







flourish

DEVOTIONS FOR A WELL-TENDED HEART

MIKE BEAUMONT & MARTIN MANSER





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Flourish: Prayers for a Well-Tended Heart

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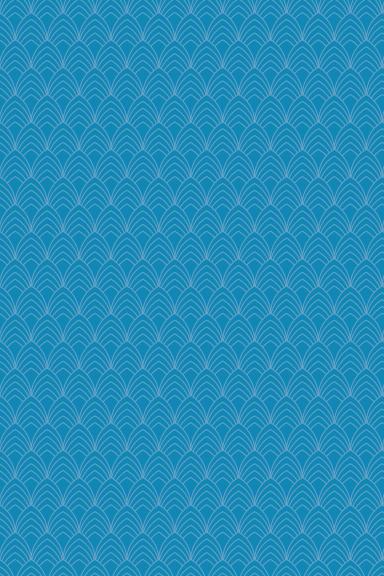
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Look, the winter is past, and the rains are over and gone.

The flowers are springing up, the season of singing birds has come, and the cooing of turtledoves fills the air.

SONG OF SONGS 2:11-12





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Praying Right

Pour out your hearts like water to the Lord. LAMENTATIONS

Jord, I WANT TO GROW IN MY PRAYING, and I want to get it "right." But the minute I say those words, I have to stop. The thing is, my whole life is governed by trying to get things "right." I try to run my home "right," do my work "right," serve at church "right." And often I focus so much on doing things "right" that I lose my joy. The same is true with my praying sometimes: I get so caught up in thinking I need the "right" words that I lose the heart of it—just talking to you.

So today, Lord, I declare that prayer is first and foremost about my *relationship* with you; and as such, it has many different expressions. No one way is "right." I'm going to stop fussing and just start sharing my heart. I may not find the "right" words sometimes, but it doesn't matter. As long as my heart is in it, I know you love to hear me.

I remember the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the Temple. The Pharisee looked and sounded fine; but he was talking to himself rather than to you—parading his own righteousness rather than seeking yours. The tax collector just prayed, "O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner." And you told us, lesus, that it was he who went home justified.

So I thank you that you aren't interested in the beauty of my language—just in what I share from my heart. Amen.

¹Luke 18:9-14

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. JAMES 4:6

PURPLE ECHINACEA

Purple echinacea are also known as purple coneflowers since their daisy-like petals angle away from the brown center, forming a cone.



A SACRIFICE

of Praise

Let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. HEBREWS 13:15

but the truth is, I don't always find this easy. When life is tough or things aren't going well, praising you demands a real sacrifice—a sacrifice of my feelings, questions, and doubts.

But then I recall that whenever people in the Bible made this sacrifice, they always found you did not disappoint them, and blessing was always the final outcome. I think of Moses, David, Job, Jehoshaphat, Hannah, Zechariah and Elizabeth, Paul—and Jesus! All faced incredibly challenging circumstances, yet all sacrificed their feelings and put their trust in you. And you vindicated them.

Why could they do this, Lord? Because they knew you are the sovereign Lord. Even when things seem to be going wrong, you are still on your throne, still causing "everything to work together for the good of those who love God." When I despair or moan, I'm really saying I don't believe that or I don't think you know what you're doing. But when I offer a sacrifice of praise, I'm declaring, "I may not understand you, but I commit myself to trusting you as I wait for your outcome!" Praise gets the focus off me and my situation and back on to you, who alone can redeem all things.

I may not always be able to rejoice in the *circumstances*, Lord; but I can always rejoice in *you*. So I set my heart today on bringing you a sacrifice of praise.

20mans 8-28



Twill constantly speak his praises. PSALM 34:1

BLOODROOT

Bloodroot, whose cheery flowers have distinct white petals and yellow stamens, has been used in cancer treatments and for inflammation, infections, and coughs.



Awesome God

Come, everyone! Clap your hands! Shout to God with joyful praise!

For the LORD Most High is awesome. He is the great King

of all the earth. PSALM 47:1-2

Breathtaking! Stunning! Magnificent! When I think of you and all that you have done, everything within me cries out, "Wow!"

So I joyfully respond to the invitation to "come." I clap my hands and shout joyful praise to you, because you, Lord, are worth getting excited about! The soccer fan might shout, the theatergoer might applaud, and the nature lover might sigh; but as one who knows you, I have far more cause for excitement than any of them. For as I come, I remember once again who you are and what you have done—especially all that you have done for me!

As I remember, I stand amazed at how truly awesome you are. The beauty and intricacies of your creation, your grace freely given to sinners, your faithfulness to your people in the past, your faithfulness to me, and your many acts of kindness—all these cause me to join with the psalmist and those who say, "Wow! What an awesome God!"

And there is even more. Your awesomeness also inspires awe in me—a deep sense of profound respect. For you are almighty God: a God who is holy, majestic, highly exalted, and far above all things. And yet you tell me not to stay at a distance, which is what I deserve, but to come. And that, Lord, is truly awesome. Amen.

Who is like you among the gods, O LORD—glorious in holiness, awesome in splendor, performing great wonders?

EXODUS 15:11



LONGING

for More

The LORD replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favorably on you, and I know you by name." Moses responded, "Then show me your glorious presence." EXODUS 33:17-18

Lord, I'M CHALLENGED BY MOSES' PRAYER. He knew you, and you knew him. And yet he wanted more—not more blessings from you, but simply more of yourself. I'm challenged by that since I often find myself coming to you for what I can get out of you. I live in a culture that always wants more, yet it's always more stuff, more blessing, more prosperity—things that put us at the center rather than you.

So I'm stirred by how Moses just wanted you. He could have asked for anything when he was up on Mount Sinai, but what he wanted more than anything else was simply more of your presence as he led your people. He even said, "If you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place." And then I think of David, who said, "My soul thirsts for you; my whole body longs for you in this parched and weary land where there is no water." 2

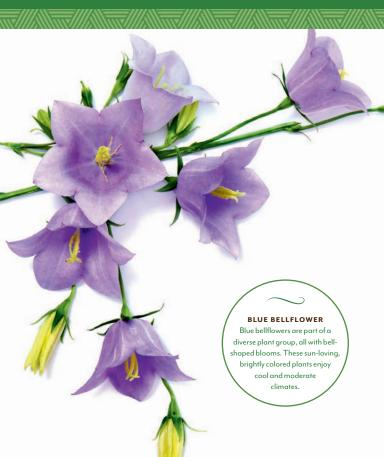
Such longing for you! And it challenges my heart. Am I as passionate to know more of you, or am I lukewarm and half-hearted at times? Today, Lord, I'm asking you to make me thirsty for more of you—and then to quench that thirst with your presence. For only when I am full of you can I overflow to others. Amen.

¹Exodus 33:15 ² Psalm 63:1

Twant to know Christ

and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead.

PHILIPPIANS 3:10



Get Clean

People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy. PROVERBS 28:13

Lord, I DON'T LIKE THE CONCEPT OF SIN. The very word reminds me there are standards, and that I don't always live up to them. It reminds me I'm not as good as I'd like to think I am. And you don't like the idea of sin either—though for very different reasons. I don't like it because it reminds me of my failings; and you don't like it because it offends your perfection. Your Word tells me you hate sin; that its foul stench gets up your nose and makes you turn away.\frac{1}{2}

Yet it also tells me you love to deal with sin! And through Christ, you have made provision for doing just that. But it all starts with me: recognizing sin for what it is; owning up to it; coming clean in order to get clean. I recall the promise in the Bible that "if we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."²

And so today, Lord, I choose not to run from my sin. Nor will I try to hide it. Rather, I choose to come clean in order to get clean.

And as I do, I trust your promise that you will forgive me. Amen.

¹Isaiah 65:1-5 ² 1 John 1:8-9



ARE MY PRAYERS

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Lord, HERE I AM, asking for things for myself again. I sometimes think you must get tired of my coming to you with all my requests, and I wonder if maybe I'm just being selfish.

Yet I remember that your Word says I should never be embarrassed about bringing my personal needs to you. You are my heavenly Father who delights to hear the heart cries of your children, and you have committed yourself to answering them out of your rich resources. I'm encouraged to remember that Jesus himself urged us in the Lord's Prayer' to bring all our needs before you—prayers about our present circumstances, our past sins, and our future welfare.

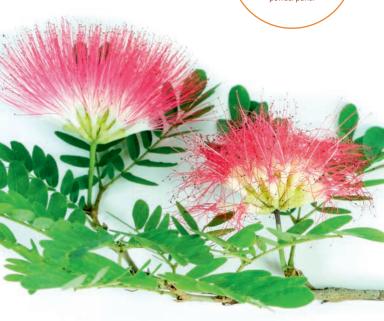
In fact, as I think about it, I'm overwhelmed by the sheer breadth of personal needs that people in the Bible brought to you in prayer: daily provision, healing, marriage, children, protection, guidance, understanding, wisdom, forgiveness, strength, boldness, victory, rescue . . . All this reminds me that when we are secure in our relationship with you, there is absolutely nothing in life that we cannot bring to you.

So Lord, I want to "come boldly to the throne of our gracious God" and bring bold and big requests to you today. And just like in the parable of the friend who needed bread and the parable of the widow and the judge, I resolve to keep asking until I have received what I need from you, my loving heavenly Father.

You don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it.

CALLIANDRA

Calliandra is a genus of tropical plants, evergreens, flowering shrubs, and trees. Its colorful blossoms resemble powder puffs.



COUNTING

the Cost

If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way,
take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on
to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life
for my sake, you will save it. LUKE 9:23-24

adding up prices in stores, figuring out if I can afford that new car, judging whether a request for help will take up too much time. Counting the cost is a way of life for me—except when it comes to you.

Oh, I know there is no cost for *knowing* you—Jesus himself paid that through his death on the cross, and there's nothing I can add. But it's the cost of *following* you that I often balk at: the cost of living life your way, of being a disciple.

I'm challenged by the way you call me to change established loyalties. Everything I've put first in my life—family, work, friends, money, plans, future—you now call me to put second. Sometimes I find that hard, yet you say that what I cling to I will ultimately lose.

I know from experience that whenever I do put you first, I never lose out. So today, help me not only to count the cost but also to be ready to pay it. For I know that as I do, it will never be my loss. American

