

Prayer Journal

For Conflict Resolution

At Forest Hills we commit to resolve conflicts and address concerns in a manner guided by scripture, specifically the rules of Christ laid out for us in Matthew 18. We call on all members to seek resolution through discernment of God's will, personal responsibility, empathy, open communication, extension of grace, and above all, love.

The first step to resolving the conflict is to take time for self-reflection and to discern God's will. This prayer journal is a useful tool in guiding you through this time.

Each day provides:

- one or more scripture verses that relates to the theme
- a brief explanation of the theme
- a list of prayer questions
- directions for a prayer time that is focused on listening to God (Opening My Heart to God)
- a prayer time that is focused on talking to God (Sharing Your Concerns with God)
- a space for journaling.

DAY 1: GOD'S GIFT

PSALM 34:18

ROMANS 5:1-11

MATTHEW 18:20

God's gifts to us are numerous. We have the wonderful gift of creation. Each of us is an unrepeatable, miracle of God. We have the gift of our talents. We have the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ. We have the gift of grace. We are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Now, we also know that reconciliation is a gift from God. God's promise is found in Matthew 18:20. In the middle of this chapter on how to reconcile there is a promise.... "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them."

Not only is reconciliation a gift from God but also the conflict itself might be a gift. Consider:

- Conflict is our opportunity to learn something new about God. (Think of the Exodus, the Babylonian Exile, etc.)
- The way in which we resolve our conflicts can be a witness to the world.
- Many people become closer to one another after a conflict has been resolved. The relationship does not go back to the beginning – it makes a leap ahead.

PRAYER QUESTIONS

1. What are the opportunities in this conflict?
2. What gifts has God given me?
3. How might I use these gifts in this situation?

OPENING YOUR HEART TO GOD

Focus on listening to where God is leading. Possible centering phrases:

- Thank you, God, for this gift...
- Lead me...
- Guide me...

SHARING YOUR CONCERNS WITH GOD

- I'm concerned about...
- I'm confused about...
- I need help with...

JOURNALING

Write down your thoughts about scripture, images, prayers, etc.

DAY 2: WHAT PLANK?

MATTHEW 18:8-9

MATTHEW 7:3-5

The first step in the conflict resolution process that Jesus lays out in Matthew 18 is self-reflection. We are asked to examine our own role (Matt 18:8a). Often this step can be the beginning and the end of a conflict resolution because when we discover what the “plank” is and eliminate it, the conflict may also disappear.

Even if this self-reflection does not eliminate the problem, it will be a necessary step in understanding how to resolve the conflict.

The basic steps in this self-reflection are...

- Discover what is causing you to stumble.
- Get rid of it. CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR.

PRAYER QUESTIONS

1. Can I let it go?
2. What does the other person see when they look at me?
3. What does God see?

OPENING YOUR HEART TO GOD

Focus on listening to where God is leading. Possible centering phrases:

- Reveal what is causing me to stumble...
- If it is Your will, help me let go of this...

SHARING YOUR CONCERNS WITH GOD

- I’m concerned about...
- I’m confused about...
- I’m still angry about...
- I need help with...

JOURNALING

Write down your thoughts about scripture, images, prayers, etc.

DAY 3: BLESSING THE PERSECUTORS

MATTHEW 5:44

JONAH

LUKE 10-37

The will of God is made quite clear in the scriptures. We are to understand and bless our persecutors. Jonah spent a lot of energy trying to escape his mission to the wicked. God pursued Jonah until he completed his mission. Matthew's account of Jesus' instructions to us includes:

- Love your enemy
- Bless those who curse you
- Do good to those who hate you
- Pray for those who spitefully use you

This is tough medicine for those of us who prefer to nurse and rehearse our anger towards others. What if you think of reconciliation and the process of forgiveness as being a series of steps one takes towards the final goal? Imagine that your goal is reconciliation. How many steps will it take for you to reach this goal? In especially difficult conflict situations there may be a lot of steps between now and your final goal. Try to take one at a time.

PRAYER QUESTIONS

1. Name the persons who you feel have "spitefully used you".
2. Ask God to enter your heart and bless you with the desire to pray for your persecutors.

OPENING YOUR HEART TO GOD

Focus on listening to where God is leading. Possible centering phrases:

- Open my heart, Lord Jesus...
- Repeat the names of those you are in conflict with...

SHARING YOUR CONCERNS WITH GOD

- I need help with...
- God, please help...
- Bless...

JOURNALING

Write down your thoughts about scripture, images, prayers, etc.

DAY 4: BE ANGRY BUT DO NOT SIN

EPHESIANS 4:25-27

ROMANS 12:21

1 JOHN 3:18

Be angry but do not sin. Recognize and acknowledge your feelings toward this situation. The sin is not in having these feelings (of anger or disappointment), rather the sin can happen in what actions you take.

Paul suggests two solutions. One is to speak the truth to one another. Another is to overcome evil with good. Christians can discover the power in remaining unconditionally constructive in every situation. No matter what others do, we can choose to speak the truth, remain constructive, and to choose God's way over the way of evil.

Remember:

- Don't get mad.
- Don't get even.
- Get what God wants.

PRAYER QUESTIONS

1. What feelings do I need to acknowledge?
2. What actions have I been tempted to take...responding to anger with sin?
3. What actions can I take to overcome evil with good?

OPENING YOUR HEART TO GOD

Focus on listening to where God is leading. Possible centering phrases:

- Come Lord Jesus, enter my heart...
- God is good...choose God...

SHARING YOUR CONCERNS WITH GOD

- I'm afraid of...
- God, help me with...
- I want to...

JOURNALING

Write down your thoughts about scripture, images, prayers, etc.

DAY 5: LISTEN FIRST

PROVERBS 18:13

This practical advice in Proverbs has become the basis for good communication in today's society. It is referred to as reflective listening. The purpose of listening first is twofold:

1. It helps open communication and sends a message to the other person that you are truly trying to understand their position.
2. Once you can understand the other's point of view, you will be better able to plan strategies that will really solve the problem.

The best way to listen first is to remain non-anxious and authentically present with the other person, showing your concern and that you care about them.

PRAYER QUESTIONS

1. In what situations have I given answers before truly listening?
2. Do I know enough about the other person's point of view?

OPENING YOUR HEART TO GOD

Focus on listening to where God is leading. Possible centering phrases:

- Lord, take away my anxieties...
- Open my heart...

SHARING YOUR CONCERNS WITH GOD

- I confess, I don't know how to...
- I'm confused by...
- I want to...

JOURNALING

Write down your thoughts about scripture, images, prayers, etc.