Answer

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. –John 1:14