

Monday, August 17 - Read 1 Peter 5:5-7 Over the next seven days, we will explore a reality that is so simple, we miss its seriousness. Here it is: God hears us when we pray. It's that simple. And that profound. Unless we sit in this truth, we will miss how incredible and life-altering it is. In 1 Peter 5, Peter tells us to humble ourselves before the Lord and to cast our cares upon him. He explains that we have an adversary who is attacking us and that Christians throughout the world are suffering. But in verse 7 he grounds his command to cast our cares upon the Lord in a simple truth: "because he cares for you." How often do we take that short phrase for granted? Of course he cares for us! But think about it for a moment. Why should he? Don't forget that the same Bible that makes this statement also tells us that all human beings have rejected God (see Romans 1), that everyone has sinned and refuses to seek after God (see Romans 3), and that we are all dead in our sins (see Ephesians 2). There is no logical step between "we have all rejected him" and "he cares for us." And yet there it is. Illogical. But real. Stop right now to consider: God cares for you. So? So cast your cares upon him. He cares about you, so he wants to hear what's concerning you. It's that simple. But this simple realization will change your life. Let it. Right this second, God is listening to you. He cares, so he hears. Say something to him. What you say doesn't matter right now. Practice believing the reality that he is listening and he cares what you will say. Then say something. Anything. Because he hears.

Tuesday, August 18 - Read Matthew 6:25-34 Jesus told us that we do not need to be anxious. Specifically, he mentions food, drink, and clothing. Most of us believe in trusting God. We're on board with Jesus' "don't be anxious" advice here. This will get us through much of life, but when life unravels, it's impossible not to worry. If you're having trouble paying for a vacation, earning a passing grade, or hoping for a promotion, you can take Jesus' advice easily enough. But if you're not sure where you'll find food, water, or clothing, then things are not okay! This is a desperate situation! Life and death! And yet it is precisely these fundamental elements that Jesus tells us not to worry about. Why? Look at the birds, he says. They're not actively trying to grow their own food, yet God feeds them. So you don't need to worry either. What is this logic? We see the birds flying around, presumably looking for food. But it's not at all obvious that God is the one feeding them. God has taught them to look for food, and—though it isn't clear to the onlooker—he ensures that they find what they need. It isn't a dramatic, noticeably miraculous act. But it is God's daily provision. The logic here is to go ahead and tell God what you need rather than being anxious about it. Why? Because he cares about our needs, and he hears our prayers. Even if it doesn't seem like it. Perhaps you look at your situation and can't see God working. That's okay. That's how it is with the birds as well. But God cares. And he's working, even when he doesn't appear to be claiming the credit. He's listening. Whatever it is, talk to him about it right now.

Wednesday, August 19 - Read Matthew 7:7-12 Prayer is not rigid, or a like a formula. It's not an incantation that, if said correctly, will magically provide what we've summoned. But then there are statements like Matthew 7:7-12, where Jesus says that if we ask, we will receive. How does that work? We can be sure that Jesus is not trying to give us a formula or a blank check. Instead, he is teaching us something about our relationship with God and the way he responds to our concerns. Too often, we treat prayer like a karma-driven algorithm. We ask God for the things we really want, but we don't expect him to give us precisely that. Life has taught us not to expect a favorable answer. We never really believed that we deserved it, anyway. But that approach is at odds with Jesus' words here. Because prayer has nothing to do with our performance. It's not about karma. Prayer is about a relationship with God, who happens to be a loving father. Just as a loving father would not give his daughter a snake when she asks for a fish or a stone when she asks for bread, so our loving father will not try to trick, disappoint, or punish us in response to our requests. Why? Because he loves us. So he listens to our requests. If you've ever earnestly asked God for something good and instead received something devastating, you need to hear these words from Jesus. Prayer is relational. Your father loves you. Keep praying, because he cares about your wellbeing. He wants you to continue to draw near. It's not a procedure that works exactly the same every time, it's a relationship. And your father's end goal is to bless you. Lean into that as you pray.

Thursday, August 20 - Read Psalms 139 Not only does the Bible teach that God listens when we pray, it's also clear that he listens BEFORE we pray. Psalm 139 is eloquent in saying that before we can even form a word on our lips, God already knows what we're going to say. He knows the words before we do. He's listening before it even occurs to us to speak. There is never a moment when God is not there with you. If you accidentally find yourself in a situation where you're in trouble and feel far from God, he's there! If you have actively tried to run from him, doing your best to get yourself in the darkest possible situation, he's there too! On the very top of the list of things you're completely incapable of doing is getting to a place where God won't hear you. David even says that if you could count the grains of sand on the shore, you still wouldn't be approaching the number of times God thinks about you. He's more attentive than the most attentive friend or spouse. He's always there—not as a policeman, but as a friend, ultra-concerned to hear what is on your mind. This is the confidence we must carry into prayer. As you finish this devotional and close your eyes to pray, God will already have been listening to you. Waiting for you to speak. He cares. More than you could even begin to fathom. So what will you say? He knows your situation better than you do. Lay it all out there for him, including your own emotional and spiritual response. He cares. He's listening. He's longing to spend this time with you right now.

Friday, August 21 - Read Psalms 46 Imagine being in a desperate situation and calling out for help but having no confidence that anyone is able to hear your call. Sometimes our prayers feel like a message in a bottle: we make a passionate plea for help but we have no idea if the message will ever reach anyone, and even then, how can we be sure the person who picks up the bottle will care about our situation or be able to do anything to help? Mercifully, prayer is not like this. God hears. And he cares. And he is able. Read through Psalm 46 to gain assurance of each of these truths. Our God is a refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. The wording is interesting. What does it mean that he is VERY present? "Very" is an intensifier, but we don't usually intensify the word "present." You're either there or you're not. But the Psalmist does not want us to undervalue God's presence: He is VERY PRESENT when we are in trouble. Read through the rest of the Psalm. Everything in the world around you can fall apart, but God is there. And he is all that matters. When the world is crumbling all around—even if it literally crumbles but certainly if it does so metaphorically—we don't need to be worried. The end of the Psalm has given comfort to God's people for thousands of years: Be still and know that he is God. As long as we are desperately fighting to rectify our situation, we may miss the unmistakable reality that God is right there with us. But if we can pause in prayer and be mindful of his presence, then we will know the only thing that matters: he is God.

For a complete study guide, visit covenantdothan.org/messages/archive/pray/.

THE COVENANT HAPPENINGS

WORSHIP AT COVENANT

08.16.20

Sundays

Wednesdays

8:15 AM | Traditional Service

9:45 AM | Contemporary Service

11 AM | Contemporary Service

6 PM | **1st Wednesday**
Once a month
Bible Study
Weekly

Online Campus

No matter where you are on Sundays, you can join us for worship on our Online Campus. Visit our online campus at covenantdothan.org/locations/ online for more information.

Livestream: covenantdothan.online.church
Facebook Live: facebook.com/covumcdothan
YouTube: Search Covenant Dothan UMC

Welcome!

All of our services - 8:15, 9:45 and 11 am - are available on our online campus. Please note: We will not gather in our buildings for worship services at this time. This includes children and students as well.

Livestream: covenantdothan.online.church
Facebook Live: facebook.com/covumcdothan
YouTube: Search Covenant Dothan UMC

Prayer

Prayer changes lives and circumstances. We believe when we come together fully submitted to God in prayer, He will move on our behalf like never before. Join us this month in praying for God's leading and guidance in our lives, our church, our movement, and our mission fields. Visit covenantdothan.org/prayer/ to view the prayer guide.

A Note From the Finance Office

The current season we are facing has been difficult in many ways. With much of our daily lives and normalcy being taken away, it's difficult to imagine giving more of ourselves. However, as Christians, we are called to be generous even in the most difficult circumstances, whether that means with our time or our finances. Even through the hard seasons, God can do immeasurably more through our generosity. Because of your continued support of Covenant, we have been able to reach more people than ever with our virtual approach to church and our CovMissions outreach. This is only possible through your generosity! Thank you for partnering with and believing God for more with us!

One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered. Proverbs 11:24-25

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THE COVENANT APP
Search & download
"Covenant UMC Dothan" on
any phone or tablet device.



August Sermon Series

Sundays at 8:15 am, 9:45 am & 11 am The most important conversation of your life. Prayers aren't empty words hurled at the sky. They're conversations. August is all about discovering how much it matters when you pray.

Livestream: covenantdothan.online.church

Facebook Live: facebook.com/covumcdothan

YouTube: Search Covenant Dothan UMC

Baptism

We believe baptism is an important step of obedience in our faith journey. It shows that we have personally trusted Jesus for our salvation, and just as Jesus was baptized on earth, we do this to follow his example. Your baptism symbolizes the new life you have found in Christ just as Jesus rose to life again. If you have questions about baptism or would like to be baptized, contact Rev. Kyle Gatlin at kyle@covenantdothan.org.

CovGroups

Marriage Night Simulcast Join us **September 12 from 6-9:30 pm** for a one-night event for married and engaged couples to laugh and learn as they hear from marriage experts and discover how to honor God through their relationship. The speaker lineup includes Matt & Lauren Chandler, Conway & Jada Edwards, Les & Leslie Parrott, and comedian Michael Jr. There is an option for viewing the simulcast from your home. Contact Wendy Hicks at wendy@covenantdothan.org for more information.

Right Now Media Our church has access to an extensive video library called Right Now Media. It's like the "Netflix of Video Bible Studies" and contains a HUGE library of faith-based videos that can be accessed from anywhere. We believe Right Now Media is a tool that can serve you as you live out your faith at home, work, and in your neighborhood. There are videos for everyone - kids, students, & adults - aimed at helping you grow in your faith. Contact Wendy Hicks to sign up.

August Prayer Groups

Our focus during this month will be on prayer and we are encouraging everyone to become involved in a group at some level. We are asking that you find 3-4 others who would come alongside you during the month of August and take advantage of our prayer resources. You can meet together on a day/time and at a location of your choosing. We have provided short Bible studies, devotionals, and Bible plans for you; visit covenantdothan.org/prayer to learn more. We know God will do great things during the month of August and hope you will take this opportunity to strengthen your walk with Christ.

Rummage Sale

Please remember our Rummage Sale as you are cleaning out. We have storage space available for any donations you would like to give. Contact Sherry Koogler at sherryk@covenantdothan.org and she will set up a time to meet you to drop off donations. The Rummage Sale benefits our Celebrate Recovery program as well as other missions in the Wiregrass.

Care Ministries



Celebrate Recovery No *hurt* is beyond healing. No *habit* is beyond help. No *hang-up* is beyond hope. It takes courage to let others into our lives, but we were never meant to walk through life alone. Let us walk with you. Though we are unable to meet in person at this time, be sure to join us on Facebook at facebook.com/covumcdothan on Thursdays at 6 pm as we provide a teaching or an inspiring testimony. For more information contact Sherry Koogler at sherryk@covenantdothan.org.

Grief Support Grief Support is a safe, confidential, loving and Christ-centered environment for sharing one another's burdens. Grief Support meets on the 2nd & 4th Tuesday of every month and is currently meeting via Zoom. If you are interested in joining or would like more information, please contact Jim Hicks at hicksje@graceba.net.

Stephen Ministry Stephen Ministry is Christ caring for people through people. If you are going through a difficult time, contact Kyle Gatlin at 793.4440 or kyle@covenantdothan.org. The care you'll receive is confidential, free and very helpful.



Stay connected with our CovKids! Be sure to check out everything CovKids has coming up on Facebook & Instagram - live devotionals, book readings, crafts & more!

Facebook: facebook.com/CovKids

Instagram: instagram.com/covkids_



Stay connected with our CovStudents! Be sure to check out everything CovStudents has coming up.

Facebook: facebook.com/CovStudents

Instagram: instagram.com/covstudents

CovStudent Parent Meeting

TONIGHT, August 16 at 5 pm, CLC Gym

For upcoming 6th graders and their parents - Join us as we go over our new schedule and what we do throughout the year. We will have giveaways and free shirts for all students that show up with their parent. Please make every effort to attend.

CovTrips

We still have spots left on our trip! Join us **October 18-24** as we set off for Lancaster in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch Country. This seven day, six night trip includes transportation, lodging, ten meals, admission to the Queen Esther Show, Gettysburg National Park, Amish Experience and Jacob's Choice at the F/X Theatre, and guided tours. The cost is \$659 per person (double occupancy). Contact Sherry Koogler at 793.4440 for more information.

Covenant Concerns

Sympathy

The Pastors and congregation would like to express our deepest sympathy to...

- Cynthia & Scott Holmes on the death of her sister, *Lisa Smith*.
- Barbara & Mike Thomas on the death of her sister, *Lillian Robison*.

Congratulations

Sue Bradshaw on the birth of her great grandson, *Bradshaw Woods Lisenby*. Parents are Woods & Brianna Lisenby.

Recent Prayer Concerns Sharon Jenkins, Carrie Mathis Allday, Gianna Allday, Steve Morrell, Jennette Gayer, Ava Blackburn, Beth & Tom Sherrer, Ronnie Brannon, Molly Tew, Tom Renshaw Sr., Margaret Wilson, David Cunningham, Linda Griffith, Chris Smith, John Babinski, Tim Koogler, Linda Avera, Carrie Williams, Beverly Youse, Kathy Kerecman, Sandy Lisenby, Danielle Simmons, Tammy Reese, Family of Patsy Bowling, Johnathan Berry, Carla Lawrence, Wallace Family, JJ Price Family, Alan Tidwell, Quinton Snellgrove, Terri Daughtry, Lori Burns, Dr. Bill Lies, Lisa Silcox, Natalie Faulk, Christy Goodwin Bullard, Mary Lisenby, George Stokes, Mark Arrington, William Brown, Peter Collins Jr., Jill Walden, Sue Reynolds, Hays McKay, Helon Scott, Jeanne Stringfellow, Dutch Holland, James Salter, Thomas Evans, Lucy Cline, Carolyn Benton, David Johnston, Yvonne Reid, Cher Hicks, Happy Fox, Pete Shelley, Lisa Henry, Karen Medley, Gayle Moores, Lamar Spence, Martha Jane Shannon, Jerry Dooling, Tipton Family, Kathy Clark, Wynn Arkle, June Granberry, Evie Riley, Tony Justice, Richard Duncan, Sarah Grantham, Charles Meeks, JoAnn Gamble, Laurie Axtell, Allwyn Nilsson, Trip and Haley Moseley & family, Avery Wells, Jeffrey Bostwick, Scott Berry, Jennie Lawson, Scott Brown, Angie Goodson, Janis Caddell, Shelby Clark, Kendrea White, Kelly Armstrong Smith, Bobby Simmons, Michael Buntin, Bernice White, Beverly White, Audrey Miller, Carolyn Thomley, Bob Drummond, Connie Moore

Currently Deployed Jerrad Anderson

Have a prayer request? If you have a prayer request you would like to add to this list, please email Kyle Gatlin at kyle@covenantdothan.org.