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# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments and Authors . . . . .	A9
Welcome to <i>The Prayer Bible</i> . . . . .	A13
The Books of the Bible . . . . .	A15
Alphabetical Listing of Bible Books . . . . .	A16
Prayer Traditions . . . . .	A17
A Note to the Readers . . . . .	A27
Introduction to the New Living Translation . . . . .	A29
NLT Bible Translation Team . . . . .	A35
The Old Testament . . . . .	I
The New Testament . . . . .	I215
Prayer Programs . . . . .	I675
Guide to Prayer Paths . . . . .	I689
Index to Prayer Prompts . . . . .	I693
Index to Stories of Answered Prayer . . . . .	I705
Index to Prayer Quotes . . . . .	I707
Index to Quotes from Hymns . . . . .	I709
Topical Guide to Bible Prayers . . . . .	I711
Source and Copyright Acknowledgments . . . . .	I719

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND AUTHORS

I've had the privilege of being involved in the NLT Prayer Bible from its early stages at Tyndale. While I have many good reasons to feel capable of undertaking a Bible project like this one, I have many more reasons to feel unprepared and inadequate. My personal prayer life falls far short of the ideal. I struggle to faithfully present needs to God or spend adequate time praising him. But, perhaps in the upside-down way of the Kingdom of God, that makes me more qualified than all my past work and training. I need these teachings and these prompts to pray as much as anyone who might eventually pick up this Bible and begin to develop a stronger, more intimate life of communion with God. Certainly, throughout the work, I have been alternately convicted of my need and brought to tears by the reality of what God has done in my life. In that sense, as much as any, this *NLT Prayer Bible* has been immersed in prayer from beginning to end.

Whenever someone tackles a Bible of this size and scope, the list of those who provided needed assistance could go on to fill pages and pages. Those I *must* thank include the following:

### OUR GOD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST

Without him, none of this work would be worthwhile nor would it even be necessary. The communion with him gained throughout this effort will affect me for the rest of my years. *May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer* (Psalm 19:14).

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### THE WRITERS

Many of you fit this work into already busy schedules, simply because you believed in it. You creatively shared your thoughts on prayer—and your hearts. I have the deepest respect and gratitude for each of you.

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## PRAYER TRADITIONS

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## PRAYER PATHS

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Without mentioning any specific names (they know who they are), I'd like to thank those people in my own circle of personal friends who have been such a support to me throughout this process. Your prayers and your words of encouragement mean more than you'll ever know.

And how could I ever finish without thanking John, my husband and friend of 30 years? Your ready smiles and your patience with me, well, what can I say? You're my rock.

Loved and forgiven,  
*Jean E. Syswerda*  
GENERAL EDITOR

**JEAN E. SYSWERDA** is a former editor and associate publisher at Zondervan. While there she led the development of such best-selling Bibles as the *Women's Devotional Bible*, the *NIV Adventure Bible*, the *NIV Teen Study Bible*, and the *NIV Youthwalk Devotional Bible*. Jean is the general editor of the best-selling *NIV Women of Faith Study Bible*, the author of the *NIV Super Heroes Bible* and *Sleep Tight Bible Stories*, and coauthor of the best-selling *Women of the Bible* and the *Read With Me Bible*. Jean and her husband, John, have three children and three grandchildren and live the country life in Allendale, Michigan.

# Welcome to THE PRAYER BIBLE

Here, maybe for the first time, is a Bible that you don't so much read and study as *do*. *The Prayer Bible* invites you to enter a quiet place, leave your lack of Bible knowledge and spiritual inadequacies behind, and immerse yourself in the Word of God and in communion with him.

A consistent and meaningful prayer life is not something that comes easily for most believers. Daily busyness and distractions break time up into little glassy fragments with hard edges, stark realities, and acute tensions. The fragments effectively cut away any chance—or perhaps even desire—for reviving time alone with God. *The Prayer Bible* offers a prescription, a workable solution, for your fragmented prayer life. Each feature of *The Prayer Bible* helps to set in motion a movement toward God and dialogue with him.

## PRAYER TRADITIONS

Six articles on important prayer traditions begin on page A17. Each article presents a different approach or facet of a devoted life of prayer. The articles offer background and history on each tradition as well as ideas on how to implement these principles in your own prayer life. After you read each article, apply its principles as you walk your way through the other features of *The Prayer Bible*.

## PRAYER PATHS

These are *The Prayer Bible's* teaching tool. You can walk these “prayer paths” through Scripture to learn about key prayer topics and how to apply them to your personal prayer life. Each of the fifteen prayer paths begins with a major article and then works its way through Scripture with eight to ten shorter articles. Flip through the pages of *The Prayer Bible* to find a prayer path article and use the directions at the end of each to follow the path through Scripture. Or go to page 1689 at the back of this Bible for a listing of each prayer path, with page numbers, and where it tracks through Scripture.

## PRAYER PROMPTS

You'll find a multitude of these “prayer prompts” in a narrow side column on each page of the *NLT Prayer Bible*. Each prompt offers you direction in how to pray the Scriptures: by praying the actual words of Scripture, or by using the Scripture as a springboard to formulate your own prayers. On page 1693 you'll find a topical index of all the prayer prompts to guide you to prompts that meet special prayer needs.

## STORIES OF ANSWERED PRAYER

These stories form the most personal component of *The Prayer Bible*. Each story gives you an intimate glimpse into the life of one person and how prayer accomplished something specific in that person's life. These stories of answered prayer will spark renewed assurance of God's promise to answer prayer. You can find a listing of each story and its location on page 1705.

## PRAYER QUOTES

Scattered throughout *The Prayer Bible* are words of wisdom from various writers, some widely known and some not so well known. Try to be quiet and a bit introspective as you read their words, using their experiences and understanding of a life of prayer to examine your own need for deeper communion with God. Some are excerpts from hymns. Use these to sing your prayers and praises to the God who delights to listen. You'll find an index to quotes and hymns on pages 1707 and 1709.

## BOOK INTRODUCTIONS

Each book of the Bible begins with an introduction to that book. These give a snapshot of the book's message, while offering insight into the prayers or the teachings on prayer that are found in that particular book.

## PRAYER PROGRAMS

Here's one more way for you to begin to use the prayer materials in *The Prayer Bible*. Each of these thirty "prayer programs" guide you through a week of prayer on a specific subject. These are designed to meet a wide variety of prayer-needs. You'll find these prayer programs beginning on page 1675.

All the features of *The Prayer Bible* combine to lead you into a communication with God that can formulate the patterns of a lifetime. Open this Bible daily, or leave it open in an accessible place, using it often to pray your way through God's Word and to continue a dialogue with God that runs throughout your day.

## TOPICAL GUIDE TO BIBLE PRAYERS

A list of Bible prayers organized by topic begins on page 1711. Use this list to explore further the biblical idea of prayer and to find biblical prayers that speak to certain life situations.

# THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis . . . . .	3
Exodus . . . . .	71
Leviticus . . . . .	129
Numbers . . . . .	169
Deuteronomy . . . . .	227
Joshua . . . . .	277
Judges . . . . .	311
Ruth . . . . .	345
1 Samuel . . . . .	351
2 Samuel . . . . .	395
1 Kings . . . . .	433
2 Kings . . . . .	477
1 Chronicles . . . . .	521
2 Chronicles . . . . .	567
Ezra . . . . .	615
Nehemiah . . . . .	633
Esther . . . . .	655
Job . . . . .	667
Psalms . . . . .	701
Proverbs . . . . .	839
Ecclesiastes . . . . .	873
Song of Songs . . . . .	885
Isaiah . . . . .	893
Jeremiah . . . . .	961
Lamentations . . . . .	1033
Ezekiel . . . . .	1041
Daniel . . . . .	1105
Hosea . . . . .	1129
Joel . . . . .	1141
Amos . . . . .	1147
Obadiah . . . . .	1159
Jonah . . . . .	1163
Micah . . . . .	1167
Nahum . . . . .	1175

Habakkuk . . . . .	1179
Zephaniah . . . . .	1185
Haggai . . . . .	1191
Zechariah . . . . .	1195
Malachi . . . . .	1209

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew . . . . .	1217
Mark . . . . .	1271
Luke . . . . .	1305
John . . . . .	1365
Acts . . . . .	1405
Romans . . . . .	1457
1 Corinthians . . . . .	1483
2 Corinthians . . . . .	1507
Galatians . . . . .	1523
Ephesians . . . . .	1533
Philippians . . . . .	1543
Colossians . . . . .	1551
1 Thessalonians . . . . .	1559
2 Thessalonians . . . . .	1565
1 Timothy . . . . .	1569
2 Timothy . . . . .	1577
Titus . . . . .	1583
Philemon . . . . .	1587
Hebrews . . . . .	1589
James . . . . .	1611
1 Peter . . . . .	1619
2 Peter . . . . .	1627
1 John . . . . .	1633
2 John . . . . .	1641
3 John . . . . .	1643
Jude . . . . .	1645
Revelation . . . . .	1649



# ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF BIBLE BOOKS

Acts . . . . .	1405	Judges . . . . .	311
Amos . . . . .	1147	1 Kings . . . . .	433
1 Chronicles . . . . .	521	2 Kings . . . . .	477
2 Chronicles . . . . .	567	Lamentations . . . . .	1033
Colossians . . . . .	1551	Leviticus . . . . .	129
1 Corinthians . . . . .	1483	Luke . . . . .	1305
2 Corinthians . . . . .	1507	Malachi . . . . .	1209
Daniel . . . . .	1105	Mark . . . . .	1271
Deuteronomy . . . . .	227	Matthew . . . . .	1217
Ecclesiastes . . . . .	873	Micah . . . . .	1167
Ephesians . . . . .	1533	Nahum . . . . .	1175
Esther . . . . .	655	Nehemiah . . . . .	633
Exodus . . . . .	71	Numbers . . . . .	169
Ezekiel . . . . .	1041	Obadiah . . . . .	1159
Ezra . . . . .	615	1 Peter . . . . .	1619
Galatians . . . . .	1523	2 Peter . . . . .	1627
Genesis . . . . .	3	Philemon . . . . .	1587
Habakkuk . . . . .	1179	Philippians . . . . .	1543
Haggai . . . . .	1191	Proverbs . . . . .	839
Hebrews . . . . .	1589	Psalms . . . . .	701
Hosea . . . . .	1129	Revelation . . . . .	1649
Isaiah . . . . .	893	Romans . . . . .	1457
James . . . . .	1611	Ruth . . . . .	345
Jeremiah . . . . .	961	1 Samuel . . . . .	351
Job . . . . .	667	2 Samuel . . . . .	395
Joel . . . . .	1141	Song of Songs . . . . .	885
John . . . . .	1365	1 Thessalonians . . . . .	1559
1 John . . . . .	1633	2 Thessalonians . . . . .	1565
2 John . . . . .	1641	1 Timothy . . . . .	1569
3 John . . . . .	1643	2 Timothy . . . . .	1577
Jonah . . . . .	1163	Titus . . . . .	1583
Joshua . . . . .	277	Zechariah . . . . .	1195
Jude . . . . .	1645	Zephaniah . . . . .	1185

# PRAYER TRADITIONS

## PRAYING THE SCRIPTURES

Someone has said that one should never read the Bible without praying and never pray without reading the Bible. But the Scriptures have fallen on hard times. Academic inquiry has shaken the foundations of faith and practice for many. When people approach the Bible as a mere historical curiosity or ordinary literary work, criticizing its form and structure or dismissing its admonitions as applicable only to an ancient culture, they hold the Bible at a distance. They refuse to let it touch them personally.

But those who love Scripture, who think about it day and night (Psalm 1:2), experience a different consequence. The psalmist equated searching God's Word with searching for God himself. He rejoiced in God's Word "like one who finds a great treasure" (Psalm 119:162). The writer of Hebrews discovered that "the word of God is full of living power" (Hebrews 4:12). Literature that lives is unlike any other piece of literature. The power and presence of God himself wait to greet any who approach the Scriptures receptively.

### Inspired Praying

As God reaches out to you through his Word, you can hardly keep yourself from responding. The Scriptures inspire prayer. Meditating on the Scriptures nurtures prayer. Prayer flows naturally, almost unbidden when you hear God speak to you through the Scriptures. Marjorie Thompson writes about "the direct cry of the heart to God that rises where we have heard ourselves personally addressed through the word. Perhaps the word has touched our pain, and we cry out in hurt, anger or frustration; perhaps God has revealed our sin, and we whisper in confession and repentance; perhaps the word has evoked gratitude, and our words leap up in thanksgiving; perhaps it has sparked our joy, and we sing out adoration and praise!"<sup>1</sup>

Without the nourishment of Scripture, your prayers can begin to seem shallow, even to yourself! George Mueller, the nineteenth-century Christian leader, wrote of his frustration at trying to keep his mind from wandering as he prayed. Superficial concerns distracted him in prayer. Mueller decided to begin his prayer time by meditating on Scripture: "I scarcely ever suffer now this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into . . . fellowship with God, I speak to my Father and to my friend . . . about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word."<sup>2</sup>

### Transformed Praying

When you come to the Scriptures listening for God, you give God room to transform *your* words with *his* Word. Prayer that comes only from your own thoughts and ideas is prayer limited by your thoughts and ideas. But prayer that springs from the inspiration of Scripture knows no limits. " 'My thoughts are completely different from yours,' says the LORD. 'And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine' " (Isaiah 55:8). The Scriptures give you "something substantial to say in prayer, and the confidence that we are praying God's thoughts to Him."<sup>3</sup>

Jesus himself used the Scriptures to express his deepest agony. When he cried out to God from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" he used words from the first line of Psalm 22. Twentieth-century pastor and courageous leader Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the Psalms "the prayer book of the Bible." The richness of the personal encounters with God recorded in the Psalms can give you the words to say in your own personal encounters with God.

### Praying the Prayers of Scripture

When you pray for others, the Scriptures grant your prayers a depth you could not find on your own. You can take any prayer of the Bible and enlist it in your prayers for someone else. For example, in Ephesians 3:16-17 Paul included this prayer: "I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources [God] will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit. And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love." You can quite easily substitute the name of a person for whom you are praying for the pronouns Paul used: "Lord, I pray that from your glorious, unlimited resources you will give *John* mighty inner strength through your Holy Spirit. . . ."

God's living Spirit brings the Scriptures alive to us not only as we read but also as we pray. When we form our prayers using passages of Scripture, we speak God's own words after him, assuring that our prayers mirror God's character and will. And God's living Spirit, speaking to us through the Scriptures, guides and empowers us to fulfill Christ's mission in the world, as we work and witness and pray.

—Jill Zook-Jones

### JOURNALING

Do you sometimes have trouble remembering valuable lessons learned in everyday living? Do you sometimes lose sight of God's daily blessings? Many people find that life rushes by so quickly that they have trouble keeping track of what matters most. Distracted by the urgent, they miss the important.

#### Struggling to Remember

Humans have long struggled to remember the spiritual significance of everyday events, tracing the hand of God in everyday choices or difficulties. Early in the biblical story Moses told the Hebrew people, "Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character. . . . Do not forget that he led you through the great and terrifying wilderness" (Deuteronomy 8:2, 15).

Later the psalmist wrote:

*I recall all you have done, O LORD;  
I remember your wonderful deeds of long ago.  
They are constantly in my thoughts.  
I cannot stop thinking about them (Psalm 77:11-12).*

From the beginning God's people wanted to remember what he had done in their lives. Sometimes that meant telling, other times it meant writing. How can you "remember" God's "wonderful deeds" today? Keeping a journal helps. You can write, for example, about an answered prayer for a friend's healing. Or you may record a new awareness of God's character that comes from a daily Bible reading. Or you may put on paper a conversation with a friend that stretches you to live more faithfully. In all these ways you help yourself remember, for the finest mind, says an old Chinese proverb, is less reliable than the simplest ink. Taking time to flip back and read earlier entries weeks or months or even years later reminds you of God's faithfulness. You're not remembering merely for the sake of nostalgic meandering but in order to help you pay attention to God, what he is doing and what he has done.

#### Writing it Down

Countless people have put pen to paper as a way to remember and reflect on God's actions, God's leadings, and the Bible's deep truths. Augustine, writing in the fifth century, wrote

his *Confessions* to sift through his life for signs of God's work. In more recent times—from Fyodor Dostoevski to Annie Dillard, from Sören Kierkegaard to C. S. Lewis—journal keepers have found that the practice helped them to remember spiritual insights and to better hear what God seemed to be communicating. The simple act of writing in a book of blank pages enabled them to discern God's faithfulness and guidance.

Here the difference between keeping a journal and keeping a diary is revealed. Diaries tend to record events. They tell of things seen or people met. A journal, however, travels deeper than a diary. Rather than cataloguing events, a journal reflects on the significance those events had on one's walk with God.

Journaling reveals the sometimes hidden significance of the detours and flat stretches and hills of life. It allows you to perceive more fully God's hand in the unfolding events of daily life. Even the bare act of writing may help reinforce an insight or call to mind the deeper details of an event or situation. You may not see God's hand in a disguised blessing until you stop to reflect on it by writing it down. Seventeenth-century spiritual life writer Jean-Pierre de Caussade wrote, "God carries out his purposes triumphantly in [life's] dark shadows: in failures, in bodily sickness, and spiritual weakness. But everything succeeds and turns out for the best in his hands, and it is through what most distresses human beings that he contrives and accomplishes his highest designs."<sup>4</sup> God's "highest designs" may be hidden from you when you're in the thick of a difficult time or when your busyness suppresses an awareness of God's wonderful generosity and graciousness. But journaling can expose you to the truth and beauty and comfort of God's hand in every circumstance of life.

### Getting Started

Here are some particulars if you decide to begin journaling:

- Begin with a blank book. This may be a leather-bound book purchased at a bookstore or a spiral bound notebook grabbed from a drugstore shelf. The important thing is that there's lots of room to write.
- At the top of each page write the date. Some days hold significance you cannot imagine at the time—you may only later discover a given date's considerable importance.
- Don't try to write fine prose. Concentrate instead on simply expressing your thoughts and questions and reactions.
- Try to write about events that relate to your relationship with God, your calling, your growth in holiness, or your struggles to live more compassionately.
- Use your journal to record verses of the Bible that speak especially powerfully to you. Or include quotes from sermons you hear or books you read.
- Use your journal to record prayers—and answers to prayer! A journal is also a perfect place to write down your struggles with God. You may even address such wrestling to God himself, allowing the very act of writing to become a prayer.

### A Final Note

Don't feel that you must write every day. Many people avoid beginning a journal because they labor under the assumption that they must write something every day. Not so! You may well go through periods where you write frequently, and then other times when days or even weeks pass without an entry. What matters most is approaching your journal prayerfully. You ask God to help you grow—through your informal jottings—in faithfulness and love.

—Timothy Jones

## FASTING

Fasting has a long history both in Judeo-Christian tradition and in other cultures. In ancient cultures outside of the Judeo-Christian tradition, fasting was often motivated by a fear of demons, which were thought to enter the body through eating and drinking. In other cultures fasting served as preparation, purifying mind and body to make a person ready to unite with the godhead or to receive ecstatic revelations. Some cultures sought fasting as a way to humiliate and deny the body. Plato recommended fasting because of its ability to clear the mind and give the body a sense of well being. But for Christians and Jews, fasting has always had to do with Almighty God. While the specific reason for the fast may vary, the goal remains increased communion with the Lord and attentiveness to his presence.

### Communication with God

In ancient Israel, fasting frequently brought individuals or the nation into closer communion with God. God's people learned that only when they stopped filling themselves with food were they able to recognize other hungers. The greatest hunger of the human race is for God, but that hunger often goes unrecognized when they are always full, always well-fed. They don't recognize their need to be nourished by the presence of God.

The people of ancient Israel also fasted in repentance when they had turned away from the Lord. They fasted out of desperate need, as when David fasted and prayed for the life of Bathsheba's child (2 Samuel 12:15-16). They fasted for victory and protection before going into battle. They fasted to humble themselves before God. Whatever the specific reason, the fast looked to God as its focus and sought his presence as its goal.

### A Hunger for God

When Jesus fasted for forty days and nights, he kept the focus not on the fast so much as on God's presence and power (Matthew 4:1-11). When Satan urged Jesus to turn stones into loaves of bread, Jesus responded by reminding Satan that human beings have another hunger, too deep for bread to fill (Matthew 4:4). Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3: "Yes, [the Lord] humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people need more than bread for their life; real life comes by feeding on every word of the LORD."

When you fast you become acutely aware of your humanness and the frailty of your body when compared to God's strength. You strip away the daily grind for food, allowing your spiritual hunger to rise, and depending on God to fill you. Done in the right spirit, fasting can be life transforming.

### A Greater Power Gained

But fasting has to do with more than satisfying your personal hunger for God. It empowers you to change the world. The disciples fasted and prayed to discern God's will and to receive power for ministry. It was while several men were fasting and praying that they heard God telling them to set apart Saul and Barnabas for mission work (Acts 13:2-3). The disciples fasted in order to seek a power greater than their own for a work that was not their own. Fasting led them to an increased awareness of the Lord's power and a willingness to let him work through them.

### What Is Fasting?

The discipline of fasting can differ greatly in scope and duration. Most people think of fasting as refraining from eating all food. However, people may choose to restrict their intake

of food but not abstain from it entirely. Often people will fast from solid food but drink fruit juices during the fast.

How long the fast extends can vary also. The Israelites usually fasted one day, from sunrise until after sunset. A newcomer to fasting should begin slowly, refraining from eating just one meal, one day a week at first, then increasing the fast to twenty-four hours. The time normally spent preparing and eating food is spent in prayer and meditation on Scripture. Care should be taken to prepare the body by eating lightly for a day or two leading up to the fast and as a follow-up to an extended fast.

### **A Life-Giving Discipline**

Fasting has tremendous potential to enrich and reorient your life. It need not become yet another legalistic ritual but can be instead a life-giving discipline. “Rather than view fasting as a means of power beyond prayer,” writes R. D. Chatham, “we should see that the power of God is constantly available, and that through fasting we have finally surrendered ourselves to the power of God. Prior to this surrender we had not realized this power, because of our lack of attention toward God.”<sup>5</sup>

—*Jill Zook-Jones*

## **SILENCE**

Often believers appear to think that prayer has to do mostly with words. They picture rich prayer as saying all that needs to be said. Sometimes, however, prayer’s profoundest moments come in the spaces between “speeches.” An acquaintance of mine claims that he does his best praying when he *stops* praying. By that he means that sometimes he needs to stop his pious chattiness. When you learn such taming of your tongue, prayer becomes not only you talking but also you resting reverently in the presence of God. “The LORD is in his holy Temple,” declared the prophet Habakkuk. “Let all the earth be silent before him” (Habakkuk 2:20). In the presence of holiness and glory, words pale in significance. You’ll quickly discover that there is “a time to be quiet and a time to speak up” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). “As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut! . . . So let your words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2).

### **The Discipline of Stillness**

While prayer does have an aggressive side—the prayer warrior image of one who is diligent and urgent—it also has a quiet side, allowing God room in a quieted heart. You’ll learn (and it takes practice!) what Bill Hybels calls “the discipline of stillness before God.”<sup>6</sup> When you pray, call to mind the counsel of Psalm 37:7 to “be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him.” Close your eyes and gently, slowly, quietly, say, “Lord,” or some other name for God. Leave silent spaces between your words. Close your Bible or other devotional book and simply sit in the presence of God with your hands outstretched, resisting the temptation to fill your prayer time with words.

While prayer most certainly does entail words—sometimes many of them—and while prayer brings you unashamedly to God with your requests (see the article on intercessory prayer), it’s easy to forget that prayer also majors on two other key aspects: relationship and listening.

### **Prayer as Relationship**

Prayer does indeed draw on all the dynamics of conversation, but even more it takes place in a climate of communion. While surely you should feel free to speak, you should learn also to cultivate wordless awe and gratitude. The late Anthony Bloom tells the story of an eighteenth-century minister who asked an elderly peasant what he was doing during the

hours and hours he spent sitting in the church. The old man said, "I look at Him, He looks at me, and we are happy."<sup>7</sup> What a warm and charming picture of prayerful communion with God!

Practicing periods of prayerful silence not only helps you quiet the words that sometimes seem to gush forth from within, but in doing so you also begin to approach both prayer and daily circumstances with less intent to manage and manipulate. You learn to open your hands and your heart and receive, not just expect to dictate and direct.

The deep intimacy that can sometimes come in quiet moments is also a reminder of just how vital it is to leave space for careful, calm dialogue with God. You certainly don't pray only for the sake of hearing yourself talk. You pray to *meet* someone—God himself—in a personal encounter. Cultivating silence, therefore, is not striving for a meditative state whereby you empty yourself of thought and emotion, as some Eastern religious traditions suggest. Rather, in the silence you create space for Christ to meet you and dwell within you. The goal is not silence itself, but the communion with God that silence makes possible.

### **Prayer as Listening**

The goal of prayerful silence also involves learning and discerning God's guidance. You still your voice to hear God's. "When you pray," Jesus sternly warned, "don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered only by repeating their words again and again. Don't be like them, because your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!" (Matthew 6:7-8). While words are useful, they can also clutter and ultimately keep you from hearing God. After all, in prayer you want not only to be heard but also to hear. You close your mouth and practice letting go of your dependence on words. You fast not only from food but also from "talkativeness." You resolve to let God's word shape you and God's will guide you, something you cannot do if you are always filling the silences with chatter.

Today's culture so emphasizes self-expression that talk about restraining the constant articulation of your feelings seems counter-cultural. But in prayer resist the temptation to indulge in endless self-expression. Only then can God express himself in your heart and life. When you quiet your mind and heart before God, when you learn to listen, God will faithfully and wonderfully speak in the silence.

—Timothy Jones

## **INTERCESSION**

Have you ever wondered why, if God already knows all, you are called to pray for particular people and specific situations? Can't you just assume God will do what's best anyway? Should your praying perhaps focus simply on knowing God and submitting to his will? Plus, how does praying "may your will be done" (Matthew 6:10) relate to prayers of "please" and "help"?

### **Earnest Prayer**

Look carefully and you'll see that prayers in which you bring the needs of others to God—the kind of prayer known as *intercessory* prayer—hold a special place in the Bible. They play a key role in God's design. No wonder many of the Bible's instructions to pray have precisely this kind of prayer in mind. "The earnest prayer of a righteous person," said James, "has great power and wonderful results" (James 5:16). Look at Elijah, James said: He was "as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell!" (James 5:17). This is no blank check for every whim and want, of course. James reminds you also that some prayers go unanswered because your "whole motive is wrong"

(James 4:3). And Jesus reminds you to pray *in his name* (John 14:13-14), in the spirit of God's will and purpose, in other words.

### **Pray Boldly**

Praying with confidence that God will do what's best doesn't preclude asking boldly for his intervention in specific situations. Jesus even commanded such praying: "Keep on asking," he told his followers. "Keep on looking. . . . Keep on knocking" (Matthew 7:7). In the original Greek these are strong, imperative statements. The statements progress in urgency from simply making a request to banging on a door in desperation: "Ask . . . look . . . knock!" Jesus even told his followers a story about a poor widow who nagged and nagged a judge for justice to, as Luke put it, "illustrate their need for constant prayer and to show them that they must never give up" (Luke 18:1).

What does this mean for your prayers? That you should boldly ask. That you should unreservedly pray for others. Have you ever heard the saying, "prayer doesn't change things; it changes *us*"? According to much of Scripture, that is only half true. Yes, you should expect your desires to be refined, your small horizons to be stretched as you meet God in your asking. But that truth does not keep you from including specific requests and from expecting God to respond *in some way* to what you ask. Prayer also changes *things*—the people and situations we pray about—even as it changes us.

### **Expectant Praying**

Now, how does this understanding of prayer fit with your understanding of God as sovereign and all-powerful? Does your request for specific things contradict God's long-term plans and overarching purposes? Shouldn't you instead allow God full room to act according to counsels you cannot even glimpse?

Awareness of God's infinite wisdom should indeed instill humility in you. But it need not dampen your expectant praying. You are invited to ask in the first place because God desires a relationship with you. He invites you into conversation with him about your life and the lives of those you love. And he places on you the responsibility for the way the world turns out, not only through your actions but also through your prayers.

### **Relationship with God**

Ultimately, then, a clear understanding of intercessory prayer comes not so much through philosophy but through relationship. Intercessory prayer puts you in dialogue with God about yourself and your loved ones and the world's wider circumstances. It gathers your daily life, with its concerns and longings, in the presence of One who already cares. This God indeed knows about the situations that provoke your longings and your compassionate cries for others. "Your Father knows," Jesus tells us, "exactly what you [and others, we might add!] need even before you ask him!" (Matthew 6:8). But that does not mean that God does not enlist you in his kingdom work, using your prayers (and his answers to them) to work great good. God so honors your participation with him in what transpires in the world that in some things he may wait for your asking before his acting.

### **Relationship with Others**

Intercessory prayer also puts you in a new relationship with the people and situations you bring before God. Such prayer allows you to think and care in the presence of God. It reminds you that you face no situation without God's awareness and involvement. "Intercessory prayer," writes Paul Fiddes, "is an experience of interconnectedness and mutuality, because it is praying 'in God' who lives in relationships. . . . We enter into the life of prayer already going on within the communion of God's being; we pray to the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit."<sup>8</sup>



To pray for others is to invite into any situation possibilities you could never manufacture on your own. “If we truly love people,” Richard Foster writes, “we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to prayer.”<sup>9</sup> It will lead you to *asking*, without hesitation and with a holy assurance that God will hear and answer.

—Timothy Jones

## WORSHIP

At a large church in the South, communion is celebrated every Sunday. After receiving communion, worshipers can go to one of the side aisles where specially trained lay people wait to pray for specific needs. Some years ago, the church hired a new pastor. Although hesitant to make quick changes, he disliked the practice of offering private prayer during communion. At a meeting shortly after his arrival, he complained to his staff about the practice, saying that private prayer distracted from gathered worship. When he expressed his dislike, one staff member commented, “I think that it’s *because* we are all gathered together in worship that the private prayers become so significant. Those prayers gain added power because they are offered during gathered worship. The many voices in worship strengthen the individual’s one voice in prayer.”

### Worshipping Together

God not only created you for communion with himself but also for fellowship with others. This flies in the face of so much of today’s hyper-individualism. Most think of faith as “God and me,” with little awareness or concern for “God present in thee.” Yet gathering with others who worship the same Lord becomes sustenance and offers much joy. Out of your private moments with God, you enter familiar and beloved surroundings together with your brothers and sisters in Christ. There you allow others to put into words and music what you may not know how to express on your own. When your senses are dull and your faith drowsy, the prayers and praises of others can revive your spirit. “Faithfulness grows in the presence of people who practice discerning the One voice among the many and who by ‘attending’ to Jesus Christ find themselves transformed and marked as his followers.”<sup>10</sup>

In liturgical churches—churches that use set forms and printed prayers—the prayer appointed for each Sunday is called the Collect. The Collect *collects* the prayers of all the worshipers assembled together, gathering them into one corporate prayer. In gathered worship you bring your personal prayers to join with the personal prayers of your brothers and sisters in Christ. Your one prayer thereby becomes magnified and strengthened by many voices.

Likewise, your private devotion nourishes gathered prayer and worship. “In earlier times,” writes Marjorie Thompson, “the weekly prayers of the gathered community were nurtured by the daily prayers of faithful families and individuals, just as a river is fed by smaller streams. . . . It was at one time common practice to examine oneself through prayer and confession before participating in the Sunday service. If we spend half an hour assessing our life before God, either Saturday evening or early Sunday morning, we will discover a natural bridge between our personal prayer and common worship.”<sup>11</sup>

### God Invites You to Come into His Presence

Whether private devotion or gathered prayer and worship, all are part of the same reality, a life-long commitment that Brother Lawrence called “practicing the presence of God.” The psalmist called it “delighting in the Lord” (Psalm 37:4). In both private prayer and in gathered worship, you lay down your preoccupation with yourself and occupy yourself with God.

When you fill your mind and heart with God, you are acting on the open-ended, eternal invitation to “come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it” (Hebrews 4:16). Whether caught up in private preoccupation with the divine alone, or while gathered with like-minded believers, you reach out to the Lord only to discover his hands already stretched out to you. You kneel to pray, you lift your voice in songs of praise, and you open your hands to receive the bread and the cup—all at God’s invitation.

To worship God is to remember that he is worthy of your complete attention. God calls you as an individual to turn your thoughts to him, and he blesses the gathered prayer and praise of his followers with his presence. Jesus promised, “For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20).

—Jill Zook-Jones

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1995), 24.
- <sup>2</sup> George Mueller quoted in Donald Whitney, *Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 71.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.
- <sup>4</sup> Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*, Kitty Muggeridge, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 22.
- <sup>5</sup> R. D. Chatham, *Fasting: A Biblical-Historical Study* (South Plainfield, N.J.: 1987), 115.
- <sup>6</sup> Bill Hybels, *Too Busy Not to Pray* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 119.
- <sup>7</sup> Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), 62.
- <sup>8</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 123.
- <sup>9</sup> Richard Foster, *Prayer* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 191.
- <sup>10</sup> Kenda Creasy Dean and Ron Foster, *The Godbearing Life* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1998), 15.
- <sup>11</sup> Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast*, 61.

# Genesis

## The Beginnings Book

Genesis records the beginning of the world, when God created the earth and everything in it. Genesis records the beginning of sin, when Adam and Eve took that first bite of forbidden fruit. It records the beginning of God's love relationship with his people, when he punished, but did not abandon, Adam and Eve after they sinned.

Genesis also records the first prayers of the Bible. Genesis 4:26 contains these remarkable words: "It was during [Enosh's] lifetime that people first began to worship the LORD." Adam and Eve's son Seth and grandson Enosh exhibited a loving reliance on God, in contrast with their son Cain's line, which was arrogantly self-sufficient. Noah survived the Flood because he was willing to follow God's instructions. His prayer and sacrifice of thanksgiving after the Flood prompted God's sign of the rainbow. Abraham, famous for his life of faith, prayed for God's help in several different life situations. These early men begin the long line of pray-ers in Genesis, with Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph following in close succession.

### PRAYER IN GENESIS

Seth and Enosh worship God . . . . .	4:26
Enoch enjoys a close relationship with God . . . . .	5:23
Noah thanks God . . . . .	8:18-20
Abraham prays regarding his childlessness . . . . .	15:2-3
Abraham prays for a blessing on Ishmael . . . . .	17:18
Abraham prays for Sodom and Gomorrah . . . . .	18:22-33
Abraham prays for Abimelech . . . . .	20:17-18
Abraham's servant prays for a wife for Isaac . . . . .	24:12-14
Isaac prays for childless Rebekah . . . . .	25:21
Jacob makes a vow to follow God . . . . .	28:20-22
Jacob prays for safety . . . . .	32:9-12
Jacob responds to God's call . . . . .	46:2

# Genesis 1

## The Account of Creation

**1:1-2 • O God, Creator Spirit, how marvelously you created the universe out of emptiness. How I praise you for your love and power!**

**CHAPTER 1** In the beginning God created\* the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness. And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw that it was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." Together these made up one day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, "Let there be space between the waters, to separate water from water." <sup>7</sup>And so it was. God made this space to separate the waters above from the waters below. <sup>8</sup>And God called the space "sky." This happened on the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky be gathered into one place so dry ground may appear." And so it was. <sup>10</sup>God named the dry ground "land" and the water "seas." And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the land burst forth with every sort of grass and seed-bearing plant. And let there be trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. The seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And so it was. <sup>12</sup>The land was filled with seed-bearing plants and trees, and their seeds produced plants and trees of like kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>This all happened on the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, "Let bright lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. They will be signs to mark off the seasons, the days, and the years. <sup>15</sup>Let their light shine down upon the earth." And so it was. <sup>16</sup>For God made two great lights, the sun and the moon, to shine down upon the earth. The greater one, the sun, presides during the day; the lesser one, the moon, presides through the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set these lights in the heavens to light the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>This all happened on the fourth day.

**1:20 • Praise God for the beauty and diversity of all the creatures he has made. Meditate on how God has made a place and function for each kingdom, phylum, genus, and species of plant and animal.**

<sup>20</sup>And God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." <sup>21</sup>So God created great sea creatures and every sort of fish and every kind of bird. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>Then God blessed them, saying, "Let the fish multiply and fill the oceans. Let the birds increase and fill the earth." <sup>23</sup>This all happened on the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of animal—livestock, small animals, and wildlife." And so it was. <sup>25</sup>God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to reproduce more of its own kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let us make people\* in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals,\* and small animals."

**1:27 • Lord, I praise you for making me in your image so that I might know you, talk with you, and reflect your character.**

<sup>27</sup> So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and told them, "Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals." <sup>29</sup>And God said, "Look! I have given you the seed-bearing plants throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. <sup>30</sup>And I have given all the

1:1 Or *In the beginning when God created, or When God began to create.* 1:26a Hebrew *man*; also in 1:27. 1:26b As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads *all the earth*.

grasses and other green plants to the animals and birds for their food.” And so it was. <sup>31</sup>Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was excellent in every way. This all happened on the sixth day.

**CHAPTER 2** So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. <sup>2</sup>On the seventh day, having finished his task, God rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup>And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from his work of creation.

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

### *The Man and Woman in Eden*

When the LORD God made the heavens and the earth, <sup>5</sup>there were no plants or grain growing on the earth, for the LORD God had not sent any rain. And no one was there to cultivate the soil. <sup>6</sup>But water came up out of the ground and watered all the land. <sup>7</sup>And the LORD God formed a man’s body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person.

<sup>8</sup>Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had created. <sup>9</sup>And the LORD God planted all sorts of trees in the garden—beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. At the center of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup>A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. <sup>11</sup>One of these branches is the Pishon, which flows around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. <sup>12</sup>The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. <sup>13</sup>The second branch is the Gihon, which flows around the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup>The third branch is the Tigris, which flows to the east of Asshur. The fourth branch is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it. <sup>16</sup>But the LORD God gave him this warning: “You may freely eat any fruit in the garden <sup>17</sup>except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die.”

<sup>18</sup>And the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him.” <sup>19</sup>So the LORD God formed from the soil every kind of animal and bird. He brought them to Adam\* to see what he would call them, and Adam chose a name for each one. <sup>20</sup>He gave names to all the livestock, birds, and wild animals. But still there was no companion suitable for him. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took one of Adam’s ribs\* and closed up the place from which he had taken it. <sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib and brought her to Adam.

<sup>23</sup>“At last!” Adam exclaimed. “She is part of my own flesh and bone! She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken out of a man.” <sup>24</sup>This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. <sup>25</sup>Now, although Adam and his wife were both naked, neither of them felt any shame.

### *The Man and Woman Sin*

**CHAPTER 3** Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the creatures the LORD God had made. “Really?” he asked the woman. “Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?”

2:19 Hebrew *the man*, and so throughout this chapter. 2:21 Or *took a part of Adam’s side*.

**1:28-30 • Ask God for the wisdom and will to be a good steward of his creation. Thank him for the animals, plants, and natural resources he has provided for your use.**

**2:7 • Thank God for breathing his life into you. Ask him to breathe his Spirit into you today.**

**2:18-24 • Contemplate the gift of intimacy God has made possible in marriage. Praise him for creating the family, and the fellowship and mutual support it can provide.**

## Genesis 3

<sup>2</sup>“Of course we may eat it,” the woman told him. <sup>3</sup>“It’s only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die.”

**3:5-6 • O Lord,**  
*you know how I often aspire to be like you and take control over my own life and destiny. You and only you are God, the source of wisdom. Help me to listen to you and obey you.*

<sup>4</sup>“You won’t die!” the serpent hissed. <sup>5</sup>“God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup>The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too. <sup>7</sup>At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves.

<sup>8</sup>Toward evening they heard the LORD God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. <sup>9</sup>The LORD God called to Adam, \* “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup>He replied, “I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.”

<sup>11</sup>“Who told you that you were naked?” the LORD God asked. “Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?”

<sup>12</sup>“Yes,” Adam admitted, “but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it.”

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God asked the woman, “How could you do such a thing?”

“The serpent tricked me,” she replied. “That’s why I ate it.”

<sup>14</sup>So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, you will be punished. You are singled out from all the domestic and wild animals of the whole earth to be cursed. You will grovel in the dust as long as you live, crawling along on your belly. <sup>15</sup>From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

<sup>16</sup>Then he said to the woman, “You will bear children with intense pain and suffering. And though your desire will be for your husband,\* he will be your master.”

<sup>17</sup>And to Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. <sup>18</sup>It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. <sup>19</sup>All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return.”

<sup>20</sup>Then Adam named his wife Eve,\* because she would be the mother of all people everywhere. <sup>21</sup>And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

<sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God said, “The people have become as we are, knowing everything, both good and evil. What if they eat the fruit of the tree of life? Then they will live forever!” <sup>23</sup>So the LORD God banished Adam and his wife from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. <sup>24</sup>After banishing them from the garden, the LORD God stationed mighty angelic beings\* to the east of Eden. And a flaming sword flashed back and forth, guarding the way to the tree of life.

**3:22-24 • O God,**  
*how I mourn the loss of the Garden of Eden—its beauty and bounty and peace and perfect communion with you. But I praise you because you have provided a perfect gateway back to paradise—through your Son, Jesus.*

3:9 Hebrew *the man*, and so throughout this chapter. 3:16 Or *And though you may desire to control your husband*. 3:20 *Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “to give life.”

3:24 Hebrew *cherubim*.

## Cain, Abel, and Seth

**CHAPTER 4** Now Adam\* slept with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When the time came, she gave birth to Cain,\* and she said, “With the LORD’s help, I have brought forth\* a man!”<sup>2</sup> Later she gave birth to a second son and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain was a farmer.<sup>3</sup> At harvesttime Cain brought to the LORD a gift of his farm produce,<sup>4</sup> while Abel brought several choice lambs from the best of his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his offering,<sup>5</sup> but he did not accept Cain and his offering. This made Cain very angry and dejected.

<sup>6</sup>“Why are you so angry?” the LORD asked him. “Why do you look so dejected? <sup>7</sup>You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it.”

<sup>8</sup>Later Cain suggested to his brother, Abel, “Let’s go out into the fields.”\* And while they were there, Cain attacked and killed his brother.

<sup>9</sup>Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know!” Cain retorted. “Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?”

<sup>10</sup>But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen—your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! <sup>11</sup>You are hereby banished from the ground you have defiled with your brother’s blood. <sup>12</sup>No longer will it yield abundant crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless fugitive on the earth, constantly wandering from place to place.”

<sup>13</sup>Cain replied to the LORD, “My punishment\* is too great for me to bear! <sup>14</sup>You have banished me from my land and from your presence; you have made me a wandering fugitive. All who see me will try to kill me!”

<sup>15</sup>The LORD replied, “They will not kill you, for I will give seven times your punishment to anyone who does.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. <sup>16</sup>So Cain left the LORD’s presence and settled in the land of Nod,\* east of Eden.

<sup>17</sup>Then Cain’s wife became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and they named him Enoch. When Cain founded a city, he named it Enoch after his son.

<sup>18</sup> Enoch was the father of\* Irad.

Irad was the father of Mehujael.

Mehujael was the father of Methushael.

Methushael was the father of Lamech.

<sup>19</sup>Lamech married two women—Adah and Zillah. <sup>20</sup>Adah gave birth to a baby named Jabal. He became the first of the herdsmen who live in tents. <sup>21</sup>His brother’s name was Jubal, the first musician—the inventor of the harp and flute. <sup>22</sup>To Lamech’s other wife, Zillah, was born Tubal-cain. He was the first to work with metal, forging instruments of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah.

<sup>23</sup>One day Lamech said to Adah and Zillah, “Listen to me, my wives. I have killed a youth who attacked and wounded me. <sup>24</sup>If anyone who

4:1a Hebrew *the man*. 4:1b Cain sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “bring forth” or “acquire.” 4:1c Or *I have acquired*. 4:8 As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks “*Let’s go out into the fields.*” 4:13 Or *My sin*. 4:16 *Nod* means “wandering.” 4:18 Or *the ancestor of*, and so throughout the verse.

**4:3-5 • Ask God to purify your heart and mind today so that what you offer him—your worship, your time, your gifts—will be acceptable and pleasing to him.**

**4:9 • Confess to God any resentment or envy you may harbor in your heart toward others who seem to have a more intimate relationship with God. Ask him to replace such emotions with the joy and peace of serving him in unity rather than in competition with others.**

**4:26 • Meditate on what it means to “worship the Lord.” Adore and praise God for his almighty, all-knowing, majestic, and loving presence.**

**5:2 • Ask God to deepen your understanding of how men and women complement each other and together reflect his image. Ask him to show you how to fulfill your role as a man or woman in your own unique way.**

**5:3-24 • Lord, only you know how many days and years you will give me. Help me to value each day as an opportunity to walk with you.**

**5:29 • Thank God that he did not leave humankind under the curse of fruitless labor and suffering, but that he promises to redeem and comfort his people instead.**

kills Cain is to be punished seven times, anyone who takes revenge against me will be punished seventy-seven times!”

<sup>25</sup>Adam slept with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth,\* for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel, the one Cain killed.” <sup>26</sup>When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. It was during his lifetime that people first began to worship the LORD.

*From Adam to Noah*

**CHAPTER 5** This is the history of the descendants of Adam. When God created people,\* he made them in the likeness of God. <sup>2</sup>He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”\*

<sup>3</sup>When Adam was 130 years old, his son Seth was born,\* and Seth was the very image of his father.\* <sup>4</sup>After the birth of Seth,\* Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>5</sup>He died at the age of 930.

<sup>6</sup>When Seth was 105 years old, his son Enosh was born. <sup>7</sup>After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>8</sup>He died at the age of 912.

<sup>9</sup>When Enosh was 90 years old, his son Kenan was born. <sup>10</sup>After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>11</sup>He died at the age of 905.

<sup>12</sup>When Kenan was 70 years old, his son Mahalalel was born. <sup>13</sup>After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>14</sup>He died at the age of 910.

<sup>15</sup>When Mahalalel was 65 years old, his son Jared was born. <sup>16</sup>After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>17</sup>He died at the age of 895.

<sup>18</sup>When Jared was 162 years old, his son Enoch was born. <sup>19</sup>After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup>He died at the age of 962.

<sup>21</sup>When Enoch was 65 years old, his son Methuselah was born. <sup>22</sup>After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived another 300 years in close fellowship with God, and he had other sons and daughters.

<sup>23</sup>Enoch lived 365 years in all. <sup>24</sup>He enjoyed a close relationship with God throughout his life. Then suddenly, he disappeared because God took him.

<sup>25</sup>When Methuselah was 187 years old, his son Lamech was born.

<sup>26</sup>After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>27</sup>He died at the age of 969.

<sup>28</sup>When Lamech was 182 years old, his son Noah was born. <sup>29</sup>Lamech named his son Noah,\* for he said, “He will bring us relief from the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed.”

<sup>30</sup>After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters. <sup>31</sup>He died at the age of 777.

<sup>32</sup>By the time Noah was 500 years old, he had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

4:25 Seth probably means “granted”; the name may also mean “appointed.” 5:1 Hebrew man. 5:2 Hebrew man. 5:3a Or his son, the ancestor of Seth, was born; similarly in 5:6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. 5:3b Hebrew was in his own likeness, after his image. 5:4 Or After the birth of this ancestor of Seth; similarly in 5:7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26. 5:29 Noah sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “relief” or “comfort.”



## Noah and the Flood

**CHAPTER 6** When the human population began to grow rapidly on the earth,<sup>2</sup> the sons of God saw the beautiful women of the human race and took any they wanted as their wives.<sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, they will live no more than 120 years.”

<sup>4</sup>In those days, and even afterward, giants\* lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with human women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes mentioned in legends of old.

<sup>5</sup>Now the LORD observed the extent of the people’s wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. <sup>6</sup>So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart. <sup>7</sup>And the LORD said, “I will completely wipe out this human race that I have created. Yes, and I will destroy all the animals and birds, too. I am sorry I ever made them.” <sup>8</sup>But Noah found favor with the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>This is the history of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless man living on earth at the time. He consistently followed God’s will and enjoyed a close relationship with him.

<sup>10</sup>Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

<sup>11</sup>Now the earth had become corrupt in God’s sight, and it was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup>God observed all this corruption in the world, and he saw violence and depravity everywhere. <sup>13</sup>So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Yes, I will wipe them all from the face of the earth!”

<sup>14</sup>“Make a boat\* from resinous wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. <sup>15</sup>Make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.\* <sup>16</sup>Construct an opening all the way around the boat, 18 inches\* below the roof. Then put three decks inside the boat—bottom, middle, and upper—and put a door in the side.

<sup>17</sup>“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing. Everything on earth will die! <sup>18</sup>But I solemnly swear to keep you safe in the boat, with your wife and your sons and their wives. <sup>19</sup>Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—

6:4 Hebrew *Nephilim*. 6:14 Traditionally rendered *an ark*. 6:15 Hebrew *300 cubits* [135 meters] *long, 50 cubits* [22.5 meters] *wide, and 30 cubits* [13.5 meters] *high*. 6:16 Hebrew *1 cubit* [45 centimeters].

**6:6 • Dear Lord,** *the thought of breaking your heart is painful to me. I am sorry for hurting you with my sinful thoughts and ways. Please forgive me.*

**6:9-12 • Ask God** *to show you how to walk blamelessly with him. Ask him to teach you how to be a man or woman of peace and integrity in a violent and corrupt world.*

**6:18 • Praise God** *that he makes and keeps his promises.*



**AN INTIMATE LOVE** *relationship with God is the key to knowing God’s voice, to hearing when God speaks. You come to know His voice as you experience Him in a love relationship. As God speaks and you respond, you will come to the point that you recognize His voice more and more clearly.*

—HENRY BLACKABY, *Experiencing God*

into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. <sup>20</sup>Pairs of each kind of bird and each kind of animal, large and small alike, will come to you to be kept alive. <sup>21</sup>And remember, take enough food for your family and for all the animals."

<sup>22</sup>So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

### The Flood Covers the Earth

**7:2-3 • Thank God for providing for you even in the hard times of life just as he provided for Noah and his family when the floods came over the land.**

**CHAPTER 7** Finally, the day came when the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I consider you alone to be righteous. <sup>2</sup>Take along seven pairs of each animal that I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others. <sup>3</sup>Then select seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that every kind of living creature will survive the flood. <sup>4</sup>One week from today I will begin forty days and forty nights of rain. And I will wipe from the earth all the living things I have created."

<sup>5</sup>So Noah did exactly as the LORD had commanded him. <sup>6</sup>He was 600 years old when the flood came, <sup>7</sup>and he went aboard the boat to escape—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. <sup>8</sup>With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and other small animals. <sup>9</sup>They came into the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup>One week later, the flood came and covered the earth.

<sup>11</sup>When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, the underground waters burst forth on the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. <sup>12</sup>The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup>But Noah had gone into the boat that very day with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. <sup>14</sup>With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of breathing animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds and flying insects of every kind. <sup>15</sup>Two by two they came into the boat, <sup>16</sup>male and female, just as God had commanded. Then the LORD shut them in.

**7:16-23 • O my God, though there may be death and destruction around me, still you are faithful. I praise and thank you for being in control even in the midst of disaster, and I trust you to bring good out of these frightening times.**

<sup>17</sup>For forty days the floods prevailed, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. <sup>18</sup>As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. <sup>19</sup>Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, <sup>20</sup>standing more than twenty-two feet\* above the highest peaks. <sup>21</sup>All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all kinds of small animals, and all the people. <sup>22</sup>Everything died that breathed and lived on dry land. <sup>23</sup>Every living thing on the earth was wiped out—people, animals both large and small, and birds. They were all destroyed, and only Noah was left alive, along with those who were with him in the boat. <sup>24</sup>And the water covered the earth for 150 days.

**8:1 • Bless the Lord for remembering you and for keeping the promises he has made to you, even if you do not see them fulfilled right now.**

### The Flood Recedes

**CHAPTER 8** But God remembered Noah and all the animals in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the waters, and the floods began to disappear. <sup>2</sup>The underground water sources ceased their gushing, and the torrential rains stopped. <sup>3</sup>So the flood gradually began to recede. After 150 days, <sup>4</sup>exactly five months from the time the flood began,\* the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup>Two and a half

7:20 Hebrew 15 cubits [6.8 meters]. 8:4 Hebrew on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11.

months later,\* as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks began to appear.

<sup>6</sup>After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat <sup>7</sup>and released a raven that flew back and forth until the earth was dry. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent out a dove to see if it could find dry ground. <sup>9</sup>But the dove found no place to land because the water was still too high. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. <sup>10</sup>Seven days later, Noah released the dove again. <sup>11</sup>This time, toward evening, the bird returned to him with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Noah now knew that the water was almost gone. <sup>12</sup>A week later, he released the dove again, and this time it did not come back.

<sup>13</sup>Finally, when Noah was 601 years old, ten and a half months after the flood began,\* Noah lifted back the cover to look. The water was drying up. <sup>14</sup>Two more months went by,\* and at last the earth was dry! <sup>15</sup>Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup>“Leave the boat, all of you. <sup>17</sup>Release all the animals and birds so they can breed and reproduce in great numbers.” <sup>18</sup>So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. <sup>19</sup>And all the various kinds of animals and birds came out, pair by pair.

<sup>20</sup>Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and sacrificed on it the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. <sup>21</sup>And the LORD was pleased with the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the earth, destroying all living things, even though people’s thoughts and actions are bent toward evil from childhood. <sup>22</sup>As long as the earth remains, there will be springtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night.”

### God’s Covenant with Noah

**CHAPTER 9** God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Multiply and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup>All the wild animals, large and small, and all the birds and fish will be afraid of you. I have placed them in your power. <sup>3</sup>I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. <sup>4</sup>But you must never eat animals that still have their lifeblood in them. <sup>5</sup>And murder is forbidden. Animals that kill people must die, and any person who murders must be killed. <sup>6</sup>Yes, you must execute anyone who murders another person, for to kill a person is to kill a living being made in God’s image. <sup>7</sup>Now you must have many children and repopulate the earth. Yes, multiply and fill the earth!”

<sup>8</sup>Then God told Noah and his sons, <sup>9</sup>“I am making a covenant with you and your descendants, <sup>10</sup>and with the animals you brought with you—all these birds and livestock and wild animals. <sup>11</sup>I solemnly promise never to send another flood to kill all living creatures and destroy the earth.” <sup>12</sup>And God said, “I am giving you a sign as evidence of my eternal covenant with you and all living creatures. <sup>13</sup>I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my permanent promise to you and to all the earth. <sup>14</sup>When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>and I will remember my covenant with you and with everything that lives. Never again will there be a flood that will destroy all life. <sup>16</sup>When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on

**8:8-13 • Ask God for the faith to believe that he is with you today, regardless of how you feel or the circumstances of your life, even when there seem to be no signs of his presence on your horizon.**

**8:20-22 • Praise the Lord for his faithfulness in bringing about each season in its time. Thank him that you can count on the sun rising and setting every day.**

**9:2-3 • Thank you, O Lord, for giving us our food today. Thank you for green plants that grow and for meat to make us strong. Make us worthy to receive these gifts from your hands.**

**9:12-16 • Praise the Almighty God for the loveliness of the rainbow. Thank him for giving the rainbow as a sign of his eternal presence and steadfast promises to all life on earth.**

8:5 Hebrew *On the first day of the tenth month*; see 7:11 and note on 8:4. 8:13 Hebrew *on the first day of the first month*; see 7:11. 8:14 Hebrew *The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived*; see note on 8:13.

## Genesis 10

earth.” <sup>17</sup>Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this is the sign of my covenant with all the creatures of the earth.”

### Noah's Sons

<sup>18</sup>Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah, survived the Flood with their father. (Ham is the ancestor of the Canaanites.) <sup>19</sup>From these three sons of Noah came all the people now scattered across the earth.

<sup>20</sup>After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup>One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent. <sup>22</sup>Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. <sup>23</sup>Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, walked backward into the tent, and covered their father's naked body. As they did this, they looked the other way so they wouldn't see him naked. <sup>24</sup>When Noah woke up from his drunken stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. <sup>25</sup>Then he cursed the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham:

“A curse on the Canaanites!  
May they be the lowest of servants  
to the descendants of Shem and Japheth.”

<sup>26</sup>Then Noah said,

“May Shem be blessed by the LORD my God;  
and may Canaan be his servant.

<sup>27</sup> May God enlarge the territory of Japheth,  
and may he share the prosperity of Shem;\*  
and let Canaan be his servant.”

<sup>28</sup>Noah lived another 350 years after the Flood. <sup>29</sup>He was 950 years old when he died.

**9:23-24 • Thank God for your parents today and ask God to help you to honor them, affording them dignity and treating them with kindness and compassion.**

**CHAPTER 10** This is the history of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the Flood.

### Descendants of Japheth

<sup>2</sup>The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

<sup>3</sup>The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

<sup>4</sup>The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim. \* <sup>5</sup>Their descendants became the seafaring peoples in various lands, each tribe with its own language.

### Descendants of Ham

<sup>6</sup>The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim,\* Put, and Canaan.

<sup>7</sup>The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

<sup>8</sup>One of Cush's descendants was Nimrod, who became a heroic warrior. <sup>9</sup>He was a mighty hunter in the LORD's sight.\* His name became proverbial, and people would speak of someone as

9:27 Hebrew *may he live in the tents of Shem.* 10:4 As in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version (see also 1 Chr 1:7); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Dodanim.* 10:6 Or *Egypt*; also in 10:13. 10:9 Hebrew *a mighty hunter before the LORD*; also in 10:9b.

**10:8-12 • Almighty God, I want to serve you today. May my words and deeds honor your name and influence others so that your kingdom is expanded.**

being “like Nimrod, a mighty hunter in the LORD’s sight.”

<sup>10</sup>He built the foundation for his empire in the land of Babylonia,\* with the cities of Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh.

<sup>11</sup>From there he extended his reign to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, <sup>12</sup>and Resen—the main city of the empire, located between Nineveh and Calah.

<sup>13</sup>Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, <sup>14</sup>Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.\*

<sup>15</sup>Canaan’s oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites, <sup>16</sup>Jebusites, Amorites, Gergashites, <sup>17</sup>Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, <sup>18</sup>Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. <sup>19</sup>Eventually the territory of Canaan spread from Sidon to Gerar, near Gaza, and to Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

<sup>20</sup>These were the descendants of Ham, identified according to their tribes, languages, territories, and nations.

### *Descendants of Shem*

<sup>21</sup>Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth.\* Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber. <sup>22</sup>The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

<sup>23</sup>The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

<sup>24</sup>Arphaxad was the father of Shelah,\* and Shelah was the father of Eber. <sup>25</sup>Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg—“division”—for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups and dispersed. His brother’s name was Joktan.

10:10 Hebrew *Shinar*. 10:14 Hebrew *Casluhites*, from whom the Philistines came, *Caphtorites*. Compare Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7. 10:21 Or *Shem*, whose older brother was *Japheth*. 10:24 Greek version reads *Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah*.

*All the mighty men of God outside the Bible have been men of prayer. They have differed from one another in many things, but in this they have been alike.*

—R. A. Torrey,  
*How to Pray*

**10:25 • Pray that you will be able to celebrate instead of censure the diversity of the people God has created.**

## God’s Promise to **ANSWER PRAYER**



### **A Rainbow of a Promise**

#### **Genesis 9:11-17**

God speaks, and Noah listens. He always listens. So far, his listening helped him survive a flood by building a boat. Now God is speaking again, and his words are words of love. “Never again will there be a flood that will destroy all life” (Genesis 9:15).

Good news to Noah! Good news to us! God makes a promise and keeps it. Noah shades his eyes and looks at the first rainbow. He is dazzled by the shower of colors. It’s a sign of God’s promise, a signal of his love. *Never again.*

This God of flawless integrity made a promise and sealed it with his sign in the sky. And this is the God to whom we pray!

- For the next article on God’s Promise to **ANSWER PRAYER** go to *Genesis 25:21* (p. 33).
- The Prayer Path on God’s Promise to **ANSWER PRAYER** begins at *1 Kings 8:1-9:9* (p. 447).

# PRAYER PROGRAMS

The Prayer Programs that follow are designed to lead you through seven days of reading and praying on various topics. Each of the thirty prayer programs include Bible passages as well as prayer prompts, prayer paths, and quotes from well-known writers to give you information, encouragement, and direction.

Prayer When Afraid . . . . .	1676
Prayer When Angry . . . . .	1676
Prayer for Your Children . . . . .	1676
Prayer When Depressed . . . . .	1677
Prayer When Disappointed. . . . .	1677
Prayer When Discontented . . . . .	1677
Prayer When Faith Is Weak . . . . .	1678
Prayer When Feeling Blessed. . . . .	1678
Prayer When Feeling Guilty . . . . .	1679
Prayer When Feeling Joyful . . . . .	1679
Prayer When Feeling Unloved . . . . .	1679
Prayer When Grieving . . . . .	1680
Prayer for Leaders . . . . .	1680
Prayer When Needing Forgiveness . . . . .	1680
Prayer When Needing Assurance of Salvation . . . . .	1681
Prayer When Needing Encouragement. . . . .	1681
Prayer When Needing to Control Your Tongue . . . . .	1682
Prayer for a New Home . . . . .	1682
Prayer When Praising God . . . . .	1682
Prayer When Seeking God’s Direction . . . . .	1683
Prayer When Sick. . . . .	1683
Prayer When Struggling with Apathy . . . . .	1684
Prayer When Struggling with Laziness . . . . .	1684
Prayer When Struggling with Materialism . . . . .	1684
Prayer When Struggling with Pride. . . . .	1685
Prayer When Struggling with Profanity . . . . .	1685
Prayer When Suffering . . . . .	1685
Prayer When Tempted. . . . .	1686
Prayer When Waiting for God to Answer . . . . .	1686
Prayer for the World Situation . . . . .	1687

## PRAYER WHEN AFRAID

No matter what your age or situation, you can probably recall times when you've been afraid. Perhaps you're living in fear right now. Whether your fear is imagined or well founded, it can take control and make you whimper in its face, forgetting that these are the best times to take hold of your trust in God. Use the readings and prayer directions of the next few days to renew and revive your belief that God can take care of you.

**Day 1:** Read Matthew 8:23-27 (p. 1231). The disciples' fear is intense, serious, and not groundless. They have been in storms before and understand the very real danger they face. Jesus uses this opportunity to help them realize that times of fear are times for faith.

**Day 2:** Read the thoughts of Henri Nouwen (p. 1525). Ask God to change your heart, to give you a complete trust in his ability to protect you from your fears.

**Day 3:** God's words of encouragement to Abraham are for you as well. You can read them in Genesis 15:1 (p. 18).

**Day 4:** Read "To Commune with God," Psalm 23 (p. 719).

**Day 5:** Read Hebrews 13:6 (p. 1608), the believer's ultimate statement of confidence. It may be difficult for you to speak this with conviction, so pray it instead, asking God to help you make it true in your life.

**Day 6:** Read Psalm 56 (p. 751). Isn't King David amazing? He had plenty to be afraid of. Real threats to his life! But he used his fear as an opportunity to put serious trust in God. As you read this psalm, meditate especially on verse 3, repeating it and praying it in the middle of your fears.

**Day 7:** *Father God, I confess to you that I am a fearful person, that I have a hard time trusting you in the middle of my fears. Help me, O God, to learn to put my trust in you whenever my fears take hold. Thank you for your promise to be with me.*

## PRAYER WHEN ANGRY

Flashing eyes, red faces, perhaps hastily spoken words—all are sure signs that you're angry. Controlled anger at injustice or abuse or hurt can be productive. Uncontrolled anger, however, is almost always destructive. The readings for this week will help you take a close look at anger and help you pray in the midst of it.

**Day 1:** Read Proverbs 29:11 (p. 868), and ask God to give you wisdom in handling anger.

**Day 2:** Pray the "Prayer for the Human Family" found on page 19, using it to diffuse your anger and redirect your thoughts.

**Day 3:** Read James 1:19-20 (p. 1612) for his instruction to be slow to anger. Use the words of the verse to ask God's help in controlling your anger.

**Day 4:** Read "Praying No Matter What," Jonah 2:1-10; 4:1-5 (p. 1165).

**Day 5:** Jesus' anger in Mark 3:1-6 (p. 1275) is an example for you of what well-directed and controlled anger looks like. Ask Jesus to help you properly direct and control your anger.

**Day 6:** Read Psalm 4:4 (p. 703). Note that the verse doesn't say not to be angry. It says instead not to let your anger control you. Pray that God will give you the grace to control your anger.

**Day 7:** *Father, I admit that my anger is usually with things that inconvenience me or irritate me. Help me to control and overcome that sort of self-defeating anger, Lord. May I be angry with the sort of things that anger you—hard heartedness and injustice. Help me to use that sort of "righteous" anger to produce good results and change in my world. Amen.*

## PRAYER FOR YOUR CHILDREN

Most believing parents think of their children as their most precious possession. And nothing is more important to them than that their children grow up to follow the Lord. This seven-day prayer program is a small beginning to a lifetime of prayer for your children.

**Day 1:** Hannah portrays one of the greatest examples of all time of praying for and sacrificially giving up a child to the Lord. You can read about Hannah and her son Samuel in 1 Samuel 1 (pp. 352-353). Note especially verses 27 and 28.

**Day 2:** Read William and Nancie Carmichael's thoughts on praying for your children (p. 67). Spend faithful time in prayer for your children and God *will* hear. The answers may not always come as you wish (children do have minds of their own, after all), but he will hear.

**Day 3:** Matthew 19:13 (p. 1250) pictures a touching scene of children sitting on Jesus' lap as he prays for them. As you intercede for your children, ask Jesus to touch them and bless them.

**Day 4:** Read “Hannah’s Prayer,” 1 Samuel 1:1–2:11 (pp. 352-354).

**Day 5:** Read Acts 21:5 (p. 1444). This little verse illustrates a big point: praying *with* your children illustrates for them the importance of prayer in the life of a believer. Begin when they are young—not only praying for your children but *with* them.

**Day 6:** Proverbs 22:6 (p. 861) gives instruction on raising children. Part of proper teaching is done in prayer. Today, spend time in concentrated prayer mentioning each of your children, listing their specific needs, and asking God to give you grace and wisdom as you deal with them.

**Day 7:** *Father of me and my children, I bless your name for loving me and for loving them. I love them, Lord, sometimes so much it consumes me. Help me to realize that my children belong to you first of all. Then do what you must in me and in them so that we all live devoted lives for you.*

## PRAYER WHEN DEPRESSED

When you’re discouraged or depressed, feeling like life is too hard to make it worth the effort, use these prayer possibilities to help guide you through the week. The circumstances of your life may not change, and your outlook may not be totally turned around; however, looking to God each day can begin to help you gain a new perspective and hope.

**Day 1:** Read Philippians 4:6-8 (p. 1548). What Paul is telling believers to do isn’t easy. But it does work! Ask God to help you “fix your thoughts” on good things when you struggle with depression.

**Day 2:** Read the words of Richard Foster (p. 859). How do you think prayer can help your situation? Your feelings about your situation?

**Day 3:** Read and claim for your life the words of Deuteronomy 31:8 (p. 266).

**Day 4:** Read “Praying When Life Is Confusing,” Psalm 13 (p. 711).

**Day 5:** Who is faithful to comfort the discouraged? Read 2 Corinthians 7:6 (p. 1515). How does that fact change how you might respond to your feelings? In your prayers today, ask God to help you trust him for comfort.

**Day 6:** Read the words David wrote when he was discouraged in Psalm 42:5-6 (p. 739), then use his words to express to God your own feelings of discouragement or despair.

**Day 7:** *Loving Father, I know you love me—even when I’m feeling down and discouraged. Those are often the hardest times for me to look to you. Give me fresh eyes to see you and to see my situation. Help me to trust you to rescue me.*

## PRAYER WHEN DISAPPOINTED

Disappointment is a fact of life. Things don’t always turn out as you might wish. Life swings its hard fists at you. Whatever disappointment you face right now, use these readings and prayers to look it in the face and declare your victory over it through Jesus.

**Day 1:** Read the prophet Zechariah’s words in Zechariah 10:2 (p. 1203). Only one person will never disappoint. Praise him today!

**Day 2:** Read the words of Jimmy Carter (p. 641) on facing disappointment, then do as he says and never give up!

**Day 3:** Read Deuteronomy 34 (pp. 274-275) for the story of Moses’ disappointment. He was denied entry into the Promised Land, but he was not forgotten by God. As you read his story, review your own disappointments and look for God’s presence even in the midst of them.

**Day 4:** Read Abraham Lincoln’s disappointment in the conventional wisdom of the day (p. 1467). Ask God to teach you to depend on him alone.

**Day 5:** Rehearse in your mind the disappointments you’ve faced recently, then pray over them, using the words of Romans 5:5, telling God that you know your hope in him is not misplaced.

**Day 6:** Use the words of Psalm 22:1-5 (p. 718) to praise God that he never disappoints.

**Day 7:** *There are times, Father, when the instabilities of life overwhelm me. I’m disappointed again and again, in small and not so small ways. Help me, Lord, to learn to look at you and trust in you rather than people or things or circumstances. You alone will never disappoint.*

## PRAYER WHEN DISCONTENTED

Discontentment plagues people of all ages. Comparison is the culprit. If you look only at what you have or at your situation without comparing it with others, you’ll likely be content with your lot. However, if you constantly compare yourself with others, you’ll invariably see yourself coming up short



# GUIDE TO PRAYER PATHS

## FINDING TIME to Pray

He Bends Down to Listen When I Pray! . . . . .	Psalms 116	811
Consistency and Faithfulness . . . . .	Acts 1:13-14	1407
“Arrow” Prayers . . . . .	Nehemiah 2:4	635
Keep It Short and Simple . . . . .	Matthew 6:7-8	1226
No Need for Words . . . . .	Psalms 5:1	705
Get Away from It All . . . . .	Mark 1:35-36	1273
Making Prayer a Way of Life . . . . .	Acts 10:1-2	1423
All Night Long . . . . .	Luke 6:12	1319
When You’re All Alone . . . . .	1 Timothy 5:5	1573

## God’s Promise to ANSWER Prayer

King Solomon’s Prayer . . . . .	1 Kings 8:1–9:9	447
A Rainbow of a Promise . . . . .	Genesis 9:11-17	13
God’s Perfect Timing . . . . .	Genesis 25:21	33
Waiting for God’s Best . . . . .	Genesis 30:1-22	39
Faith Takes Hold of God’s Promise . . . . .	Isaiah 7:1-25	901
God’s Waiting Room . . . . .	Hebrews 10:36	1601
The Promise-keeping Character of God . . . . .	Hebrews 11:13, 39	1605
God Answers When We Obey . . . . .	1 John 3:22	1637
The Prayer That’s Always Answered Yes . . . . .	1 John 5:13-15	1639

## GREAT PRAYERS of the Bible

The Lord’s Prayer . . . . .	Luke 11:2-4	1333
Moses’ Prayer at the Burning Bush . . . . .	Exodus 3:1–4:17	77
Solomon’s Prayer for Wisdom . . . . .	2 Chronicles 1	569
David’s Prayer of Thanks for God’s Protection . . . . .	Psalms 18	715
Jesus’ Prayer of Submission . . . . .	Matthew 26:36-46	1265
Jesus’ Prayer of Forgiveness . . . . .	Luke 23:34	1359
Paul’s Prayer for the Ephesians . . . . .	Ephesians 1:15-23	1535
Prayer of Praise of the Redeemed . . . . .	Revelation 19:1-8	1671

## GREAT PEOPLE of Prayer

Moses: A Man of Prayer . . . . .	Exodus 32:9-14; 33:12-23	115
The Israelites: A Cry for Deliverance . . . . .	Exodus 2:23-25	73
Solomon: He Asks for Wisdom . . . . .	1 Kings 3:1-15	439
Job: Understanding His Need for God . . . . .	Job 1:20-21	669
David: Thanking God for Answered Prayer . . . . .	Psalms 138	829
Daniel: The Process of Prayer . . . . .	Daniel 9	1121
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector . . . . .	Luke 18:9-14	1349
Early Church Believers: Courage to Preach . . . . .	Acts 4:23-31	1413
Paul: A Life Centered on Prayer . . . . .	Acts 9:11-19	1421
Jesus: Praying for Us . . . . .	Hebrews 7:25	1599

## IMPORTANT ELEMENTS of Prayer

The Disciples’ Prayer . . . . .	Matthew 6:9-13	1227
Beginning from God’s Perspective . . . . .	Isaiah 40:21-31	933
Rooted in a Relationship . . . . .	John 15:7	1395
Praising God in Spite of Circumstances . . . . .	1 Chronicles 29:10-15	565
Entering with Thanksgiving . . . . .	Psalms 100:4	793
Confessing Sin . . . . .	1 John 1:8-9	1635
Bringing Requests to God . . . . .	1 Chronicles 4:9-10	529
Standing in the Gap . . . . .	Ezekiel 22:30	1067

Never Give Up . . . . .	Luke 11:5-10	1335
Believing with Expectance . . . . .	Hebrews 11:6	1603

## PERSISTENCE in Prayer

Hannah's Persistence . . . . .	1 Samuel 1:1-2:11	355
Persistence in Poverty . . . . .	Matthew 5:3	1223
Persistence in Asking . . . . .	Matthew 7:7-11	1229
Persistence in Injustice . . . . .	Luke 18:1-8	1347
Persistence in Suffering . . . . .	Romans 5:3-5	1465
Persistence in Reconciliation . . . . .	2 Corinthians 5:18-19	1515
Persistence in Failure . . . . .	Hebrews 6:10	1597
Persistence in Confidence . . . . .	2 Peter 1:3	1629

## POSTURE & PLACES of Prayer

Anyplace, Anywhere, Any Position . . . . .	Acts 16:13	1435
Bowing . . . . .	Exodus 12:27	87
Prostrate . . . . .	Numbers 20:6	201
Sitting . . . . .	2 Samuel 7:18	405
Standing . . . . .	2 Chronicles 6:12-13	573
Lying Down . . . . .	Isaiah 38:1-3	931
Hands Uplifted . . . . .	Lamentations 3:41	1037
In Private . . . . .	Matthew 14:23	1243
Public . . . . .	Acts 2:46	1409
Kneeling . . . . .	Acts 20:36	1443

## Prayers of PRAISE & ADORATION

A Scene of Praise to Jesus . . . . .	Matthew 21:1-16	1253
Praise God at All Times and in All Places . . . . .	Psalms 113	807
Praise Using Musical Instruments . . . . .	Psalms 150	837
Praise for Salvation . . . . .	Isaiah 12:1-6	907
Praise for Rescuing Us . . . . .	Jeremiah 20:13	987
Praise for Providing for Our Needs . . . . .	Joel 2:26	1143
Praise God for His Wise Plan . . . . .	Matthew 11:25-26	1237
Praise for a New Birth . . . . .	1 Peter 1:3-6	1621
The Sacrifice of Praise . . . . .	Hebrews 13:15-16	1607

## Prayers of REPENTANCE

God's Call to Repentance . . . . .	Ezekiel 18:30-32	1061
The Repentance of the Israelites . . . . .	Judges 10:15-16	327
David's Repentance for His Sin . . . . .	2 Samuel 12:13	409
King Manasseh's Repentance . . . . .	2 Chronicles 33:10-13	609
Job's Prayer of Repentance . . . . .	Job 42:1-6	697
The Repentance of Nineveh . . . . .	Jonah 3:5-10	1166
John the Baptist's Call to Repentance . . . . .	Matthew 3:2	1221
Jesus' Call to Repentance . . . . .	Luke 15:1-7	1341
The Lost Son's Repentance . . . . .	Luke 15:11-21	1343
The Repentant Thief . . . . .	Luke 23:39-43	1361

## Prayers of THANKS

A Silent Thanksgiving . . . . .	Luke 7:36-50	1323
Thanking God Each Morning and Evening . . . . .	1 Chronicles 23:30	555
Thanking God for His Past Deeds . . . . .	Psalms 107:21-22	803
Thanking God for His Goodness . . . . .	Jeremiah 33:11	1005
Thanking God for Wisdom . . . . .	Daniel 2:20-23	1107
Thanking God for Others . . . . .	Romans 1:8	1459
Thanking God for Spiritual Gifts . . . . .	1 Corinthians 14:18	1501
Thanking God for the Gospel . . . . .	2 Corinthians 2:14	1511

Thanking God for the Memories .....	Philippians 1:3-6	1545
Thanking God for Everything .....	Ephesians 5:20	1539

## Praying **EFFECTIVELY** for Others

Paul's Model Petition .....	Colossians 1:3-14	1553
The Attitude of Christ .....	Philippians 2:3-5	1547
The Sin of Prayerlessness .....	1 Samuel 12:16-23	367
Praying for Enemies .....	Matthew 5:43-45	1225
Praying for Those Who Hurt Us .....	Job 42:7-10	699
Prayer for All People .....	1 Timothy 2:1-4	1571
Praying for Our Leaders .....	2 Thessalonians 3:1-2	1567
Harvest Prayers .....	Matthew 9:35-38	1233
Earnest Prayer .....	James 5:14-18	1617
Help from the Holy Spirit .....	Romans 8:26-27	1469

## Praying the **PROMISES** of God

The Song of Moses .....	Deuteronomy 32	269
I Am Your God .....	Psalms 50:7-15	747
I Am Your Redeemer and Protector .....	Isaiah 43:1-7	937
I Am Your Sustenance .....	John 6:48-51	1377
I Am Your Clarity .....	John 8:12-30	1381
I Am Your Comfort .....	2 Corinthians 1:3-7	1509
I Am Your Glory .....	2 Corinthians 3:18	1513
God's Gift of Faith .....	Ephesians 2:8-10	1537
I Am the Beginning and the End .....	Revelation 22:12-13	1673

## Praying with **PASSION**

Jesus' Desperate Prayer in the Garden .....	Luke 22:39-46	1357
A Worthy Struggle .....	Colossians 4:12	1555
Comfort in Tears .....	Job 16:20	681
In the Family Way .....	Galatians 4:6-7	1529
Heart to Heart .....	Psalms 17:1	713
Speaking with Confidence .....	Mark 11:22-24	1293
Passion for Jesus .....	John 14:13	1393
Repentance and Refreshment .....	Isaiah 57:15	951

## Praying When in **DISTRESS**

"I've Had Enough, LORD!" .....	1 Kings 19:3-18	469
Praying When We Suffer .....	Job 5	671
Praying with Honest Emotion .....	Psalms 88	783
Praying When Surrounded by Enemies .....	Psalms 143	833
Praying for God's Mercy .....	Lamentations 5	1039
Praying No Matter What .....	Jonah 2:1-10; 4:1-5	1165
Two Kinds of Prayers .....	Mark 5:22-43	1279
Praying When Life Is Confusing .....	Psalms 13	711
A Soul-piercing Cry .....	Matthew 27:46	1269

## **WHY** Do We Pray?

Embracing the Divine Connection .....	Acts 12:1-19	1427
To Ask .....	1 Samuel 1:9-18	353
To Commune With God .....	Psalms 23	719
To Confess Sin .....	Psalms 51	749
To Give Thanks .....	Luke 17:11-19	1345
To Invite Miracles .....	John 11:1-44	1387
To Pray for Others .....	John 17	1397
To Submit .....	Mark 14:32-42	1299
To Thwart Evil .....	Daniel 6	1117

# INDEX TO PRAYER PROMPTS

## ADORING GOD

Genesis 12:7-9; 14:17-23; 15:13-16; 17:1; 21:33; 31:1-13; Exodus 26:31-35; Leviticus 6:12-13; Numbers 4:17-20; 21:29; Deuteronomy 32:47; Joshua 13:32-33; 1 Samuel 30:6; 2 Samuel 15:21; 22:3-4; 23:5; 1 Kings 8:13; 2 Kings 17:36; 18:1-6; 1 Chronicles 5:23-25; 11:18-19; 23:30; 29:10-12; 2 Chronicles 32:13; 36:17-20; Ezra 7:10; 10:18-44; Nehemiah 8:6; 8:10; Esther 6:10-12; 8:7-14; Job 9:4-10; 36:26-31; Psalm 48:9; 89:5; 95:6; 123:1-2; Isaiah 2:2-3; 9:6-7; 41:4; Jeremiah 5:24; 9:24; 15:16; 32:27; 32:40; Ezekiel 37:27; 41:15-20; Daniel 2:11; 2:46; 5:4; Hosea 2:19; 4:15; Amos 4:5; Habakkuk 1:12-13; 3:3; Matthew 12:18-21; 21:1-6; 21:5-11; 27:47-54; Mark 8:27-29; Luke 3:21-22; 22:66-71; John 14:6-7; 5:5-11; Ephesians 1:3-5; Colossians 1:15; 1:22; 1 Timothy 3:14-16; Hebrews 1:1-3; 10:19-22; 1 John 1:1-3; Revelation 1:12-20; 4:1-5; 5:12; 7:12; 8:1; 15:3-4

## ASKING GOD FOR COURAGE

Genesis 22:1-11; 26:7; 32:9-12; 38:13-26; Exodus 4:14; Leviticus 25:43; Numbers 14:1-4; 16:25-26; Joshua 6:1-3; 6:28-32; 10:13; 10:19; 11:9; 16:10; 22:34; Judges 5:21; 6:28-32; 7:3; Ruth 3:11-12; 1 Samuel 14:6; 17:26; 1 Kings 15:11-15; 18:17; 18:24; 18:27; 22:28; 2 Kings 5:1-5; 11:2; 1 Chronicles 12:17; 21:3; 2 Chronicles 1:15-17; 6:32-33; 15:1-7; 18:23; 18:28-32; 19:11; 23:1; Esther 3:1-2; Job 36:21; Psalm 27:14; 106:30-31; Proverbs 10:10; 28:1; Isaiah 6:11-13; 57:15; Jeremiah 11:2; 26:12; 26:24; 37:17; 38:7-9; 38:15; 38:19; Ezekiel 11:2; 13:10; 24:18; Daniel 3:17; 6:16; 10:19; Haggai 2:4-5; Matthew 10:24-31; 12:30; 20:24-28; 24:4-14; 27:24-26; Mark 14:53-62; 15:42-45; Luke 9:23; 23:50-51; John 7:12-13; 7:50-51; 11:16; 19:1-13; Acts 2:14; 3:1-7; 4:1-3; 4:19-20; 6:8-15; 17:16-17; 22:1-16; 24:10; 24:14-15; 25:26; Romans 8:13-17; 12:3-8; 2 Corinthians 1:21; 13:8; Galatians 6:3; Ephesians 5:3-9; Philippians 1:27-28; Titus 1:2-3; 1 Peter 2:21-24; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Jude 22-23; Revelation 2:9-11; 10:9-10

## ASKING GOD FOR FORGIVENESS

Genesis 6:6; 24:58; 35:8; 44:7; 50:15-21; Exodus 4:1; 16:3-4; Leviticus 4:2; Numbers 11:21-23; 16:3; Deuteronomy 1:28; Judges 12:1-4; 16:28; 18:14; 1 Samuel 15:3, 7-9; 1 Kings 8:27-30; 8:46-51; 21:4; 2 Kings 5:25-27;

7:2; 22:1-2; 1 Chronicles 8:8; 2 Chronicles 6:20-21; 6:36-39; Ezra 9:3-4; Nehemiah 9:28; Job 13:23; Psalm 4:4; 106:24; 119:173-176; Isaiah 9:17; 43:22; Jeremiah 7:4-10; 16:17; 44:12; 48:42; Ezekiel 34:12; Amos 1:3; 5:21; 7:2; Jonah 4:5; Zephaniah 2:3; Matthew 6:14-15; 23:23; 26:69-75; Mark 10:46-52; 14:37-40; Luke 11:2-4; 17:3; 18:9-14; John 9:39; Romans 7:6; 14:1-13; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Timothy 5:13; Hebrews 12:7-9; James 2:14-18; 5:9; 1 John 1:5-7

## ASKING GOD FOR GUIDANCE

Genesis 3:16; 5:3-24; 19:1-7; 21:22-32; 23:20; 24:12-14; 26:30-33; 30:22-24; 31:24-30; 31:31; 32:22-32; 34:5-16; 47:5-6; 48:1-7; Exodus 5:19-21; 9:16; 10:23; 15:13; 23:12; 28:15; 39:42-43; Leviticus 6:12-13; 7:16; 8:4; 8:34-36; 16:8-10; 25:17; Numbers 7:12-83; 16:43-50; 17:5; 20:3; 33:55; 36:2; Deuteronomy 1:2; 5:1; 8:11-14; 11:18-19; 15:10-11; 27:9; Joshua 2:17-20; 7:20-21; 9:14-15; 18:10; Judges 6:36-40; 8:27; 9:16; 11:30; 34-35; 13:6-7; 17:6; 17:7-13; 19:15; 1 Samuel 4:10; 9:6; 11:6-7; 16:16; 18:3; 26:7-9; 2 Samuel 2:1; 6:16; 13:21; 14:1-3; 15:25-26; 18:14; 20:9-10; 20:17; 1 Kings 3:23-27; 7:14; 10:13; 12:12-13; 21:20; 2 Kings 1:2-4; 3:10; 4:5; 8:27; 9:1-3; 9:36; 12:23; 15:1-4; 17:1; 19:29-31; 24:14-16; 25:7; 1 Chronicles 1:1; 1:10; 4:9-10; 4:27; 6:49; 7:40; 14:10; 17:1; 18:14; 22:7-10; 28:20; 28:21; 29:1-5; 2 Chronicles 18:4; 20:3-4; 22:8; 23:1; 24:15-16; 30:22; Ezra 1:1-2; 5:11; 7:19; 10:4; Nehemiah 2:11-15; 12:24; 12:42; 12:43; Esther 2:20; 4:13-14; 7:3-4; Job 2:4; 5:17; 23:3-5; 29:21-24; 30:20; Psalm 4:4; 5:8; 14:1; 17:1; 17:3; 25:4-5; 40:5; 45:1; 73:10; 90:4; 92:5; 95:8; 119:1; 119:133; 142:3; 142:5; Proverbs 4:21; 13:20; 17:22; 18:4; 19:18; 20:19; 21:1; 23:12; 29:18; Ecclesiastes 1:2; 5:1-2; 7:13; 11:4; Song of Songs 6:3; Isaiah 6:8; 8:11-15; 22:11; 27:6; 37:31; 44:25; 48:17; Jeremiah 2:13; 2:17; 6:10; 7:16; 8:11; 12:3; 23:18; 31:33; 33:2-3; 35:17; 40:10; 42:3; 44:3; Lamentations 4:13; Ezekiel 7:5-9; 13:22; 20:1; 20:40; 23:48; 34:15; 42:1; 44:24; Micah 2:13; 5:4-5; Haggai 1:3-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:18-20; 5:38-42; 10:16-20; 12:33-37; 13:53-58; 14:22-32; 16:5-12; Mark 1:35; 2:15-17; 2:19-22; 2:27; 6:7-13; 8:22-26; 9:43; 10:35-45; 13:21-23; 15:5; Luke 5:35; 6:24-26; 6:27-36; 9:2-3; 9:57-62; 13:22-30; 14:34-35; 16:10-12; 19:11-27; 20:20-25; 24:13-16; 24:35-40; John 6:27; 8:28-29; 8:44; 15:1-8; 18:15-18, 25-27; 20:8-9; Acts 4:32-37; 5:1-11; 8:29; 9:15; 10:3-4; 10:9-16; 10:34; 15:36-41; 16:6-10;

18:7-11; 18:27; 21:13-14; 22:21; Romans 12:1-2; 12:3-8; 12:9-13; 13:5; 13:13-14; 15:20-22; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 14:12; 14:15; 16:1-4; 16:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:5-7; 5:9-10; 12:7-10; 12:15; Galatians 2:1-3; 4:16; 6:1-2; Ephesians 4:26-27; 5:3-9; 6:4; 6:9; Colossians 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:14-16; 4:7-8; Titus 3:14; Philemon 6; 10; Hebrews 6:11; James 1:5-6; 2:21-26; 2 John 8; Revelation 18:4; 18:11-13

### ASKING GOD FOR HEALING

Genesis 20:17-18; 27:27-36; 30:1-15; 37:3-4; Exodus 7:4-5; Joshua 20:4; 2 Samuel 15:1-6; 20:9-10; 21:10; 1 Chronicles 8:8; 2 Chronicles 11:4; 23:16; 29:1-2; Ezra 3:12; Psalm 6:2; 38:3; 102:16; 147:3; Isaiah 19:21-22; 30:26; 40:1; 48:4; 57:18-19; Jeremiah 8:15; 17:14; Habakkuk 1:4; Matthew 8:1-17; 9:1-6; 9:19-22; 15:30; 20:29-34; Mark 1:41; 2:1-4; 5:21-23; 5:24-34; Luke 5:38-41; 8:43-48; 4:43-54; John 11:3-4; Acts 15:19-31; Romans 8:26-27; 8:28; Hebrews 4:12

### ASKING GOD FOR HELP

Genesis 4:3-5; 8:8-13; 24:1; 25:28; 25:29-34; 37:18-30; 42:24; 45:14-15; Exodus 4:11; 8:8; 11:6-7; 16:27-30; 17:12; 21:4-6; 21:21-26; 22:1-13; 22:22-24; 23:2; 23:12; 23:20; 32:31-32; 36:6-7; 40:15; Leviticus 6:1-7; 14:21; 19:10; 23:22; 25:10; Numbers 3:32; 5:11-13; 6:24-26; 10:2; 11:16-17; 14:10-12; 25:1-3; 27:16-17; Deuteronomy 1:17; 2:5; 5:11; 12:13-14; 15:13; 18:21-22; 20:5-8; 21:9; 23:21-23; 24:19; 28:2-6; 29:19; 31:8; Joshua 3:3-4; 17:16; 22:5; 22:8; 22:13; Judges 1:1; 7:15; 12:1-4; 13:8; 17:7-13; 21:25; Ruth 1:20; 4:10; 10:9; 1 Samuel 13:15; 18:12; 19:10; 22:3; 2 Samuel 8:15; 12:22-25; 13:1; 14:24; 14:33; 15:30-31; 24:1-4; 1 Kings 1:6; 1:11; 1:36-37; 4:20; 6:12; 7:40, 48, 50; 13:8-10; 18:36-37; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:15; 4:8; 5:16; 9:22; 12:15; 13:3-4; 13:5-7; 15:19-20; 23:24; 23:29; 1 Chronicles 2:13-15; 3:1; 5:9; 5:20; 10:13; 12:2; 22:5; 2 Chronicles 3:1; 16:10; 20:17; 25:20-28; 26:15-16; 29:3; 34:11; Ezra 3:12; 8:15-17; 10:12; Nehemiah 2:1-4; 3:12; 4:22-23; 9:28; 10:38; 12:1; Esther 10:3; Job 5:7; 15:6; 20:4-11; 27:3-4; 30:27-28; 31:1; 33:6; 33:14-18; 40:3; 42:3; Psalm 5:3; 10:1; 18:6-12; 18:37; 26:8; 34:14-15; 37:16; 37:21; 37:27; 37:31; 39:1; 52:4; 52:8-9; 69:9; 73:3; 89:8; 101:2; 105:19; 106:34-36; 108:1; 139:23-24; 141:3-4; Proverbs 3:1; 3:27; 6:20; 10:19; 11:24; 12:16; 13:18; 14:29; 15:1; 16:31; 17:9; 22:7; 22:24-25; 25:16; 28:22; Ecclesiastes 2:12-16; 2:24-26; 3:1-8; 5:7; 9:10; 11:1-2; Song of Songs 1:1; 1:15-16; 2:1-2; 2:15; 6:3; 6:9-10; Isaiah 3:13-15; 10:15; 17:7-8; 23:8-9; 29:9-12; 37:4;

43:25; 45:19; 56:1; 62:6-7; Jeremiah 12:8; 18:23; 22:14; 22:30; 24:7; 27:14; 44:7; 44:21; Lamentations 4:1; Ezekiel 7:19; 19:13; 28:15; 33:7; Hosea 5:5; Amos 1:9; Micah 1:16; Habakkuk 2:4; Zephaniah 2:10; Zechariah 2:13; Matthew 9:35-36; 13:11-13; 18:21; 24:12; 24:44; 25:13; Mark 4:9; 4:35-41; 6:7-13; 8:1-10; 9:23-24; 9:34-35; 9:39-41; 10:1-12; 10:14-16; 12:31; 12:43; Luke 1:38; 2:36-38; 8:1-3; 8:22-25; 10:2-29; 10:30; 11:2-4; 12:35-40; 16:13-14; 19:1-10; John 7:1-7; 8:1-11; Acts 9:9-24; 10:17-30; 16:15; 17:22; 20:1-2; 23:1; 26:28; Romans 8:35-39; 15:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:14; 15:52-53; 2 Corinthians 6:8-10; 10:3-4; Galatians 2:19-20; 3:6-9; 6:9; Ephesians 4:20-24; Philippians 1:15-19; Colossians 3:18-19; 3:21; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Philemon 17; Hebrews 2:15; 2:18; 7:19-22; 10:24; 10:25; 10:35-36; 12:16; 1 Peter 3:1-5; 4:8-9; 5:2; 3:14-16; 2 Peter 1:5-7; 2 John 4, 6; Revelation 2:2-7; 3:15-16

### ASKING GOD FOR HIS PRESENCE

Genesis 2:7; 26:28; 28:1-17; 31:48-53; 41:38; Exodus 3:7-8; 9:7; 25:8-9; 28:15; 33:11; 40:38; Leviticus 9:6; 9:24; 10:1; 23:32; 27:9-15; Numbers 2:2; 7:89; 14:26-30; 22:7-8; Deuteronomy 12:13-14; 32:34-35; Joshua 14:10-12; Judges 4:23-24; 5:21; 6:2; 15:14; 1 Samuel 7:6; 15:22; 19:20; 23:3-4; 24:5; 28:6; 2 Samuel 5:23-25; 1 Kings 15:8; 2 Kings 5:7; 6:14-17; 18:1-6; 1 Chronicles 13:14; 2 Chronicles 1:15-17; 11:14, 16; 18:27; 25:20-28; 32:22-23; 35:20-24; Nehemiah 7:4-6; Job 3:25; 35:13-14; Psalm 31:20; 36:9-10; 41:11; 42:1; 42:8; 55:6; 68:19; 69:32; 89:15; 93:5; Proverbs 21:8; Isaiah 24:23; 28:29; 29:18-19; 30:30; 32:1-3; 49:14; 65:2; Jeremiah 21:2; 23:18; 23:23-24; 29:13; 33:25; Ezekiel 11:5; 16:16; 20:25; 20:48; 23:24; 28:22; 40:6; Hosea 6:6; Malachi 2:5-6; Matthew 2:6; 6:19-23; 11:1-15; 16:1-4; 24:30; 27:45-46; Luke 6:17-19; 22:8-16; 22:17-20; John 1:18; 1:29; 3:21; 5:25; 6:32-35; 7:38; 15:1-8; 18:7-11; Romans 8:5-6; 8:26-27; 1 Corinthians 1:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Hebrews 2:1-3; 10:26-31; James 1:2-4; 1 John 3:1-2; 2 John 6

### ASKING GOD FOR JUSTICE

Genesis 31:42; Exodus 22:1-13; Numbers 14:20-21; Judges 9:23; 9:57; 1 Samuel 14:45; 26:7-9; 2 Samuel 12:1-6; 13:14; 1 Kings 2:31; Nehemiah 5:6-11; Esther 10:3; Job 8:3; Psalm 35:7; 99:4; Proverbs 31:8; Isaiah 1:24-26; 14:12-17; 14:22-23; Jeremiah 14:14; 23:11-12; 49:15; Ezekiel 30:21; Hosea 5:10; Joel 3:11; Amos 5:24; 8:5-6; Habakkuk 1:4; John 7:50-51; Acts 12:20-23; 13:6-12; 25:1-22

## INDEX TO STORIES OF ANSWERED PRAYER

When the Lord Says "Wait" . . . . .	61	Advance Praying . . . . .	843
Blu's Traveling Blues . . . . .	93	Praying God's Will . . . . .	921
Little Red Boots . . . . .	185	Flash Flood . . . . .	967
God's Wilderness Goulash . . . . .	237	God Is Enough . . . . .	1051
A Prayer for Unsaved Auca Indians . . . . .	283	Unanswered Prayer . . . . .	1113
A Family for Halley . . . . .	339	Mine, Yours, and Hours . . . . .	1149
Jim Elliot's Prayer . . . . .	375	A Strong Tower . . . . .	1213
Constancy and the Coed . . . . .	465	Finding God in Russia . . . . .	1285
A New Believer's Prayer . . . . .	483	Certain of What I Could Not See . . . . .	1369
God's Provision . . . . .	583	The Blessing of Noah . . . . .	1431
Wish List . . . . .	623	Saved by a Stamp . . . . .	1495
A Kidney for David . . . . .	675	A Little Boy and a Grown Son . . . . .	1581
God's Amazing Presence . . . . .	731	Storms over Romania . . . . .	1593
More Than Enough Power . . . . .	769	A Wife Prays for Her Husband's Salvation . . . . .	1657

## INDEX TO PRAYER QUOTES

Abiding in Christ . . . . .	1503	God as Listener . . . . .	939
Action, Importance of . . . . .	301	God's Actions . . . . .	1383
Adoration . . . . .	181	God's Blessing . . . . .	1479
Anxiety . . . . .	1325	God's Careful Attention . . . . .	1045
Awareness of Sin . . . . .	1171	God's Comforting Voice . . . . .	294
Before Sleep . . . . .	968	God's Good Gifts . . . . .	1251
Beginning to Pray . . . . .	1187	God's Grace . . . . .	927
Being "In Touch" with God . . . . .	537	God's Joy . . . . .	217
Being Specific . . . . .	213	God's Love . . . . .	689
Believing in God's Sovereignty . . . . .	777	God's Timing . . . . .	161
Benefits of Prayer . . . . .	849	God's Wisdom . . . . .	51
Boldness . . . . .	1451	God's Word . . . . .	1263
Certainty of God's Presence . . . . .	665	Godliness . . . . .	13
Christ as Companion . . . . .	1353	Going Deeper . . . . .	1197
Christ's Transforming Power . . . . .	1525	Goodness of God . . . . .	1398
Claiming God's Blessings . . . . .	174	Hearing When God Speaks . . . . .	9
Closeness to God . . . . .	326	Heart of God . . . . .	1655
Common Sense . . . . .	1367	High Calling . . . . .	1350
Connection with God . . . . .	1373	Holiness, Importance of . . . . .	1092
Constant Communion with God . . . . .	739	Holy Optimism . . . . .	261
Consulting with God . . . . .	73	Holy Spirit's Control . . . . .	413
Conversation with God . . . . .	815	Honesty with God . . . . .	883
Corporate Prayer . . . . .	825	Hope . . . . .	1001
Crucial Praying . . . . .	509	Human Helplessness . . . . .	591
Daily Life . . . . .	1391	Humanity . . . . .	19
Dedicated Heart . . . . .	1659	Ignorance . . . . .	1151
Delayed Answer . . . . .	143	Imagination . . . . .	1473
Depending on God . . . . .	385	Intercession . . . . .	1517
Desperate Need . . . . .	1467	Intimacy with God . . . . .	1019
Details of Life . . . . .	397	Jesus as Teacher . . . . .	54
Difficult Circumstances . . . . .	445	Jesus' Example . . . . .	947
Disappointment . . . . .	641	Jesus' Praying, Importance of . . . . .	317
Discouragement . . . . .	199	Joy . . . . .	651
Divine Guidance . . . . .	1591	Joy of Communion with God . . . . .	22
Emptiness . . . . .	791	Keeping Focused on Christ . . . . .	1069
Enjoying the Presence of God . . . . .	1197	Kingdom of God . . . . .	549
Eternal Perspective, Importance of an . . . . .	347	Knowing God . . . . .	1062
Eternal Results . . . . .	1585	Knowing the Will of God . . . . .	1143
Every Person's Duty . . . . .	755	Knowing Why . . . . .	1181
Expectant Listening . . . . .	1043	Language of Longing . . . . .	571
Experience, Importance of . . . . .	138	Laughter as Praise . . . . .	999
Faith in Christ . . . . .	107	Life Habit . . . . .	420
Faith, Importance of . . . . .	1463	Listening to God . . . . .	1403
Fellowship with God . . . . .	931	Love, Importance of . . . . .	1031
Few Words . . . . .	1501	Magnificence of God . . . . .	1267
Finding God . . . . .	251	More Than a Wish . . . . .	1034
Friendship with the Lord . . . . .	309	Mystery . . . . .	1050
Genuineness, Importance of . . . . .	989	Nature of Intercession . . . . .	642
Getting to Know God . . . . .	1485	Nearness of God . . . . .	1521
Gift from God . . . . .	489	Obedience . . . . .	1339
Gift of God . . . . .	1085	Our Children . . . . .	67
Gift to God . . . . .	165	Paying Attention to God . . . . .	805
Giving God Time . . . . .	25	Personal Change . . . . .	105

Personal Transformation . . . . .	859	Speaking with God . . . . .	629
Petition, Importance of . . . . .	1561	Spirit's Indwelling . . . . .	1489
Pleasing God . . . . .	1133	Success in Ministry . . . . .	1101
Powerful Effects . . . . .	1125	Suffering . . . . .	685
Practicing the Presence of God . . . . .	1095	Sufficiency of God . . . . .	191
Privacy . . . . .	983	Talking to God . . . . .	1155
Promises of God . . . . .	1613	Thankfulness . . . . .	1137
Protecting Children . . . . .	1016	The Devil's Fear of Prayer . . . . .	1315
Purity through Prayer . . . . .	531	The Holy Spirit's Guidance . . . . .	1247
Raw Praying . . . . .	725	Time for Prayer . . . . .	141
Real Life . . . . .	993	Time for Prayer, Importance of . . . . .	1120
Realizing Our Needs . . . . .	1011	Total Commitment . . . . .	119
Relationship with God, Importance of . . . . .	975	Total Surrender to God . . . . .	1307
Responding to God's Love . . . . .	207	Transforming the Soul . . . . .	99
Retreat . . . . .	1205	True and False Prayer . . . . .	1625
Revival through Prayer . . . . .	1277	Two-Way Communication with God . . . . .	1644
Right Living . . . . .	108	Unanswered Prayer, Purpose of . . . . .	888
Silence . . . . .	473	Union with Christ . . . . .	1289
Simplicity . . . . .	877	Value of Prayer . . . . .	123
Sin's Crippling Effects . . . . .	47	Way of Life . . . . .	279
Sincerity . . . . .	1599	Weakness . . . . .	263
Source of Power in Prayer . . . . .	761	Work in Prayer . . . . .	1519



## INDEX TO QUOTES FROM HYMNS

"Bless This Hour of Prayer" . . . . .	151, 297	"Jesus, with Thy Church Abide" . . . . .	1417
"Blessed Jesus, at Thy Word" . . . . .	427	"Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending" .	1661
"Bless Thou the Gifts Our Hands Have Brought" . . . . .	617	"Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word" . . . .	957
"Come Boldly to the Throne of Grace" . . . .	1259	"Make Me a Captive, Lord" . . . . .	415
"Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain" . . . .	1303	"May the Mind of Christ, My Savior" . . . .	1653
"Day of Judgment! Day of Wonders!" . . . .	1667	"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" . . . . .	1219
"Dear Shepherd of Thy People, Hear" . . . .	1385	"O Lord, Thou Judge" . . . . .	913
"Fairest Lord Jesus" . . . . .	889	"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" . . . . .	1301, 1401
"God Is in His Temple" . . . . .	601, 1193	"Rejoice, the Lord Is King" . . . . .	1665
"Hear Us, O Savior!" . . . . .	493	"Take My Life and Let It Be" . . . . .	179, 247
"I Want a Principle Within" . . . . .	867	"The Quiet Hour" . . . . .	1043
"In His Temple God Be Praised" . . . . .	515	"What a Friend We Have in Jesus" . . . . .	455
"In Time of Tribulation" . . . . .	659	"What Shall I Do, My God to Love" . . . . .	1079
"Jehovah, God, Thy Gracious Power" . . . .	501	"When Time Seems Short and Death Is Near" . . . . .	1027
"Jesus, Lover of My Soul" . . . . .	225		

# TOPICAL GUIDE TO BIBLE PRAYERS

## Adoring God

- A Prayer to Walk with God *Psalms* 73:23-26, 28 pp. 767, 768
- Praise to the Creator of the Universe *Psalms* 74:12-17 p. 768
- In Awe of God *Psalms* 89:5-8 p. 784
- Singing a New Song for God's Victory *Psalms* 98:1-3 p. 791
- Revering the Lord *Psalms* 111:7-10 pp. 806-807
- Meditating on God's Splendor *Psalms* 145:4-7 pp. 834-835
- Celebrating God's Power *Psalms* 145:9-13 p. 835
- Praise for God's Wonderful Plan *Isaiah* 25:1 p. 916
- Glory to God in the Highest Heaven *Luke* 2:13-14 p. 1309
- More Than We Ever Dare to Ask *Ephesians* 3:20-21 p. 1537
- The Elders' Praise for God *Revelation* 4:10-11 p. 1654
- Worthy Is the Lamb *Revelation* 5:12-13 p. 1655

## Asking God for Courage

- Expressing Our Fears to God *Exodus* 3:11-12 p. 74
- Entrusting Our Reputation to God *Psalms* 25:1-3 p. 721
- Jesus' Merciful Prayer *Luke* 23:34 p. 1360
- A Prayer for Courage *Acts* 4:24, 27-30 p. 1412

## Asking God for Forgiveness

- Solomon's Prayer That God May Forgive *2 Chronicles* 6:36-39 p. 575
- A Petition for Mercy *Psalms* 79:8-9, 13 p. 776
- Recognizing Our Sin *Isaiah* 64:5-9 p. 956
- Healing through Confession *Jeremiah* 14:19-22 p. 981

## Asking God for Guidance

- Requesting Clarification *Exodus* 33:12-14 p. 117
- Asking God Which Way to Turn *Psalms* 5:7-8 p. 704
- Asking to Be Led Along God's Path *Psalms* 25:4-5 p. 721
- An Appeal for Guidance *Psalms* 43:3-5 p. 740
- A Prayer from the Discouraged *Psalms* 119:25-29 pp. 813-814

- Asking for God's Help *Psalms* 119:30-32 p. 814

## Asking God for Healing

- A Prayer in Sickness *2 Kings* 20:2-5 p. 510
- Healing through Confession *Jeremiah* 14:19-22 p. 981

## Asking God for Help

- Manoah's Prayer for Instruction *Judges* 13:8-9 p. 331
- A Prayer for God to Prove Himself *1 Kings* 18:36-37 p. 467
- A Plea for Help *2 Chronicles* 14:11 p. 584
- Jehoshaphat's Cry for Help *2 Chronicles* 18:31 p. 588
- A Prayer during a Crisis *2 Chronicles* 20:6-9, 12 p. 589
- Waiting Patiently for God *Psalms* 27:11, 13-14 p. 723
- Asking God to Listen *Psalms* 28:1-2 p. 723
- An Appeal for Help *Psalms* 54:4-7 p. 749
- Trusting in the Midst of Troubles *Psalms* 55:1-3, 6-7 p. 750
- Calling on God *Psalms* 55:16-19 p. 750
- Praying When Hope Seems Dim *Psalms* 69:1-3, 13 p. 762
- Deliverance from Death *Psalms* 69:14-15 pp. 762-763
- Reminding Ourselves of God's Greatness *Psalms* 86:8-10 p. 781
- Committing Our Troubles to God *Psalms* 88:1-4 p. 782
- A Prayer for Restored Success *Psalms* 90:14-17 p. 786
- A Plea for God to Listen *Psalms* 102:1-3, 12 pp. 793-794
- Crying Out to the Lord *Psalms* 142:1-4 p. 832
- Calling on God's Name *Lamentations* 3:55-58 p. 1038

## Asking God for His Presence

- The Joy of God's Presence *Psalms* 16:9-11 pp. 711-712
- An Appeal for God to Listen *Psalms* 27:7-10 p. 723
- Praying for God's Favor *Psalms* 84:5, 8-10 p. 780
- Waiting on the Lord in the Morning *Psalms* 143:8-10 p. 833

**Asking God for Justice**

- A Prayer against Mockers *Nehemiah 4:4-5*  
p. 637
- Gratefulness for Justice *Psalms 9:1-2, 4*  
p. 707
- Praying for the Helpless *Psalms 10:12, 14,*  
17-18 p. 708
- A Complaint concerning Injustice *Psalms 12:1-*  
3, 7-8 p. 709
- An Appeal for Justice *Psalms 140:1-2, 11-13*  
pp. 830-831

**Asking God for Mercy**

- Abraham's Prayer for Mercy *Genesis 18:23-25*  
p. 21
- Moses' Intercession for His People *Exodus*  
32:31-32 p. 117
- Asking God to Relieve Our Suffering  
*Psalms 9:13-14, 19-20* pp. 707-708
- Praise for God's Mercy *Psalms 28:6-7* p. 724
- David's Prayer for a Clean Heart  
*Psalms 51:10-13* p. 747
- A Petition for Mercy *Psalms 79:8-9, 13*  
p. 776
- An Urgent Cry for Help *Psalms 86:1-6*  
p. 781
- Praying in the Midst of a Storm *Jonah 1:13-16*  
p. 1164
- Have Mercy on Us *Matthew 9:27-29* p. 1233

**Asking God for Our Needs**

- Expressing Frustration to God *Genesis 15:2-4*  
p. 18
- Samson's Cry for Water *Judges 15:18-19*  
p. 334
- A Petition for Blessing *1 Chronicles 4:10*  
p. 527
- Praying for Success *Nehemiah 1:11* p. 634
- A Prayer for God to Answer *Psalms 69:16-18*  
p. 763
- Waiting for God to Act *Psalms 74:10-11, 22-23*  
pp. 768, 770
- A Request for God to Remember Us  
*Psalms 106:3-5* p. 799
- Prayer as Incense before the Lord  
*Psalms 141:1-4* p. 831
- The Lord's Prayer *Matthew 6:9-13* p. 1228

**Asking God for Protection**

- A Plea for God's Protection *Genesis 32:9-12*  
p. 43
- Hezekiah's Prayer for Deliverance  
*2 Kings 19:15-16, 19* p. 508
- Giving Thanks That God Is Near *Psalms 16:7-8*  
p. 711
- The Lord, Our Stronghold *Psalms 18:1-3*  
p. 713

- Praying to Our Helper *Psalms 54:1-3* p. 749
- A Request for Protection *Psalms 61:1-4*  
p. 755
- A Cry for God to Hurry *Psalms 70:1, 4-5*  
p. 764
- A Plea for Safety *Psalms 71:1-3* p. 764
- Fixing Our Thoughts on God *Isaiah 26:1-4*  
p. 916
- Jesus' Prayer for Believers *John 17:25-26*  
p. 1397

**Asking God for Strength**

- Praying for Strength from the Lord  
*Judges 16:28-30* p. 335
- Humbling Ourselves before God  
*Job 42:1-6* p. 699
- A Prayer for Strength *Psalms 80:14-15,*  
17-19 p. 777
- Finding Strength in Times of Trouble  
*Isaiah 33:2-3* p. 924
- Complaining about Ridicule *Jeremiah 20:7-9*  
p. 987
- The Lord Stands Beside Us  
*Jeremiah 20:10-11, 13* p. 987
- A Prayer for Love *1 Thessalonians 3:11-13*  
p. 1562

**Asking God for the Desire to Obey**

- Moses' Prayer for Israel *Deuteronomy 33:3*  
272
- A Prayer for Good Motives *1 Chronicles 29:17-*  
18, 20 pp. 565-566
- Meditating on God's Word  
*Psalms 119:33-37* p. 814
- A Prayer for God's Guidance  
*Psalms 119:137-138, 142-144* p. 818
- Jesus' Prayer for Holy Living *John 17:16-19*  
p. 1397
- A Prayer for Holiness *1 Thessalonians 5:23-24*  
p. 1564
- A Prayer for Resources *Hebrews 13:20-21*  
pp. 1608-1609

**Asking God for Understanding**

- Moses' Prayer to Enter the Land *Deuteronomy*  
3:23-25 p. 232
- Praying for Eyes to Be Opened *2 Kings 6:17-18*  
p. 487
- A Prayer for the Whole Earth *Psalms 67:1-3*  
p. 759
- Committing Ourselves to God's Word  
*Psalms 119:105-109* p. 817

**Asking God for Unity**

- Jesus' Prayer for the Unity of Believers  
*John 17:20-21* p. 1397