

## Prayer

Jesus, guide my lips to praise You in all I do and say.  
May my speech reflect truth and goodness;  
May my actions display care and attention to detail;  
May my thoughts be fixed on Him who guides my every moment.  
So, may I know Your presence, Lord, and practice it.  
Thank You, Jesus; AMEN.

## Other Prayer Suggestions

### Weekly Theme: the sick in mind

*Pray for all who research the illnesses of the mind, and ask the Lord to bless this work.  
Pray also for those who exercise a ministry of healing to those who are sick in mind.*

### On-going prayers

- *Pray for Afghanistan; its peoples and government*
- *Pray for those whose jobs are under threat at this time*
- *Praise God for church fellowship*

## Meditation

For gentleness, see the joy and care  
with which a grandparent plays with a grandchild;  
For faithfulness, see the endless romance  
of two lovers lost in the pathways of passionate love;  
For patience, see the self-control of a parent  
who never gives up hope on a lost or struggling child;  
For kindness, see the reassuring smile  
of one who visits you unexpectedly when ill in hospital;  
For graciousness, see the honesty and love  
which holds together true and lasting friendships;  
For goodness, see those who are all these things  
who show in their lives the fruit of the Spirit of God;  
For all that's best in life, follow the advice of the Creator.

## Bible Study - 1 Samuel 27-35

<sup>27b</sup> And Saul said to his son Jonathan, 'Why has the son of Jesse not come to the feast, either yesterday or today?' <sup>28</sup> Jonathan answered Saul, 'David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem; <sup>29</sup> he said, "Let me go; for our family is holding a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. So now, if I have found favour in your sight, let me get away, and see my brothers." For this reason he has not come to the king's table.'

<sup>30</sup> Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan. He said to him, 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? <sup>31</sup> For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, neither you nor your kingdom

*shall be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die.'*<sup>32</sup> Then Jonathan answered his father Saul, 'Why should he be put to death? What has he done?'<sup>33</sup> But Saul threw his spear at him to strike him; so Jonathan knew that it was the decision of his father to put David to death.

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food on the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, and as his father had disgraced him.

## Review

This is the final scene of the first Act of the drama of Saul and David; and it is a scene that does not have David present. David absented himself from the New Year feast which took place over several days, in the almost certain belief that Saul would have him killed on the spot. After a day or two, Jonathan's excuses for him wore thin, and Saul was having none of it. In a fit of rage he let out all his feelings about both David and his son Jonathan, cursing him to his face, before throwing a spear at his son! Saul continued to behave senselessly for the rest of his life.

All this would have been done in public, and Jonathan felt the disgrace deeply. He responded by not eating, and not in other words, not showing up at the feast; the very thing that had roused his father's wrath at David. After this, Jonathan gave David the pre-arranged sign that Saul would never accept him back at court (1 Sam 20:35f.), and the two say goodbye before David disappeared into exile. It is a tragic story, but for David it was the beginning his true apprenticeship for being King of Israel and Judah, and as a man of God, he survived and grew stronger. Jonathan, however, continued to serve his father faithfully as an army officer despite the deep hurt of the breakdown between them, eventually dying tragically in the same battle with the Philistine as his father.

It is quite likely that each of us, at some time or other, has had a relationship go very badly wrong, and we can still feel the pain of what happened. This is all the more grievous when it happens within a family. The circumstances that each of us experience are all very different, though the feelings of rejection and loss are often very similar. Because of this it is possible for us to 'empathise' with the experience of others, and relate to the feelings aroused by their stories. There are no rights or wrongs about how to deal with these situations when they occur; if there were, they would not hold so much agony for us.

As a minister I have had to sit with people after the breakdown of marriage, or the heartrending breakdown of trust that can occur between parents and child, which often tears mother and father apart, for example. And yet life never stops for us to get off, ask permission to start again, or redo things that could have been done better. The only choice we ever face is whether to allow these things to pull us down or to rise above them. Frankly, I do not know where people find the heart and momentum to rise above these things without the love and presence of Almighty God through Jesus Christ. David knew his Lord and took years to work through what had happened, awaiting God's time to return to the public eye and fulfil the anointing that God had blessed him with. The evidence is that he was able to make a positive choice in the most difficult of circumstances, thus enabling God to bring good things out of bad.

All of us can take David's example; particularly if we are in the midst of feeling rejected and hurt because of something awful that has happened within the family. Yet if we hold on to the faith we have in Jesus and turn to Him for guidance and support, then through His Word and through prayer we can find the strength to be whole again in Christ, committing what has happened to him who will judge all things and make them perfect at the last. Our relationship with the Lord is the key, just as it was for David. If we remain in His will, we will come through our trials. Like David, are we in the 'right' before God concerning what has

happened? Can we totally forgive the other parties involved and perceive their humanity even if they behave atrociously? If we can, then like David, the path before us may be hard but it will ultimately be fruitful.

## Questions (for use in groups)

1. From what you know of the story of Jonathan, why do you think that he remained faithful to his father despite seeing his father trying to kill him?
2. We talk about the 'straw that breaks the camel's back', bringing problems out into the open. In what ways have you experienced this in your family life?
3. Are there any further lessons we can learn from our scripture today about the nature of arguments within families and how they can be handled?

## Discipleship

### Personal comment:

*The one person I feel most for in this story is Jonathan. David has a tough time, but his day will come and he is the Lord's anointed. Sometimes someone like Jonathan must bear the brunt of rejection on behalf of another, and this is a thankless and awful thing to bear. Jesus bore such suffering for us on the Cross.*

### Ideas for discipleship programme

- Commit yourself to praying for a family issue which is capable of creating division and upset within your own family. Give this subject maximum prayer over a week, and then see what the Lord says to you about it.
- Talk to someone at church who has experienced great rejection, and do your best to 'bless' them in whatever way you can. You do not know the full weight of their rejection, but serve them.

## Final Prayer

Grant to us, Lord, some of that perfect love with which you healed the sick, and forgave the sinner. We need the compassion, love, and practical care that You showed within Your ministry. We need it for ourselves and for each other, so that we might truly be Your people, this and every day. AMEN