

Finding the Right Prayer

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DAY A: God is Listening Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

*“This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says:
I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal
you.” 2 Kings 20:5 (2 Kings 20:1-6)*

To pray is to test a hypothesis; God is listening and God cares. I believe we are wired for this assumption, but life's disappointments and mysteries cause us to wonder. God knows we will struggle to strike up a conversation with the One whose ears we cannot see, so we have to trust the ones who have dared to pray before us. The scriptures tell the story of generations of people who prayed and received a divine response. The church is populated by people who have prayed, and come to sense the presence of God. The invitation is to join them in this experiment. The only way to know the power of prayer and experience the presence of the One who is listening is to Pray!

Prayer is our conversation with God; we speak and make space to listen for God's voice. Like in a friendship, the space given for conversation establishes and sustains the relationship. Only by praying will we come to know the God who seeks to establish a deep and meaningful relationship with us. Prayer cultivates the intimacy necessary for an ongoing conversation with your Maker that I believe will change you, your circumstances, and the trajectory of your life.

So, just begin the conversation....

Hello God, It's me _____. But I guess you already knew that. Give me faith to believe that you are listening. Give me ears that are able to hear your voice. Overcome my doubt and fear. Gift me with hope and curiosity around where this conversation may lead. Amen.

*Conversation Starter: God, today I'm feeling
_____ as I begin seeking you through prayer.*

Day B: Seeking God

Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14 (11-15)

Praying is like hiking to a waterfall deep in the woods. Someone has told us how breathtaking the place is and how refreshing it can be to swim in the pool, but we don't just hop out of the car and arrive. We must put on our boots and hike deep into the thicket following the trail markers and at times bushwacking through the undergrowth. The journey gives time and distance to quiet the demands of the every day so that when we come to the falls, we have space in our mind and heart to savor the beauty and clarity the encounter offers.

We can't expect to find ourselves in God's presence the moment we say, "Dear God..." God knows our minds are full and our lives busy. For this reason scripture invites us to "seek God's face." This challenges us to pursue an encounter with God in prayer. Challenge yourself to seek God's presence for 5 minutes. Sit comfortably, breathe deeply, and pray slowly allowing space between each line.

God, I choose for these moments to step beyond the urgent and loud in order to discover your presence.

Quiet my mind. I seek only you.

Move aside the distractions.

Awake my spiritual senses.

Be as close as my breath. Immerse me in your Spirit.

Speak Lord, your servant is listening.

As I return to daily activity, help me to continue in the awareness of your presence. Amen.

Day C: Claiming Space to Pray Rev. YuJung Hwang

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6(5-8)

Prayer is about building a relationship with God. Just as we grow closer to a friend by spending intentional time together, we also need to choose a time and space to be with God. When you make plans to meet a friend, you set aside time and a place to connect. The more you meet, the deeper the friendship grows. In the same way, choosing a regular time and space with God gives us the opportunity to grow in intimacy with Him. Think of a couple who sets aside “date nights.” They may spend time together daily, but those intentional evenings away from the chores that surround them at home allow them to focus, talk, and listen without distractions.

In the same way, when we choose a quiet space and set aside time with God, we create room for an unhindered and meaningful encounter with Him. As you begin this prayer journey, select a time that you can give God at least 10 minutes of focused time. Set an alarm to remind you. Also set up a place to meet; a favorite chair, a swing on the deck, even a walking path where you can converse with God each day.

God, help me to set aside a special time and space to meet with You each day. Make this space Holy Ground where your presence is near. Teach me to guard this time as I would time with a dear friend. In the quiet of this space, remind me that You are near, listening, and ready to speak. May this daily practice draw me closer to You and deepen my love for You. Amen

Day D: Pray Specific Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

*“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

Matthew 7:7 (7-11)

Do you know what you are praying for? It's okay at times to pray only for God's presence or peace. Sometimes we are so confused or overwhelmed, our prayer must be simply, "God, help!" We are wise though, when we are able to discern carefully what we are praying for. Praying specific, targeted prayers gives us the opportunity to make our requests known to God. Praying specifically is an act of faith as it requires surrendering our need and being open to how God will respond.

This summer I have been praying specifically, "God, move the right principal to hire my son for his first teaching job." As the start of the school year approaches I have been adding, "EVEN TODAY, LORD!" Generic prayers are easier to pray because it is hard to know if they are answered. Specific prayers require boldness because we are appealing to God to make a move on our behalf in a way we will be able to measure. Bold prayers give God the opportunity to respond in noticeable ways which in turn give us the opportunity to witness and celebrate. I am still praying for my son, and I won't quit until God reveals the career path He intends.

Today consider one specific request or appeal that would have a significant impact on your life or the life of another. You may ask for healing, direction, forgiveness, reconciliation, a job.... Write down a bold prayer in the space below and return to it each day until it is answered.

God, with boldness I pray...

Day E: Persevere in Prayer Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

"I tell you... because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

Luke 11:8 (5-10)

One of my sons was three when he came to live with us. Many had disappointed him, so he understandingly found it hard to trust us or feel at home. For self-protection he did everything possible to distance himself. After a particularly difficult day of doors slamming and chocolate fingers sabotaging a family quilt, I melted on the dining room floor. I began that day to pray fervently for the child to experience the healing which would allow him to trust our love and come to welcome the love of God.

Sometimes God does not answer quickly. The prayer that began that afternoon continued for over a decade. As food would fly, I would pray. As he shared his pain, I would pray. As he scooted away from me on the bench, I would pray. After he lied, I prayed. After washing his mouth out with soap, an error that would set us back years, I prayed.

Looking back I realize that God was gently and faithfully answering my prayer for a long time in ways too subtle to notice. But I will forever remember the day in November when this powerful young man came running down the field, jumped into the stands, and tackled me with a robust hug. His, "I love you mom," was the sound of 1,000 angels singing and the Lord God Almighty reminding me that praying is not a quick fix, but the opportunity to lean into a future revelation of what God can accomplish in us over the long haul.

Today consider what is worth praying for even if you will be praying for decades. Be brave and lift that circumstance or person to God. Write your prayer on a post-it note and place it somewhere you will see it every day for as long as it takes for God to reveal the response.

Dear God, This one may take a while, but I humbly pray that you will.... Give me the faith and perseverance needed to continue in prayer until you answer or your will is revealed. Amen.

DAY F: “Amen” Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

“He said, “Amen! May the LORD do so! May the LORD fulfill the words you have prophesied by bringing the articles of the LORD’s house and all the exiles back to this place from Babylon”. Jeremiah 28:6

Often we end a prayer by saying, “Amen.” When I was a kid we equated the word “Amen” with “Let’s eat.” This word which closed our grace prayers alerted our senses that prayer time was finally over so we could pick up our fork! It is wise to claim a deeper meaning in this familiar closing.

The word Amen originates from Biblical Hebrew where the meaning is best translated, “so be it” or “let it be so.” The expression is used often in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) as a way to affirm the truth of, or agree with, what has been said. In the verse from Jeremiah above the prophet is claiming God’s promise to bring God’s people out of captivity and affirming his belief that God can accomplish this deliverance. Jeremiah says “Amen,” as if to say, “yes Lord, I believe you can and will do it!”

To say “Amen” is also to surrender and release the prayer into God’s care trusting that God will hold and act upon the prayer according to God’s purposes and promises.

“Amen” can be more than a closing word. When you say Amen, claim the power of the expression:

**Amen: So be it God,
answer my prayer according to your will.**

Amen: Let it be so God,

I affirm your goodness and ability to answer.

Amen: Let it be, God I place this prayer in your hands.

**Amen: God help me to trust you enough to let this
prayer be in your keeping knowing that you are
working according to your promises and your
purposes for me and all your people.**

DAY G: Praying Circles

Sabbath Prayer Activity

In one of my favorite prayer guides, “The Circle Maker,” Mark Batterson introduces readers to Honi, a legendary pray-er of the Jewish faith. Honi is remembered for his audacious prayers for his community during a time of prolonged and dehydrating drought. When all hope was nearly lost, Honi boldly drew a circle in the dust and resolved to pray within the circle until God sent rain to deliver the people. Honi prayed steadily until the heavens opened, the cisterns filled, and the faith of God’s people was replenished.

The image of drawing that circle and sitting within it until God’s response is realized has transformed my prayer life. Honi teaches us that prayer matters and prayer deserves our focused attention.

I invite you to try my adaptation of Honi’s bold prayer. This is an opportunity to put together the strands of insight regarding prayer which we have gained.

- 1. Consider the people or circumstances which you feel called to pray for specifically.**
- 2. Draw a circle in your journal or on a prayer card for each of these areas of focus. Write down your specific prayer within the circle. Imagine the circles as set aside space in your life to focus on these matters in prayer.**
- 3. Resolve to pray every day for these matters until God provides a response. Journal the insight you gain from your prayers around the circles so you can notice how God is changing you or the outcomes.**
- 4. Keep on circling these prayers until you are released from the circle by God’s response.**

Day 1: A Prayer to Hear God's Voice

Rev. YuJung Hwang

"The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'" 1 Samuel 3:10 (1-21)

Prayer is a conversation with God and meaningful conversation includes both speaking and listening. When we pray, many of us are quick to tell God our concerns and requests, yet we often forget to pause and give God space to speak to us.

In 1 Samuel 3, God called Samuel. At first, he thought Eli, his teacher, was calling him. After the third time, Eli realized it was the Lord who was speaking and taught Samuel to respond by saying, "Speak, for your servant is listening." From then on, Samuel learned not only to speak to God, but also to invite God to speak.

You may wonder: How does God speak to me? God's voice can come in many ways—through Scripture, a hymn, a sermon, a song, a conversation with a friend, a moment in devotion, an experience in nature, or a circumstance in your life. Sometimes God communicates through a quiet nudging of your heart, a whisper in your ear, or a word given to your mind. Each time you pray, invite God to speak and allow a moment of silence. Pay attention to how God might be speaking during ordinary moments of your day. When you sense God's voice, may you respond as Samuel did: "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Loving God, teach me to slow down in prayer. After I pour out my heart, help me take time to be still and listen. Open my ears to hear Your voice in Scripture, music, conversations, and even in silence. Let my prayer life be a two-way conversation where I not only speak but also receive Your guidance. Today, I pray simply: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Amen.

Day 2: A Prayer to Enjoy God's Presence Dan Eschliman

Two friends once met for coffee at the end of the summer to catch up. The first friend had been on an amazing vacation, and was excited to share about all he had done, where he had been, and what he had learned about himself along the way. After a while, the second friend interrupted, "I'm sorry... when do we get to the part of this story that is helpful to me?"

What a lousy friend! Obviously, the point of spending time with a friend is not solely to get what you need. Healthy friendship is not this transactional; it is built on a loving foundation of time spent together. The same is true in our relationship with God. Prayer is not just about what we want or need, what we are struggling with, or what worries us. Rather, prayer is an opportunity to spend time in God's presence, to deepen our friendship, both in the speaking and the listening.

Psalms 139 is an example of one man's prayer conversation with the Lord. Slowly pray the words leaving a generous pause between each line. Allow the prayer to reveal God's closeness.

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

**You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.**

**You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.**

**Before a word is on my tongue, you
Lord, know it completely.**

**You hem me in behind and before,
you lay your hand upon me.**

**Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?**

**If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light
become night around me,” even the darkness will not be
dark to you; the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because I am
fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
When I awake, I am still with you. Psalm 139 (select verses)**

Day 3: A Prayer for Salvation Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

The scriptures reveal a consistent truth: God desires a relationship with us. So why do we question if we are living in a relationship with God? As a pastor, I hear two consistent causes for doubt: First, we question if God really does want a relationship with humans, specifically if God wants a relationship with “me”- I am pretty messed up.

Second, we question if we have done whatever is necessary to know for certain that we ARE IN a relationship with God. The apostle Paul, one of the first pastors, offers us these words of assurance and clarity: *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it*

is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:4 (2-10). We are saved from a life of separation from God into a relationship with God because of God’s grace. Grace is God’s gift of unconditional love and forgiveness which holds open the door for us. All we must do is receive the gift by trusting the one who holds the door open.

Many of us are convinced of this grace slowly, over time, and enter into a relationship with God so gradually we don’t know we are “in” until we realize the intimacy with God we have gained. Others experience a profound moment of recognizing and receiving God’s saving grace. In either case, we benefit from saying a formal prayer in which we claim God’s saving grace and seek to begin or deepen a relationship with God through Jesus.

As it says in Romans 10:9: *“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* Intentionally praying a prayer for salvation is powerful. With this prayer we invite God’s grace that empowers us to believe in Jesus. Through this prayer we confess that we have sinned and we seek God’s forgiveness. In this prayer we claim the power of Jesus’ resurrection over sin and death and invite that same power to resurrect us from sin so that we can live in relationship with God now and for eternity.

Ask God for grace and faith to pray this prayer with earnest desire to know God’s salvation.

Lord Jesus, you show us the way to live in relationship with God. I have sinned and rebelled against this way. Forgive me all my sins and my ignorance. Free me from all guilt and shame. Release me from every doubt which causes me to distance myself from you. Save me by your grace. Open to me the door of salvation and give me faith to enter into a relationship with you. Give me assurance of my place in your family and confidence that I will live all my life, and eternity with you. Thank you Lord Jesus for the gift of Salvation. Amen.

Day 4: Prayer When God Seems Distant Ben White

“But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised of the people.” Psalm 22:1-21

By the grace of God, I have had a relationship with Jesus Christ since I was 8. However, the relationship has been fraught with separations. Sometimes, I have caused the distance through an inner rebelliousness that I could neither destroy nor control. When my sin causes guilt, I can identify with the verse above; I feel as low as a worm. Other times I feel God is distant because I find myself in bad situations and I don't sense God rushing in to save me. In either case, it is powerful to know that Jesus prayed, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” from the cross. Jesus expresses how far away God feels when we suffer the assault of sin.

But these verses convey more than a lament. Written centuries before the cross, they describe in uncanny detail what Jesus endured: pierced hands and feet, divided garments, mockery, and public shame. Remarkable details that perfectly fulfilled how God-forsaken Jesus appeared. To me, this is God's reminder that He sees what we cannot. Even in silence, God is present, even when God appears restrained, his plan is unfolding.

What, then, are we to do when God seems distant? The answer is simple, though not easy: keep crying out to HIM. God is present and God is merciful. As we return to Him, He receives us. Every time. If the Word of God says He will never leave us nor forsake us, then distance is not the final reality. Even when we feel abandoned, we are not alone. Like David, the psalmist, and like Jesus, we can pray honestly in our anguish— we can trust that God is nearer than we feel and God is planning a resurrection.

Lord, when I feel far from You, remind me that You have not left me. Give me courage to keep coming back, no matter how many times I fall or how distant you feel. Help me to rest in Your promises and to trust that even in silence, You are at work. Amen.

Day 5 : Listening For God's Voice Vic Cison

"My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:6-13

God has a WORD for us; will we receive it? We may receive a word from the Lord as we read scripture, pray, or just along our way. God promises that his "word" is not empty, God's word is given to influence and enhance our faith.

I love the way God communicates through the poetry of scripture. Isaiah reveals God's quest to share God's word and the reward, abundant life, which we receive when we allow God's word to transform us. The poet offers the metaphor; the Word of God is like the snow and rain which refreshes the earth. As we welcome the word we are revived; the seeds of faith concealed in our bodies of dust begin to spout and grow. God's word can become the substance of our faith, the bread that nourishes and sustains our salvation and abundant life. We are wise to listen, receive, and be transformed by the Word. For the Word gives understanding of salvation, fullness of peace, and love.

The poet invites us to remember the ultimate work of the Word is for us and all of creation: "the mountains and hills will burst into song...the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow".

**Lord, help me to seek you with all my heart. Help me to go after you and investigate everything you have promised. Transform me by your word that I may discover all you have planned for my life. By the Spirit of God, according to the Word of God, through the person of God, make me a child of God.
In Jesus' Name, Amen.**

Day 6: A Prayer for Blessings Bette Miller

“The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them, The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.” Numbers 6:22-26

These are some of the most familiar verses in scripture, and for me, they have brought a level of peace and comfort through my life's many trials. I have had the challenge of moving to new locations and starting new jobs or projects, but the most difficult has been enduring pain, illness, and the loss of family and friends. God has always been there with His blessings which sustain me through the trials, and grace my life with great joys. I have been blessed with a wonderful family and friends, and opportunities I never expected.

God had already given Moses an almost unbelievable challenge to lead the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt and into the Promised Land. That alone was quite a feat, but when Moses was given this direction, they had been traveling for several years. They had vacillated between being faithful and unfaithful and their trust in Moses and the Lord had frequently wavered. AND YET, God was still ready to bless them as they began the long journey through the Wilderness.

Can there be any more special encouragement than to have the Lord bless us, be gracious to us, and give us peace, even in our weakest moments? We not only ask for God's blessing, we ask blessings from others and we offer our blessings to others in return. We hear portions of this scripture from our pastors and claim them for ourselves. We may ask for protection, strength to endure hardships, or simply to seek God's favor and peace.

Dear Lord, we are grateful for your gracious care as we continue to ask for your blessing. Lord bless me and keep me, look upon me with love, and give me peace. I/We especially ask your blessing for _____. Amen

Day 7: Breath Prayers Mary Chmielewski

Prayer Activity

Breath Prayers are short but powerful prayers. Breath prayers are a good way to help you focus before doing a task. Breath prayers are great for a stressful or unexpected situation to help you stay calm and reconnect to God. A breath prayer is saying one line as an inhale and the second line as an exhale. Practice these breath prayers and use them readily:

Take a deep breath in through your nose
Breathe out through your mouth.

Breath in and say, “I can’t”
Breath out and say, “but Jesus you can”
Breath in and say, “Open my ears”
Breath out and say, “to hear you Jesus”
Breath in and say, “Lord have mercy”
Breath out and say, “Christ have mercy”
Breath in and say, “What is impossible for man”
Breath out and say, “Is possible for God”
Breath in and say, “Be still and know”
Breath out and say, “that I am God”
Breath in and say, “Nothing can separate me”
Breath out and say, “from the Love of God”

You can make a breath prayer using a promise from God, a Bible verse or a Biblical truth. You can even make up a breath prayer from your heart for the situation in which you find yourself.

Day 8: The Lord's Prayer Mark Devault

Matthew 6:9-13

*“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be
done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily
bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven
our debtors. And do not bring us
to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.”*

Have you heard the proverb “Familiarity breeds contempt?” It suggests that the more accustomed we become with something, the more likely we are to lose respect or appreciation for it. The prayer Jesus teaches us, recorded in Matthew 6, is repeated so often I wonder when we speak it if we really hear what is being asked.

During this prayer season we are discussing how to pray, what to pray, and when to pray. We may hear orators pray using eloquent phrases and well thought content, and we may wonder how we can pray that well. But Jesus reminds us what is actually needed; he suggests we apply the KISS principle (keep it simple, stupid). Prayers don't have to be long or eloquent, they don't have to be complete sentences; but they do have to come from the heart.

The prayer Jesus teaches us is simple and complete. It covers admiration for God, acceptance of his kingship, a request for what we need and forgiveness, as well as the willingness to forgive. Jesus prays that we be led away from sin and protected from evil. What more needs to be said? So as we pray this prayer, claim the power is simplicity. Think about each phrase, and make it come from your heart.

**Prayer: Lord, you ask us to pray, and you ask us to ask
you for help. You even give us the way to ask. As we
say the Lord's Prayer, help us slow down and think of
each phrase. Let it sink in that you are here for us.
We ask in Jesus' name. Amen**

DAY 9: A Prayer of Confession Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

The weight of guilt can be crushing. Our shame over what we have done can make us feel unworthy to be loved by God or others. King David messed up big; he peeked in the women's showers, misused his power to begin a sexual relationship, and then had a man killed to cover it all up. Whether your sins would rival David's or seem less egregious, they make it hard to love yourself, be loved by others, and feel worthy of the love of God. The Lord does not want us to live in this state. Rather we are invited to seek the Lord's forgiveness. God promises that when we earnestly confess what we have done wrong and ask for God's grace, we will be forgiven. Use this prayer written by King David (Psalm 51:1-9) often to seek the cleansing from sin and guilt that God is eager to give.

***Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities. Psalm 51:1-9***

Prayer Starter: God, I confess that I have failed to love you and follow your ways. I have harmed others or myself. Forgive me for these and all my sins:

Words of Assurance: Speak these out loud to yourself: **By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!**

Day 10: A Prayer for Worship Bethany Casias

“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come into His presence with singing...for the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures forever and His faithfulness to all generations.”

Psalm 100: 1-2, 5

For as long as I can remember, I've communicated with God through music. I was a painfully shy, anxious child who rarely fit in. I didn't have many friends, and I experienced a lot of loneliness. My first piano teacher was also our church organist, so I honed my early music skills by playing through the Baptist hymnal. My favorite hymn was “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” I remember sitting at the piano for hours as I sang these words:

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

I quickly learned that when I sang to God, my nerves would calm, my heart wouldn't race, and I had the reassurance of at least one friend: Jesus. I wish I could say that I became more confident as I grew older. The truth is, I continued to struggle with anxiety, self-doubt, and fear. During my senior year of college, when I was top-of-the-class in my music program, I nearly dropped out during a period of extreme despair. I will never forget the phone call I received from my Minister of Music during the worst of my hopelessness: “Sing to God, Bethany. He doesn't just want our joyful songs. He wants the rotten, painful, ugly songs, too.” I wept as I sat at my childhood piano and played through the Baptist Hymnal until the sun went down. I was quickly reminded that in my impossible quest for perfectionism, I'd forgotten to sing to the friend whose love and faithfulness had always sustained me: Jesus.

Psalm 100 challenges us to sing our songs to God. He wants to hear them, no matter how brutal or beautiful. He

has the power to transform even the most sorrowful melody into a soaring anthem of praise and thanksgiving. Why? Because He loves us, and His love endures forever! With reassurance like that, how can I keep from singing?

Prayer Song: By Robert Lowry
I lift my eyes; the cloud grows thin;
I see the blue above it;
And day by day this pathway smooths,
Since first I learned to love it,
The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
A fountain ever springing;
All things are mine since I am His—
How can I keep from singing?

DAY 11: A Prayer for Renewal Rev. Dr. Jennifer Smith

We long for peace of mind and heart. We hope to experience joy and fullness. Still, if we are honest, we often feel disrupted. The everyday demands of life can cause us to feel out of balance. Conflicts in the world, nation, or family can weary us and disrupt our peace. King David offers a prayer which invites God to give us a spirit which is freed from all that disrupts and defeats us. This new spirit is right with God, full of joy, and willing to give and receive. This may be a good prayer to memorize for the next and every disrupted moment:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit. Amen.

Day 12 : A Prayer Before Speaking

Rev. Dr. Jennifer Smith

Our relationships and our lives are shaped by the words we speak. We are wise to pause often before speaking and invite the Lord to guide our words. Paul, one of the great pastors of the early church, understood the significance of our words. He instructs us, *“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”* Remember grace is God’s gift which moves in our lives in the form of unconditional love, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. Imagine the healing and uplifting power of a conversation that is truly, “full of grace.” I am confident this is only possible for us humans through a lot of prayer and practice.

We have all suffered the guilt and the slow journey of rebuilding trust that follows a harsh word darting out of our mouths. And likewise, the sting of words, void of grace, striking us from the lips of another.

We need wisdom to speak with clarity and to process or “meditate” upon what is spoken around us so that we can understand and bless our conversation partners.

Psalm 19:14 may be a good prayer to memorize for those moments when you need God to guide your speaking and your listening.

***“Let the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.” Amen***

Day 13: A Prayer of Consecration Rev. YuJung Hwang

“Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”

Joshua 3:5

To consecrate means to be set apart for God’s purpose. In Joshua’s day, the people of Israel were called to prepare themselves—spiritually and physically—because God was about to lead them into the promised land. Consecration was a way of saying, “I belong to God, and my life is dedicated to God.”

As Christians, we too are called to be set apart. But unlike the Israelites, our consecration does not come through ritual purification or the making of a sacrifice. It comes through Jesus Christ. Because of His death on the cross and the shedding of His blood, our sins are forgiven. By His sacrifice, we are cleansed and made holy. Through Christ, we have direct access to God in prayer.

A prayer of consecration is when we offer our lives fully to God. It is more than asking for blessings—it is surrendering our will to His will, our plans to His plans, our lives to His service. When we pray this way, we acknowledge that we belong to God and trust God to do “amazing things” among us, just as God promised to Israel. Think of consecration like giving God the keys to your house. Instead of keeping certain rooms locked or hidden, you allow God into every space of your life. When we hold nothing back, God can shape us, cleanse us, and use us for God’s purposes.

Holy God, thank You for the death and resurrection of Jesus through which you make a way for us to be cleansed and renewed for a life in your service. In response, I surrender my life to You—my plans, my desires, and my will. Fill me with Your Spirit and use me as You will. Do amazing things in and through me, for Your glory. Amen.

Day 14: Journaling our Prayers Mary Chmielewski Prayer Activity

Materials needed and starting points:

- Buy an inexpensive composition book and get a favorite pen -or- use the Journal app on your phone
- Start your Journal entry with a date
- Commit to journaling each day for two weeks

Journaling - Ideas

- Write a letter to God
- Share your day with God - start with your morning and go through your day
- Ask for God's guidance on an issue/concern
- Confess a sin(s) and ask for help and forgiveness
- Write to God on behalf of a family member or friend
- Write about your feelings
- Write a poem to God
- Ask God a question
- Examine a Bible verse or hymn/worship song
- Praise God and thank Him for a blessing(s)

Day 15: Praying While Waiting on God Linda Huffman

Psalm 46:1-11

In 2024, I was chair of the Leadership Development Team (LDT). This team is responsible for supporting the pastor and staff, interviewing and recommending new staff members, and welcoming new pastors and associate pastors when they are appointed by the Bishop of our United Methodist Conference. During this particular year our associate pastor, Pastor Ian, was being appointed to pastor his own church. I eagerly awaited word from Pastor Jenny about who would be appointed to our church in his place. Imagine my surprise and anxiety when Pastor Jenny shared with LDT there was no appointee coming to us by the usual way.

My immediate thoughts were: How would the church function without an associate pastor? How would all the good work continue? In this moment I realized these fears and uncertainties would be answered in God's time through prayer. He is there for those times of uncertainty and fear. *"Be still and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:1-10a). I took time to be still and feel God's presence. I gained confidence that in God's time we would be blessed with an associate pastor. *"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth give way"* (Psalm 46:1-2). When Pastor YuJung arrived, I knew my prayers were answered.

Lord, Thank you for the stillness to pause and feel your strength and presence in times of uncertainty and fear. I know you will give me the patience for the answers to my prayers. In God I trust. Amen.

Day 16: Praying for Wisdom Terry Nelson

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight”.

Proverbs 3:5-6, 13-26

Many of the Proverbs were compiled by David’s son, King Solomon. The book’s purpose was to provide moral advice and common sense. If we trust in the Lord with all our heart, we will have the wisdom that can help us turn from evil and find the path the Lord has uniquely laid out for us. We must be careful not to misconstrue this guidance into “prosperity gospel,” assuming there is no illness or hardship if we are walking in the Lord’s way. Rather we are promised that as we learn to walk in God’s ways, we will know the peace, purpose, and prosperity which He intends. Trusting God means to know and revere God, be in an ongoing fellowship with him, and submit to God with our whole life. Only God can see the path ahead for each of us. He knows what will be best for us and can remove obstacles along the way, halt our path in one direction, or build stepping stones. God may speak to us in a whisper, or via wise people, or circumstances as he clears the way for us ahead. When we are on the right path, we will feel peace and have circumstances change that we cannot always explain. Likewise, the Lord’s discipline may be necessary when we stubbornly want to do things “our way.” I can attest to how God has worked in my personal and professional life. During times when I impatiently moved ahead of God’s direction, I needed to make a course correction when things weren’t working out or I didn’t have true peace. These are moments to pray for God’s wisdom.

Dear Lord, I know that you are the source of wisdom and peace for all who acknowledge you. Thank you for being my savior and steering me to the best path to honor you! Teach me to listen for your guidance and walk carefully in your ways. Amen.

Day 17: When God Says No Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith
Deuteronomy 29:29

One of the reasons many of us don't pray is we are afraid of what will happen if God doesn't choose to answer how we hoped. Divine silence can feel like rejection or abandonment. As we pray bold prayers there will be occasions when God doesn't grant miraculous healing, change our circumstance in visible ways, or even place an answer on our heart quickly. In these moments we wrestle with the divine conversation partner who sometimes says, "no", "not yet", or *nothing at all*.

A few years after the birth of our first biological son my husband and I began praying for another child. Given our struggles to conceive, we turned to fertility treatments. After years of attempts we were blessed with a pregnancy. From the start, the baby was in peril. We prayed fervently and accepted every medical intervention. After a few weeks, a miscarriage was confirmed. Our rational minds could accept that this fragile collection of cells didn't have the right conditions to grow, but my spirit was wrecked. Can't the God who calms seas and resurrects the dead give these cells endurance? In faith I know the answer is "yes." God could have reversed the laws of biology and supernaturally fixed the pregnancy, but God let nature run its course, and that broke my heart.

In the moments when God appears silent or even whispers "no," our faith is challenged. The hard yet critical thing is to not turn away from God, but rather to press in harder. To wrestle with God until God offers comfort or clarity. In our heartache we can moan and ask the Spirit of God to restore us enough to perceive how God will redeem us.

**God, when there is no answer, or the outcome seems cruel, give me enough hope in your existence and your goodness that I can continue to seek you and your will.
Amen.**

Day 18: Prayers for Vision Tim McKenzie

“When I heard of the solid trust you have in the Master Jesus and your outpouring of love to all the followers of Jesus, I couldn’t stop thanking God for you—every time I prayed, I’d think of you and give thanks. But I do more than thank. I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do...”

Ephesians 1:17-18

As I’ve matured in my faith, I have come to see beauty in Biblical interpretations aiming to help a reader better grasp the essence of a passage more so than focusing on letter-for-letter translations. *The Message (MSG)* is a version of the Bible that adheres to this aim.

The above passage from Ephesians as presented in MSG clearly tells us in the modern world how to pray to God in a way that has, and continues to get, results: by giving gratitude always, by being bold in asking, and by justifying such audacious requests by having a personal relationship with Christ. Because if one is a follower of Christ, the most significant petitions one offers up ultimately will be about others, anyway. We Christians are called to be a social lot. We’re also called to rely on God to help us contribute our mark within the bigger picture, the biggest picture there is: existence. He sees us through. We need only strive to see a bit better, ourselves.

God, help us to use our words when we praise, our hearts when we ask, our minds when we decide, and our faith to envision how we can best maintain a real relationship with you, Jesus. Amen

Day 19: Knowing and Doing God's will MJ Shannon
Acts 10:1-25 (read the whole story)

"Why doesn't God just send me a text or email so I can be sure of what He wants me to do?" I think many of us have felt that way as we try to understand our role in God's Kingdom. Even when we grasp His plan, we may not know how to carry it out.

In Acts, we read about the visions of two people whose lives intersected in a divine appointment. Cornelius, a Roman centurion and Gentile, was devout in prayer and giving, but did not know Christ. An angel told him to send for Peter, and he obeyed. At the same time, God was working in Peter's heart. Peter had a vision of a sheet descending from heaven with all kinds of animals. A voice said, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." This command broke Jewish food laws, and Peter resisted—until the voice said, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." Peter realized this was not about food, but about God's salvation being for everyone.

A few lessons stand out: God's message isn't always crystal clear, but when He calls us, we should act—even without all the answers. We may need to hear His direction more than once, or experience it in different ways. What are the chances a Roman centurion would cross paths with an apostle? This was no coincidence—it was God's will.

Sometimes, we need to be still and present with Him. When we seek God, He will reveal his truth and fulfill His purpose through us, even if we don't fully understand. I hope I can recall these points when I ask, "What is God's will and what do I do next?" and I don't get that text message.

**Prayer: Lord, help me to seek you with a humble heart.
Teach me to listen, trust, and obey even when your
plans are far beyond my understanding. Amen.**

Day 20: Prayers of Surrender

Shannon Rhinehart, Hope Rising Resource Center

There's a reason the Serenity Prayer has been spoken by millions of people across the world, in recovery rooms, hospital waiting areas, and whispered in quiet moments of fear: it gets to the heart of surrender.

So often I've tried to control things outside of my power - outcomes, relationships, the choices of others. And just as often, I've ended up exhausted and discouraged. The Serenity Prayer reminds me that peace comes not from having everything my way, but from entrusting my life to God. When I lean into surrender, I notice a shift. The situations don't necessarily change, but I do. My heart quiets, my mind clears, and I can respond with wisdom instead of reaction. The miracle is that surrender is not giving up - it's opening up to God's greater work.

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity

To accept the things I cannot change;

Courage to change the things I can;

And wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;

Enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;

**Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,
not as I would have it;**

Trusting that He will make all things right

If I surrender to His Will;

So that I may be reasonably happy in this life

And supremely happy with Him

Forever and ever in the next. Amen.

(prayer attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, 1892-1971)

Day 21: Centering Prayer Activity Rev. YuJung Hwang

“Be Still and Know that God is God” Psalm 46:10

Centering Prayer is a simple, contemplative practice that helps us rest in God’s presence. Instead of filling our prayer with many words, we quiet our minds and hearts so that we can simply be with God. It is a way of creating space to experience God’s love and peace beyond our thoughts and concerns.

This kind of prayer allows us to slow down, let go of distractions, and rest in the truth that God is God—and we are God’s beloved children.

Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed.

Sit comfortably, close your eyes for a moment,
and take a deep breath.

Then, read these words slowly in a soft voice (or silently in your heart), allowing each phrase to sink in:

Be still and know that God is God.

Be still and know that God is.

Be still and know that God.

Be still and know that.

Be still and know.

Be still and.

Be still.

Be.

Now close your eyes and rest in silence for one minute. If distracting thoughts come, gently return to the word, “God.”

Day 22: Interceding for Others Joanna Compton

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people. 1 Timothy 2:1-2

In this scripture, Paul has left Timothy behind in Ephesus as he journeys on. Paul later writes urging him to instruct the Church in Ephesus on what and how to pray. Paul encourages Timothy to pray for everyone; the country, leaders, the opportunity to live in peace and be thankful. Paul provides 4 recommended components:

Petitions - ask God for what you may need.

Prayers - used here in devotion or praise to God.

Intercessions - to approach God on someone else's behalf.

Thanksgiving - to offer gratitude and thankfulness to God.

I have found that praying in a meaningful way needs to be intentional. Setting aside a time and place as part of my daily routine has helped me start my day "centered." For me, this is first thing in the morning when things are quiet. There are times when words are hard to come by, and turning to a prayer pattern or model like Paul gives to Timothy can help to jump start our praying.

I invite you to try my favorite pattern of prayer:

The 5 Finger Prayer

Thumb - for those that are closest to you and your family - *Pray for harmony*

Index Finger - for those who guide you- friends, teachers, pastors etc. - *Pray for wisdom*

Tall Finger - for those entrusted to lead lead us and shape our nation and world- *Pray for guidance*

Ring Finger - for those who are sick, weak or in trouble - *Pray for comfort and healing*

Pinky - for ourselves. - *Pray for discernment, forgiveness, grace, mercy, understanding etc.*

Day 23: A Prayer for Our Global Community

Tim McKenzie, John 17:20-23

The Romantic era poet William Blake, an iconic figure during and after his life, was known for some dubious beliefs; maybe more fairly, the questioning of commonly-held beliefs. He is the philosopher who inquired how the same God can create both the Lamb and the Tyger [*sic*], the gentle redemption versus the savage ferocity of nature coming from the same Source. This isn't to say he doubted God: he was deeply faithful in his devotion to the divine within a Christian perspective. He challenged many conventions of his time, however, and sought to understand God in more profound ways, sometimes outside of the establishment.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus, an outsider Himself, instructs His disciples to include in their prayers anyone who seeks out His message, “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” (John 17:21, *NIV*). Pointing to the metaphysical reality that the true nature of things is a ubiquitous connection, Jesus reveals everything is linked throughout time and space, stemming from Almighty God in His mysterious form of the Trinity.

In his esoteric, ‘out-there’ way, Blake echoes Christ: “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern” (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*). In other words, our sight is limited; God’s is infinite. In God’s view, all humanity is beautiful.

Almighty God, help me to cleanse my limited sight so that I may better see how to care for Your Creation and affirm dignity to *all* humankind. Amen.

Day 24: A Prayer for Growth Pam Miller

Luke 8:1-8

For me, this passage in Luke has two distinct messages. The first part (Luke 8:1-3) acknowledges women by name who are instrumental in supporting Jesus' ministry. I imagine these women are "prayer warriors" who I want to emulate as I find my way of contributing to and supporting the work of our church.

In the second part of this passage (Luke 8: 4-8) Jesus tells the story of a gardener who scattered seeds on four different soil types. The soil in this parable represents people and each type of soil represents a person's readiness to hear and understand God's Word and have it take root and grow within their life.

One of the ways we grow is through spending time in prayer - daily authentic conversations with God. During these times of connection, you don't need to hold back, you can share whatever you feel, and say what you want. You will not be judged.

Through authentic, honest conversations with God, we become soil which is not hard and guarded, but rather open and ready to hear what God has to say.

God, I am tempted to be closed off for self-protection even in my conversations with you. Help me to be open, vulnerable, and available so that you can see and heal what is broken about me and cultivate all that is good and lifegiving. Amen.

Prayer by Rev. Jenny Smith

Day 25: A Prayer for the Nation Peter Jacobas

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations. Psalms 22:27-28

Today, we seek God's mercy and direction for our Nation. As followers of Christ, we are called to intercede for our leaders, our fellow neighbors, and our nation's future. As the Psalm above reminds us, we lift our voices to the Lord, as all authority and dominion belongs to Him alone. The news reminds us that many in our nation need our prayers, but sometimes that can be overwhelming. Rains and floods have torn communities apart, while violence has torn apart neighborhoods and even cities. Our nation is deeply divided on many issues, so anyone may wonder how our words of prayer could even begin to heal our nation.

With these thoughts, when praying for our nation, I begin by reminding myself that our God is a God of mercy and healing. I remind myself that He rules over the nations and favors justice and compassion. With those reminders, I pray for all those who lead our nation, I pray for the communities that have been affected by tragedy and violence, and I pray that God's grace and mercy would flow to heal our nation.

Prayer for the Nation

O Lord, let your Spirit move across our nation—heal divisions, restore unity, and breathe new life into every corner of society. May your grace fall on communities that are rebuilding from events that have torn them apart. May your wisdom guide those in authority, that they may govern with integrity and humility, always seeking the common good and honoring your will. We ask that you would turn the hearts and minds of all who live in our nation toward you and your saving grace. Amen.

Day 26: A Prayer for Our Community Dan Eschliman

1 Timothy 2:1–2

Today, we pray for our community. One of the great lies of our modern, individualistic flavor of Christianity is that prayer is a personal activity, relating only to ourselves and God. Today, take time to remember the people you depend on, and the people who depend on you, all ultimately depend on God in a deeply interconnected web of relationships. After each line of this prayer, speak the names of some of your neighbors, making this a unique prayer for you.

Lord, we are grateful for the community in which we live.

Bless all of our neighbors, and guide us to better love you and each other in our daily living. For teachers and all those who care for our children, we pray...

For doctors, nurses, and others who care for our health, we pray...

For those who grow, harvest, transport, prepare, and serve us our food, we pray...

For first responders, and all who work to keep us safe, we pray...

For those who sweat in difficult jobs so that our community has what it needs, we pray...

For those who spend long hours thinking and planning on our behalf, we pray...

For those whose work is in the home, whether their own or another's, we pray...

For those who provide us nothing, reminding us that our value is not found in what we do, we pray...

For those who are in need, guide us to the ways you would have us help them, we pray...

Lord, bless all the people who share our community. Help us to celebrate our differences, share generously from our strengths, and rely on each other in our weaknesses. We pray all of this in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in whom perfect unity and community are found. Amen.

Day 27: Interceding for Those I love Cindy Shruell

Over the past two years, I have been walking alongside my parents as they transition into assisted living. It has been a journey filled with love, responsibility, and difficult choices. One of the hardest parts has been knowing when to step in, and when to step back, trusting them to make their own decisions even when I want to help or protect them. There are moments when I feel helpless, wondering if I am doing enough or doing too much. In those times, I am reminded, when I am unsure, God is sure. When I am silent, God still speaks. And when I cannot carry everything, God steps in and carries what I cannot.

As I reflect on the story of Jesus healing the paralytic (Mark 2:1-12), I picture the crowd, eager to witness a miracle. The scene is full of energy and noise. But the paralytic man was silent. He was simply there, carried by others, and Jesus saw him. In the same way, when I cannot find the words or the strength to carry those I love—or even myself—God sees me. Jesus intercedes on my behalf; he listens, understands, and responds—not just to our words, but to our hearts.

So, dear Lord, hear my prayer, the one spoken softly, and the one I cannot speak at all. Hear what lives in my heart. Intercede where I cannot. Heal what I cannot fix. Carry what I can no longer hold. I pray for healing, in my life, and in the lives of those I love. I pray for wisdom in the moments I feel uncertain, and for stillness in the chaos. Let me rest in Your presence and trust in Your power. Let my quiet faith be enough because I know You see me. And when it is not enough, when I fall short, I trust that You, Lord, will fill the space with grace. Amen.

Day 28: Praying from the Inside Out
Intercessory Prayer by Rev. Jenny Smith

“Then the king said to the man of God, ‘Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored.’ So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored.” 1 Kings 13:6

God invites us to pray for ourselves; we do not need an intermediary. There is also something particularly powerful about having someone else intercede for you. An “intercessor” is one who pleads our case, like a mentor making a case for their mentee to get a job, or a high school coach making a case for their player to be invited on a college team. The intercessor uses their voice and influence on behalf of the other. Biblically, an “intercessor” is one who prays on behalf of the other. An intercessor lifts a person or cause up to God. God often responds in powerful ways because of the faith, willingness, or persistence of the intercessor. You can be an intercessor, just plead the case of the person or cause in your heart with faith that God can intervene.

Today, practice interceding from the inside out.
Use the circle diagram on the inside of the back cover of this prayer guide to organize your prayers.
Record prayers in each circle, adding new prayers as they arise.

Begin with those people and causes closest to your heart - family and friends - their health, careers, etc.

Then move to your church family, your community, your nation, the world, creation.

Praying from the inside out reminds us that our personal prayers are significant even as they are a part of a huge global village where people in every place are interceding from their own perspective.

Day 29: Praying Through Pain, 1 Peter 5:10

Jen Shatto

“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” 1 Peter 5:10

My daughter Elle was born by c-section four weeks early. Postpartum depression was real and as painful as the surgical site. My foundation in God held strong though, even as my mind and body felt like it was holding on by a thread. I struggled through Elle's first year. We became new members at a church near our home. God was planting seeds of support. I noticed during Elle's first year that something was not right with her hip, but the pediatrician dismissed me. Dealing with pain and mentally struggling, I did not pursue my concern. Elle began to walk with a limp and then she was diagnosed with hip dysplasia, needing surgery. I was scared as Elle was taken for her procedure. Our Pastor came to the hospital and I crumbled into an embrace. God showed up. The Pastor prayed with us. I had a sense of peace in this storm. The church prayed for healing and brought us meals. Elle's surgery was successful.

Mental and physical pain can blanket someone in hopelessness. I am thankful that God weaves himself through our lives with His Holy comfort. He reveals himself so we can lean on Him. I am rooted in prayer and relationship with God. He reminds me that I am never alone. In God's care, I can weather each new challenge.

God, I don't understand why I have to go through this pain, but I trust that You have a plan. As I suffer, remind me that You are shaping me for something greater. Grant me peace and healing as part of Your divine plan. Amen.

Day 30: A Prayer for When You Are Afraid Rev. YuJung

"I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares the Lord; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope." Jeremiah 29:11

In life, we all face moments of fear, times of waiting for medical test results, walking through changing circumstances, or facing the unknown. Fear often fills our minds with endless "what ifs," playing out scenarios that may never happen. These anxious thoughts can capture our hearts and cloud our spirits, making it hard to see what is true and what is a lie. When fear overwhelms you and it feels impossible to think clearly, pause for a moment. Stop the racing thoughts and turn to this promise from God in Jeremiah 29:11, personalize it as a prayer:

"God knows the plans God has in mind for me; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give me a future filled with hope."

God's plans for you are not for disaster, but for peace. Not for despair, but for a future filled with hope.

Find a quiet place and come before the Lord.

Slowly breathe in and out three times,
and then pray with your breath:

- When you breathe in, say in your heart: **"Peace"** — receive peace.
- When you breathe out, say in your heart: **"Fear"** — release fear.
- When you breathe in, say: **"Hope"** — receive hope.
- When you breathe out, say: **"Hopelessness"** — release hopelessness.

Repeat this breath prayer until you feel God's peace calming your mind and renewing your heart.

Day 31: Prayer for Physical Healing Mary Chmielewski

“One person there had been sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus, who knew this person had been sick for a long time, said, ‘Do you want to be healed?’” John 5:5-6 (1-18)

When my daughter entered 6th grade, the school evaluated all the girls for scoliosis. I was told my daughter should see an orthopedic spine specialist. We were horrified when we saw her X-ray. The doctor told us she had a severe curvature of the spine, and if it continued to curve just 2 more degrees, she would need corrective surgery which had risks. The plan was to keep the scoliosis from continuing,

Her treatment went on for many years. Her doctor was always making adjustments to her brace; my daughter was an obedient patient, and family and friends faithfully prayed for her. At the end of her four years of treatment, her doctor sat us down and we prepared ourselves for bad news. He said that only 2% of patients have correction of their curvature and that our daughter was part of that 2% and that her spine was nearly normal. Her doctor could not stop smiling, and he kept saying this is remarkable. My daughter told the doctor that many people had been praying for her.

Like the man who waited for many years by the healing pool for his chance to be healed, my daughter's healing took years. God used her doctor, my daughter, and the prayer warriors. We were only praying for the curve to stop progressing, and yet God blessed us with a bigger healing.

Loving Abba, We do not know why some are healed and others are not. But help us to understand that Your timing is sovereign. Help us to pray continuously, trust in your goodness, and be grateful. Amen.

Day 32: A Prayer for Mental Health Tim McKenzie

*“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:
Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail. They are new every
morning; great is your faithfulness.” Lam. 3:21-23*

The Book of Lamentations, traditionally attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, centers upon the destruction of Jerusalem and subjugation of its people by the Babylonians in the 6th century BC. It’s about displacement, erosion, and loss of identity. Stories of violence, authoritarianism, and injustice, grief, death, and despair. Some things never change (just the perpetrators).

And yet. Above the darkness awaits a new morning, bestowed by a merciful, compassionate, and unwavering God. Evil is finite, but the Love of God is eternal. J.R.R. Tolkien, a devout Christian, famously approaches this enduring sense of hope among mass destruction in his most famous work, *The Lord of the Rings*. When Tolkien’s most humble yet mightiest character of his books, Samwise, finds himself in the hellish landscape of his enemy’s land and death seems certain, he despairingly looks up to the sky only to realize that “the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty for ever beyond its reach.” (*The Return of the King*).

Heavenly Father, when issues of mental health, issues of despair and detachment from You may seem overwhelming, please help us to seek healing for whomever is affected, whether it be family, friend, stranger, or self. Let recovery begin in supplication to You, knowing You are above all desolation and all misery, ready to instill in us a new day dawning. Amen.

Day 33: Asking for God's Defense Roger Bridges Psalm 35

Do you think you are having a bad day? Read all of Psalm 35 and see what kind of days David was having. I doubt that most of our bad days are anywhere near as bad as David's. But we still need help getting through them. David seems to think God is sitting idly by just watching as he is going through all these attacks and hardships. On our bad days, we might think the same. But we, and David, would be wrong. God is not a passive observer of our lives. God is always active.

We might think God is not helping us because He is not doing what we want. We know that David did eventually come out as a winner. We don't know for certain, how or if God answered David's prayer regarding his enemies. It may be easy for us to think that God is not listening when he does not answer our prayers, but God may be answering our prayers in different ways than what we are asking. We may want God to free us from difficulties. God might be saying that we have to face hardships. We can be sure of his promise: God will get us through anything we face. So, don't think God has abandoned you. Don't think God doesn't care about you. He is always there, and He always cares for you. He may be seeking to answer your call for help in a way that you cannot see.

So what should you do? Pray your prayers. Ask God for help and remember that God may be working in your life in ways you cannot even imagine. Look for what God wants for you, not what you want.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for always being with us. Thank you for your guidance and help even when we do not see it. Help us to open our eyes and heart to see what you are really doing, not what we think you ought to be doing. Amen

Day 34: Praying While Angry Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

“In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.” Ephesians 4:25-27

To be angry is to be human. Those who write scripture assume we will be angry at times. We are justifiably angry when we get laid off, when we are treated unfairly, when the actions of others cause us pain. The scriptures are even full of examples of people who were angry with God. If God is all powerful and all knowing, we can be mad at God when bad things happen to us. To be angry is not a sin, but to let anger consume us is a shame. Scripture invites us to come to God with our anger. God can take it! Be honest[God already knows how you feel. Invite God to help you process your anger so that your anger doesn't lead you to a disrupted existence or to destructive behaviors. Seek to process your anger through prayer:

God help me process this anger so that I can know your peace and act in ways that are healthy for me and others:

Is the energy coming from this anger intended to help me address an injustice?

Or is this angry energy a distraction or disruption which is robbing my peace?

Is there a person or circumstance I need to address or should I release this anger and move forward without confrontation?

Am I ready to address the source of my anger in ways that lead to resolution without doing greater harm?

Or do I need to continue in prayer until I gain enough clarity to know what action is healthy for me or others?

DAY 35: Throwing Stones:
Praying on the Move when Angry or Anxious
Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith

Prayer is typically pictured as a quiet and still activity. But sometimes our bodies are full of toxic energy and our minds race with invasive thoughts. In these moments we need to pray, but we fear we can't sit still. So don't! Some of our best conversations happen while our bodies are engaged on a walk, a hike, or a drive. On this Sabbath day choose an active prayer most suited for where your mind and body are at the moment:

Angry: Go outside, collect a bucket of rocks, shells, or pinecones. Pick a tree that looks strong enough to take your aggression. Say a prayer asking God to help you release the frustration in your body and mind.

THROW THE STONES HARD!

Then when you're "empty" sit down and pray.

You may find strength in knowing that there is a time for everything including throwing stones. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-14.

Anxious: Choose a walk or hike that is challenging for you. Take your prayer guide and pick the prayer that feels right at each mile marker (your phone can track your miles). Notice how your prayers change along the way.

Exhausted: Turn to Day 21 and just BE STILL.

Day 36: Courage for Taking the First Step

Rev. Jenny Smith

“Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water’s edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing.” Joshua 3:1-17

In today’s scripture, the people of God are on their way to the land which God has promised, but just as their new home begins to rise on the horizon they realize a swollen river stands in their way. I picture the tired Israelites dropping their walking sticks and plopping down in the final yards of desert. No doubt the people begin another round of prayers that God will part the waters and bring them through this last obstacle.

What challenges or obstacles stand before you? What have you been praying about for a while, and you are starting to wonder if God will ever reveal the answer or remove the barrier? Where do you feel stuck?

If you read carefully, you will discover that God doesn’t promise to part the river first. God instructs the priests to take the first step while the water is still raging. Once their feet are wet in the river, God parts the waters so they can get to the other side.

As you pray big and pray long, ask God and yourself: “Is the next step mine to take?” While you are waiting on God, God may be waiting on you!

God, give me just enough faith and courage to take just the next right step forward. Amen.

Day 37: Prayer for Making Amends When We Have Caused Harm Jen Evans and Shannon Reinhardt

“His children must make amends to the poor; his own hands must give back his wealth.” Job 20:9

Amends aren't just about saying “sorry.” They're about owning up to the harm we've caused and being willing to make it right when we can. Sometimes that means a conversation or an action; sometimes it just means changing how we live so we don't repeat the same harm again. Amends take courage because they make us vulnerable. We don't control how others respond. Some people may forgive us, some may not, and some may not even be safe to approach. But amends aren't about forcing an outcome, they're about taking responsibility and living with more honesty and integrity.

Every time we choose to face the past instead of running from it, we lighten the weight we carry. Amends are really about freedom - freedom from shame, guilt, and the lies we tell ourselves. They help us step into a life that feels more whole, more honest, and more peaceful.

**God, Help me to do more than say “sorry.”
Give me the courage to face the harm I've caused
and the willingness to make things right when I can.
Show me when to act, when to speak, and when the
best amends are found in living differently. Protect me
when it's not safe to reach out, steady me when I don't
get the response I hoped for. Let this work free me
from the weight of guilt and shame. Help me walk with
honesty, with integrity, and with the kind of peace that
comes from living true. Amen.**

Day 38: When Making A Big Ask Rev. Dr. Jenny Smith
Nehemiah 1

In 2007 the Lord laid upon the hearts and minds of Mt. Carmel church a vision for tearing down the cramped Sunday school wing their grandparents had built and building in its place a ministry center. The new two-story building would give space for a community preschool, a kitchen for preparing meals for the shelter, mission space for assembling backpack blessings, worship, and an after-school learning program for kids who needed safe learning space. Our architect designed an amazing building that met all our needs. The only problem was the building was 6 feet higher than building code. We prayed, strategized and pushed design limits, but the building was still two feet too tall. At last during a prayer session with the engineer an idea popped: let's raise the ground two feet!

And so the design was made to raise the dirt at the foot of the building in order to reduce the height from ground to roofline. With trembling hands and hearts, we carried the design to the planning commission. It's not an exaggeration to say at least a few laughed at our ingenuity. I sat in a row with lay leaders and we prayed diligently the words which Nehemiah had prayed before asking his king for a new assignment and a forest, "Lord, give us success with this man!"

The vote was called and the first six landed in a tie with the deciding vote falling to our most vocal critic. When asked for her word she said firmly, "Approve." Then she froze and said, "Oh, I meant to say no, but I guess God intercepted my words." We stood speechless as the plans were stamped and remained in awe as the ground and the building rose before us. God has a way of changing words, minds, and situations so before you make a big ask pray:

God, grant me wisdom and vision to set my hopes and plans according to your purposes. Give me courage to ask from others what is needed and give me success according to your will. Amen.

Day 39: A Prayer for Justice Seeking

Pam Miller, Pastor Jenny Luke 18:1-8

Recently we met with leaders of our Racial Justice group. As we reviewed our plans for the year ahead we shared frustration. We see God working, convicting our community with concern for the dignity, well-being, and just treatment of all human siblings. We are grateful for the ways we can partner with local faith communities in advocacy work for our neighbors. But our efforts feel small and inconsequential when we look at starvation escalating in Gaza and violence becoming normalized for children in places like Ukraine. While our hearts are exploding with desire to move the world toward justice, our influence seems small. So, do we “just pray” because that’s all we feel we can do? No, we pray because prayer is the most powerful thing we can do, and the source of wisdom and courage that leads to action.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells of a woman who keeps appealing to a judge to address an injustice. A careful listen reveals that the judge doesn’t care at all about the woman or the case. But, eventually because she will not be silent, the judge executes justice so that he doesn’t have to hear her pleas anymore.

Let us pray for God to reveal where our voice, our presence, our influence, our vote, or our work can be so persuasive that we move one law, leader, or institution towards a just treatment of the outcast or the vulnerable. Might we even pray that God will reveal one place where we can be so persistent in our appeals for justice that those in power will execute justice, if not for justice sake, just to be rid of us.

Dear God, strengthen our hearts and minds to pray daily and ask for an end to injustice and oppression. Inspire our leaders, and those of influence everywhere, to end injustice and insist upon lifegiving care for all people. Make us instruments of your justice and peace as we love our neighbors. We pray in the name of Jesus, who embodies justice and peace and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 40: For Making A Change Rev. YuJung Hwang
"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"
2 Corinthians 5:17

One of my struggles has always been changing myself: my way of thinking, living, and acting. It has never been easy. When I tried to change on my own, relying only on my willpower, I often ended up frustrated and even guilty when I failed. But this Scripture reminds me: "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" Real change does not come from my strength, but from being in Christ. When I am in Christ, my old self is gone, and I become a new creation. My part is simply to remain in Him.

How, then, can I stay in Christ? By filling myself with His presence and letting go of my anxious thoughts and self-judgment. The Breath Prayer helps me do this. I inhale the love, peace, and courage Christ brings and exhale the stale depleting thoughts. The more Christ fills me, the more revived I am in body, mind, and spirit.

Breath Prayer by Joanne Compton

Find a quiet place, place your hands gently on your lap, and focus on the rhythm of your breath- inhaling to receive, and breathing out to release.

Loving Father, may I:

receive Your love & release my insecurity
receive Your joy & release my discontent
receive Your peace & release my anxiety
receive Your patience & release my impulsiveness
receive Your kindness & release my indifference
receive Your goodness & release my ungodliness
receive Your faithfulness & release my disloyalty
receive Your gentleness & release my severity
receive Your self-control & release my self-indulgence

Prayers for Families: “Welcome Jesus”

Susan Doyle

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me”. Rev. 3:20

In my childhood home a painting of Jesus hung in the hallway. Jesus is pictured standing outside of a door with his hand reaching towards us. As a little child, I remember questioning my parents about the picture. “Why was there no doorknob or latch?” “Was anyone home?” “Didn’t they know that Jesus had come to visit?”

My parents would patiently remind me that the picture represents Jesus standing outside of the door to your heart; just waiting for us to let him in.

Hmm...My little mind was racing. “When we let Jesus into our hearts does that make him happy?” My parents would smile and reply “Joyful”. Ah, now I get it.

When we pray we open the door of our heart and welcome Jesus to come into our lives. Jesus is overjoyed when we let him in. As you pray this prayer maybe you want to prop the door open and imagine Jesus coming in!

Dear Jesus, thank you for always being ready and willing to be in our lives. Thank you for opening doors for us as we seek to learn about you. Give me faith to open my heart and welcome you in. Fill me with the joy you bring. Amen.

For Living with Joy

God, your world is beautiful;
help me enjoy all the shapes and colors around me.
Give me eyes to see the butterflies and the worms
and the wisdom to appreciate both.
Give me ears to hear the birds and the crickets
And the spirit to hear their songs as praise.
Give me hands to feel the dirt and the grass
And gratitude for how earth holds me up.
Give me a spirit that feels your movement in the wind
And a heart that is eager to enjoy your presence always.
Amen.

A word for adults: According to the Westminster Catechism
(a guide for being a Christian) “the chief end of man is to
glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

“Prayer for the Beginning of the School Year”

Sherry Perrine

Dear God, it is the beginning of a new school year. Beginnings can be both exciting and a little scary. The opportunities ahead are more important than my school supplies, the lunch I will eat, and the clothing that I put on each day. Everyday please provide what I need so that I may be:

- Brave in order to begin each new day.
- Open to new people and surroundings,
- Willing to work hard.
- Patient with myself and others
- Kind and caring to myself and others.
- Strong when things are hard.
- Grace-filled when things are easy.

Thank you, God, for loving me and for this opportunity to attend school. Surround me with your love and guidance as I continue to grow in knowledge and character. Amen

Bible verses to consider: Isaiah 41:10, Zephaniah 3:17, Colossians 3:23, 1 Corinthians 16:14, Galatians 5: 22-23

A Prayer for Forgiveness

God, I messed up. I made a mistake and someone or something got hurt. I feel terrible. Forgive me God. Help me to feel and trust your grace which forgives me and makes new good as new. Help me to learn from this mistake and apologize to anyone who may have been hurt by my actions. Thank you Jesus for your love. Amen.

For Times of Change Rev. YuJung

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” Isaiah 43:19

Change touches every family: beginning at a new school, getting to know a new teacher, moving to a new home, or having someone move away to a new school or place. These moments can bring both excitement and uncertainty. Yet God promises that even in times of change, God is at work. God makes a way where there seems to be no way, and God provides hope and renewal in every season.

Prayer for Families:

Gracious God, thank You for walking with our family through times of change. When we feel anxious, remind us of Your steady love. When the path feels uncertain, guide our steps. Teach us to lean on You and on one another with patience, kindness, and grace. Help our home to be filled with Your love. Give us hope for what lies ahead. Lord, do a new thing in our family, and let us see You at work in every season of our lives. Amen.

Prayer for Grownups:

Faithful God, You are the same yesterday, today, and forever, yet You are always doing new things. In this time of change, calm my fears and strengthen my trust in You. Help me to let go of what I cannot control and to embrace the new path You are opening before me. Give me courage, Lord, to walk forward with hope, knowing You go with me and will never leave me. Amen.

For a Hard Day

Sherry Perrine

God today was a hard day, and I am feeling out of sorts. I know that talking to you helps, even when I can't find the right words. Help me to slow down and breathe. As I breathe slowly in and out may I begin to feel your presence. Help me find good ways to express my feelings through movement, art, quiet, a cuddle with my pet or family, or words. My hard day is real! Help me to give it over to you and trust that you will provide me strength to move through it, learn from it, and joy to embrace the good days that will come soon. Amen

Some Bible verses to consider:

Philippians 4: 6-7, Psalm 23, John 14:27, Philippians 4:13

For Healing

This is a breath prayer for families. After the opening, pause to breathe deep and slow. As you exhale, speak your concern. As you inhale, welcome God's healing. You may want to add more stanzas that share how you are feeling and what you need.

God, I feel broken. My skin or my heart are scuffed up. I am worried about how my body, or my family, or my life will be made well again. God I need your healing:
I am shook up - settle me with your peace.
I am worried - hold me tight.
I am confused - calm my thoughts.
I am tired - give me good rest.
I feel broken - heal me Jesus, make me whole.

-Notes-