

ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S GIFTS OF WORK AND REST

As we approach the time of harvest, the following prayers help us contemplate the blessings of work and of rest. Let us pray to appreciate God's involvement in and His concern about these aspects of our lives.

Care For My Soul

Dear Lord, you are the Good Shepherd who leads His people beside still waters. You are the one true guardian of souls and only You can restore desolate souls to contentment and peace.

I know that I am responsible for what I view, for what I say, and even for what I think. I confess that I often indulge in irresponsible actions that can harm my soul and certainly do not glorify You. I do not want to be a slave to my transgressions that cause me to feel so damaged before You, O God.

Caretaker of my soul, please hear my cry for deliverance from such things as pride, doubting Your goodness, and grumbling rather than praising You. Help me leave my burdens at the foot of the cross, trusting that You desire to do something new in my life as I receive Your forgiveness. Bless me with grace that makes me alive with You, Lord Jesus Christ.

Strengthen my soul to show compassion, humility, and patience because You have shown these to me. Please allow my example before others to be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.

In the name of the One who restores my soul and guides me in the paths of righteousness. Amen. (Psalm 23:2-3)

***John 10:11** "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep..."*

***Psalm 23:2-3** He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*

***Ephesians 2:4-6** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...*

***Colossians 3:12-13** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.*

***Psalm 42:5** Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him for the help of His presence.*

All scripture references are quoted directly from the NASB.

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The Blessing of Work

Glory to You, the creative Lord, for patterning the world after Your own heart, with cycles of work and rest, rhythm and order, and purpose. You bless Your people with the privilege of work. You generously trust humanity with the task of caring for and cultivating the earth.

Too often I behave as if my foolish and self-absorbed thoughts were at the center of the universe. I disregard Your plan for my life in favor of one I choose that makes me feel more significant and important. Forgive me for acting as though I will remain here forever. In reality I am only a temporary steward of Your gifts and grace.

As Your redeemed child, help me see my life and work as a reflection of Your plan for me, both in my earthly vocation, and in the work of Your kingdom. Burn into my memory that my foremost task is to live and to work in such a way that Jesus is the One whom others see. Teach me to redeem each day for what it is...an opportunity to love and serve You more.

In my daily work, and in Your eternal plans, use me or lay me aside, as You see fit. I am the clay and You the potter, and I surrender myself to Your purposes. Thank You that through Your Word, the Holy Spirit, the counsel of other believers, and the daily circumstances of life, You guide me. Give me ears to hear and a heart to understand.

In the name of the One who created us in Christ Jesus for good works. Amen. (Ephesians 2:10)

Psalm 145:5-6 On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate. Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, and I will tell of Your greatness.

James 4:14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

I Corinthians 3:9 For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, God's building.

Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand.

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Daily Needs Provided

Oh Lord, You are the Creator, Sustainer and Provider of all life. You created Your children to need food and to require rest for the body and soul. Your mercies are new every morning as You provide for all daily needs. And yet, Your Word says that life is so much more than food or bodily requirements.

Forgive me for taking for granted the abundant blessings You have provided! How easy and arrogant it is to think that I take care of myself, that I have the ability to provide for all my needs and wants or that I have earned any wealth in this life. I am sorry for the time and concern I waste in preoccupation with food, clothes, and vain things. These have no lasting value.

Holy One, help me to trust You completely for all I really need. May the wants and desires in my life flow from Your Word and Holy Spirit. *Search me, O God, and know my heart. See if there is any hurtful way in me. Help me to walk in Your everlasting way.*

Almighty God, cause me this day to be still and reflect on the greatest blessing of all – the gift of salvation through Your Son, Jesus. Help me to walk in a manner that pleases You in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. For I know that all other needs and wants will fade in importance in the light of Your glory and grace.

I pray this in the name of the Good Shepherd who provides goodness and mercy all the days of my life. Amen.
(Psalm 23:6)

Matthew 6:25: For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink, nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food and body more than clothing?"

Deuteronomy 8:17 Otherwise, you may say in your heart "My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth."

Psalm 127: 2 It is vain for you rise up early, and retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors; for He gives to His beloved even in his sleep.

Psalm 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

Colossians 1:9-12 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.

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Being a Good Steward

You, Lord, are the Great Creator and Master Planner. You called upon mankind to care for Your beautiful world, and You granted Your diverse people the skills and discernment to do it. From the beginning, You entrusted man with Your creation so that he would remember and glorify You.

Far too often I claim ownership of all that is Yours, and I am sorry. I am guilty of using and abusing Your creation for my own pleasure and convenience. Forgive me for my thoughtless ingratitude and for my irresponsibility in watching over the treasures You have placed in my care.

I ask for the Holy Spirit's wisdom to guard, invest, and share the resources You have given to me as I wait for You to come back. Please renew my sense of accountability, responsibility, and love for all that is Yours.

You are the Good Shepherd. As I strive to be a good undershepherd, thank You for the honor of caring for Your possessions. I pray that You will be glorified in and through my service. Thank You for using me to keep things ready and in good order until the day of Your return.

In the name of the Maker of heaven and earth. Amen. (Psalm 146:6)

Genesis 1:27-28 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Matthew 25:29 "For to everyone who has, shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away."

John 21:17 Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep."

I Peter 5:2-4 ...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God, and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

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Receiving the Gift of the Sabbath

Holy Creator, You set the course of days, weeks, seasons, and years. This unchanging pattern provides order in the lives of Your obedient children. As their loving heavenly Father, You have given the blessing of work as well as the refreshing rest from work. The discipline of this plan clearly sets Your people apart from those who do not recognize Your guiding hand.

But I am not always obedient, Lord, in following Your plan! I am like a young child who resists designated rest times; I feel that there are things I still want to do! My refusal to comply reveals my profoundly arrogant lack of gratitude and trust for Your provision. You created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, yet I refuse to follow Your example. I reject the GIFT of Your COMMAND to set aside one full, refreshing day for worship.

Please help me see the wisdom of Your special respite for me and for those under my care. Sabbath rest is a good and gracious gift, Father, and I want to accept it. Show me how to organize each week so that I can delight in spending a day learning more about You.

I yield back to You the time You have given me to complete my work. Please let me also return to You a special day of restful reflection each week. You wisely insist that I spend time in Your restoring presence, and this demonstrates Your fatherly love and kindness. Please let others see and desire this love. Thank You for the gift of Your Sabbath rest which points me toward my eternal rest to come.

In the name of the One who offers perfect rest. Amen. (Matthew 11:28-30)

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Exodus 20:8-11 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

Deuteronomy 5:12 & 15 Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. . . . You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

Leviticus 23:3 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling.

Hebrews 4:9-10 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

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Our Society

You are Holy, Lord God Almighty! Believers are set apart in Your creation to be holy like You. You specifically designed mankind to be in relationship with You and with each other. Your expectations for Christian living are clearly taught in Your Holy Word.

I am often convicted of not loving my neighbors as myself. Please forgive me for an attitude that is uncaring toward the abused, the neglected, and those who suffer the effects of all forms of social injustice. Instead, make me courageous and compassionate to use my voice to champion all those who are exploited and who have no voice, especially children and the elderly.

Precious Father, allow me to see all of society through Your eyes. Use me to bring peace into my workplace, my community, my school, and my home. Teach me to accept and not to judge while offering hope and true joy that can only come through Jesus Christ.

Give me Your grace to do unto others as I want them to do unto me. May my mission be to delight You as I share Jesus, the Light of the World. Let Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and may all Your children live in peace through obedience to You.

This I pray in the name of the One who promises a future and a hope. Amen. (Jeremiah 29:11)

***Leviticus 19:2** "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.'"*

***Micah 6:8** He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

***James 2:15-17** If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*

***Isaiah 49:13** Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people and will have compassion on His afflicted.*

***Matthew 7:12** In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

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