
Appendix: Prayers for “Stuck” People

In this book, we’ve learned about people who feel stuck in their relationship with God. “Stuck” people are dealing with a pressing challenge and believe God is still saying no. Discouragement rises. Prayer becomes repetitive, one-dimensional, and even demanding. The trial becomes all-consuming, and one’s prayer life revolves around that trial.

When I’m stuck, I find that a prayer book can be a helpful tool because it leads me to pray something different. Here is a portion of one of my favorite prayers from *The Valley of Vision*. You can take a moment to pray it now.

*Father,
I am well pleased with your will, whatever it is,
or should be in all respects,
And if you bid me to decide for myself in any affair,
I would choose to refer all to you,
for you are infinitely wise and cannot do wrong,*

as I am in danger of doing.

*I rejoice to think that all things are at your disposal,
and it delights me to leave them there.*

*Then prayer turns wholly into praise,
and all I can do is to adore and bless you.*

*Amen.*¹

A prayer book is not about reciting magic words, line by line. It is a jumping-off point for times and subjects of prayer you might not find on your own, especially if you're stuck. Here are some books that you might find helpful:

- *A Journey to Victorious Praying: Finding Discipline and Delight in Your Prayer Life* (Bill Thrasher)
- *A Passion for Prayer* (Tom Elliff)
- *Be Thou My Vision: A Liturgy for Daily Worship* (Jonathan Gibson)
- *Fount of Heaven: Prayers of the Early Church* (ed. Robert Elmer)
- *Handbook to Prayer: Praying Scripture Back to God* (Kenneth Boa)
- *Heart of God: 31 Days to Discover God's Love for You?* (Elisabeth Elliot)
- *Prayers of Rest* (Asheritah Ciuciu)
- *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions* (ed. Arthur G. Bennett)

Many more books could be listed. But in addition to these recommendations, Scott and I want to include some of our prayers—two weeks' worth to be exact. If you are stuck, it is our prayer that you may find rest in seeking your Lord in a different way.



A Prayer for Hope When God Appears to Turn Against Us

Poor Job. He loses everything and encounters a silent heaven. Yet the constant accusations of his friends drone on. Job bursts out in a soliloquy revealing his abandonment and despair. And yet, he is not without hope. Burdened with bitterness and frustration, he laments that he is unable to find God no matter how sincere or desperate his search. Somehow, he cleaves to his faith in God and says, “But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold” (Job 23:10).

Pray that prayer for yourself or someone who has abandoned their faith because of the apparent indifference of God. Be honest in your disappointment with God’s perceived lack of concern, but also rejoice that He will bring us through, stronger than ever, because “the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).

Father,

I confess that I have been disappointed because it appears You have not answered my prayers

and cries for help. Today, my need is great and specific, and I bring it to You again. Lord, help me to be content in difficulty and suffering.

I recall Your Word, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered" (Romans 8:36).

I choose to persevere for Your sake.

Assure me that hardship is not Your abandonment of me.

Remind me of Your faithfulness.

I pray that I might say with Job, "Though he slay me, I will hope in him" (Job 13:15).

When I doubt, give me hope.

When I am in despair, give me comfort.

Let not accusers hinder me from believing in Your goodness and provision. Instead, let grace and peace overwhelm me. Today, reveal Yourself to me that I may pass this test of apparent abandonment and know that You are close to me, even in my trials and disappointment.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

2

A Prayer for Worship in Trial

Back to Job again. God finally speaks, and He does not deliver a word of comfort. Instead, He asks Job at least two dozen questions He knows Job can't answer. God's point stings a bit: If you don't understand the created, physical realm, what makes you think you can understand what I'm doing beyond your sight? In a way, God is saying, “Job, what makes you think you can understand My purposes for you or anyone else?”

The encounter humbles Job. He was passing judgment on the Almighty, calling into question His justice and care for one of His servants. Now that he has an opportunity to speak, he replies, “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth” (Job 40:4). Having encountered God, he now realizes that God's wisdom and justice are beyond human understanding.

In the presence of God, only one proper response exists: worship. And, as Job learned, we can worship God even without explanations.

Pray that all of us would be more consistent in our worship, knowing God is beyond our understanding. If we could “find Him out” and discern His hidden purposes, we would be bringing Him down to our level. Before you pray, pause and read Job 42:1–6.

Father,

I worship You today.

I confess that I have complained against You because life is often difficult for no apparent reason.

I have questioned Your ways, believing that if I had Your power, I would have done a better job of running this universe than You.

I repent of such arrogance and selfishness before You, my Creator and Redeemer.

Father, I pray for myself, my family, and my friends that they may not rebel against Your sovereignty.

When they see injustice in the world, may they refuse to ascribe it to You.

May they remember that You, O Lord, are God, and we are not.

Help them to believe that Your way is perfect, and let that admission lead to submission, repentance, and thanksgiving.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

3

A Prayer That We Might Believe God During Tragedy

I (Erwin) can't forget the Haitian earthquake of 2010. It killed nearly 200,000 people, and one news interview is still vivid in my mind. A reporter was interviewing a young mother with a baby in her arms.

She said, “I lost my son. He died in the rubble.”

The reporter asked, “Did you get to bury him?”

“No, no chance. His body was crushed in the rubble. I just had to throw him away.”

Then the camera zeroed in on her backpack as she prepared to board a bus. A Bible was visible, sticking out of a side pocket of the backpack. As she boarded the bus, the interview was over. The camera lingered, and she began speaking to no one in particular. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble . . .” Her voice trailed off as she disappeared from view.

When the report was over, I kept staring at the television for a moment, pushing back tears and letting what I had seen sink into my soul. This dear woman had lost a son. She had a baby in her arms. And because of the earthquake, she was boarding a bus to live who knows where.

Somehow, she was still believing, still trusting that God is her refuge and strength.

She was quoting Psalm 46, a praise song for when God spared the city of Jerusalem during the invasion of the Assyrians. God granted a harrowing escape for His people, and they found God as their unshakable pillar. Please read the entire Psalm for yourself.

Let us pray for all those who are experiencing calamities. Let us also pray for ourselves that we would be able to trust God even when it does not make sense, humanly speaking.

Father,

May I have the faith to trust You even when I experience devastating loss—whether it be my child, my home, or my job.

Grant me the faith to believe that I belong to You and You belong to me.

Even when my life in this world is filled with loss, remind me that this time is short and eternity is long.

God be a comfort to _____ that they might trust You amid their loss.

When their faith fails, strengthen them to believe that Your promises are still true.

May they remember that Your care for them is not defined by prosperity in this world, but by Your safeguarding of them to their heavenly home.

Strengthen our faith for we are weak.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

4

A Prayer for Faith in a Desperate Moment

Imagine being responsible not only for your own fate, but also the fate of a nation. Jehoshaphat found himself in such a predicament. A great army was moving against the land of Judah. Filled with fear, he “set his face to seek the LORD,” (2 Chronicles 20:3) and called the people together to fast and pray for God’s mercy and protection.

He prayed earnestly, confessing his sin and the sin of his people, reminding himself of God’s greatness and the covenant with Israel. Listen to some of his words of desperation: “O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you” (2 Chronicles 20:12).

Jehoshaphat understood that he was no match for the overwhelming superiority of the invading armies. For deliverance to be possible, God had to directly intervene.

This prayer of desperation was also accompanied with worship. “Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshipping the LORD” (20:18). Next, Jehoshaphat turned military strategy on its head by sending a choir ahead of his own army! Should we be surprised

when we read, “And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed” (20:22).

Do you detect the lessons for us when we are in a desperate moment? First, God can use whatever means He wishes to deliver us. He can thwart armies and reverse whatever seems to be coming at us. He is never in need of ideas to deliver us. Second, God answers when we ask in faith—a faith fueled by worship. One of the best things we can do when we’re in a frightful place is to pause and give praise to God with singing and the affirmation of His promises. Desperate praying unaccompanied with praise is almost always a prayer of unbelief. Praise captures God’s ear, and He responds, though not always in the way we expect.

Father,

Teach me to praise You at all times, especially when I am confronted by my enemies.

I have deep-seated fears within my soul about my future, my health, and especially about those whose greatest delight would be to witness my destruction.

Lord, today I turn away from those fears to give You praise.

Like the choir that led the armies of Judah into battle, I move forward with praise and gratitude for Your great name and the power of Your love.

I pray for my family and friends that they might develop the habit of giving You praise each morning.

*May they read the psalms of praise, giving
You their thanks and worship.*

*Teach them even as You teach me, that
when we do not know what to do, praise
is always the right response.*

*Together may we quote the words of Jehoshaphat’s
choir, “Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast
love endures forever” (2 Chronicles 20:21).*

Let Your praise be continually on our lips.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



A Prayer for God's Nearness— and Confession

The Lord has repeatedly demonstrated His expectations for complete purity among His people. In the Old Testament, God judged the rebellion of Korah with overwhelming force (Numbers 16). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit ended the lives of Ananias and Sapphira for their deception (Acts 5:1–11).

Friends, God has not changed. The God who judged Korah and Ananias is the same God we worship today. The wages of sin are still death, and He reserves the right to hand us our paycheck when He sees fit.

Are you prepared for the God who comes near? He is not far off. He purifies His people, and that demands refinement and purification. He comes to bring light, exposing your sin, but will it not hurt when He scrubs your soul's every crevice? David invites Him in Psalm 139:23, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!"

As you kneel to pray today, the Holy One is already present. Read and pray Psalm 139 to Him. Like David who cried "search me," let us welcome His work.

O Holy One,

*I welcome Your presence today, like
when a candle enters the darkness.*

*Come alongside Your servant, search
me, and expose my flaws.*

*By Your nearness, destroy every
vestige of self-righteousness.*

*Convict me of every sinful desire and misplaced word,
May Your holiness be reflected throughout my being.*

*Fill me with sanctifying truth! Make
me holy as You are holy.*

*By the Holy Spirit’s discipline, end my sins
You are here, with me in my filth.*

*I am revolted by my sins and frightened
by You—the Holy One.*

Change me.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

6

A Prayer to Confess the Sinfulness of Our Prayers

Prayer reflects our heart. The two men praying in Luke 18 are a perfect example of this truth. Both pray! But the Pharisee's heart is filled with pride while the tax collector's heart is filled with humility.

Have you ever taken stock of a Bible study or a church's prayer time? If you listen carefully, you can detect where the community's priorities lie. Various types of prayer such as worship, submission, provision, reconciliation, and protection can go missing. While praying for the sick is important, sometimes that's all God's people do.

Often our holy avenue of approaching our loving Father is regularly tainted by our selfish, idolatrous proclivities. Prayer is so often about us and what we want, not God and His kingdom. Like a self-important toddler, we ask favors of our Father while not submitting to Him.

After meditating on Luke 18:9–14, let us confess the sinfulness of our prayers.

*Lord of my salvation, God of constant provision,
Turn Your gaze toward me,*

Show Your face to me.

I am but a wretch who begs before You.

*I bask, bloated with Your many gifts,
yet I am often vacant of gratitude.*

Forgive and dispel my foolish and selfish wantings.

*I am but soul and flesh, corrupted
thoroughly from within.*

*Even my righteous desires are polluted in
prayer, as I stir in my own selfish aims.*

*My pleas themselves are held
hostage by my iniquities.*

Set me free from the slavery to self.

*Purify my thoughts and grant me holy
prayers marked by humility and worship.*

*Recognizing the shortcomings of my prayers,
provide me with what I do not perceive to
request, even what I do not want to ask.*

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



A Warfare Prayer Against the Powers

When we decide to fight our selfishness and say to God “Your kingdom come,” we should expect evil’s allies to reinforce our flesh’s cause. The patterns of this wicked world and the demonic powers around us will seek to strengthen the hand of sin which grips our hearts.

We are often blind to the cosmic nature of our struggle in this flesh and in this world. We naturally acquiesce to the dominant ideas, practices, and routines of our cultures and countries. “Everybody is doing it.” “Everybody thinks this way.” Animated and controlled by “the god of the age” (Satan), many of our customs and philosophies are contrary to the one true God over the ages.

But because of Christ, we can finally see. Colossians 2:13–15 says:

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

The powers are disarmed, unmasked, and “put to open shame.” Jesus exposes the demonic deceptions that control the nations. And the gospel truth strides boldly among the lies of our time, striking down their hold on humanity. Today, let us join the battle. The war is within and without. Let us march with Christ.

Lord, You who conquers the powers,

I am a citizen of Your everlasting kingdom.

*Philosophies of the age are rendered
foolish by the cross I claim.*

*Parties and politics are temporary institutions
unable to win the war I wage.*

*Principalities and powers are beneath the Christ-won
throne where I abide (Ephesians 1:20–23; 2:6).*

*Yet the cosmic forces—those rebellious beings
of unseen realm—still manipulate me.*

*I love to be eloquent in worldly wisdom, rather
than be identified with the cross’s shame.*

*I campaign more for political wins
than for spiritual victories.*

*I quickly submit to my old guardians,
the powers that once ruled me.*

Christ, You have unmasked the powers!

I see that the nations have been misled,

*Seduced by the “no gods” of false religion
who dictate our days and devotions,*

*Marred by cultural corruptions that
obscure the law of conscience.*

*Fooled to pursue redemption and meaning in
personal effort, politics, and impure sacrifice.*

I praise You, King of kings.

*The demons shudder. The princes tremble.
The world shakes, for the King has come.*

The truth has been revealed:

Dagon is fallen; the gods are weak.

Demons plead for mercy; the legion is disarmed.

*Deliverance draws near; the serpent
writhes under the Nazarene sandal.*

Lord, I am a haven of your Spirit,

Illumined by His truth, led by His guidance,

Reformed by His discipline, secured by His seal,

Yet my heart's wiles whisper like a demon.

*Unchecked, I would yet seek to serve the dark
host, the world powers with which I struggle.*

Within and without, the conflict rages:

My inner nature still seethes with Satan's rebellion,

*My family still passes down the
philosophies of the powers,*

*My people still perpetuate revolt and
rebellion against You, the Lord.*

*O Blessed Spirit of God, help me to
adopt a singular allegiance,*

*Persevering when I am ostracized by
human relations of blood and anthem,*

*Resilient when I am oppressed
by demonic harassment,*

*Joyful when I lose my life, my job,
my access to worldly dreams.*

Crush the enemy; uproot his rule.

Seat me with You; set my mind above.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

8

A Prayer for Better Emotions

Some of us grew up hearing that being emotional was a bad thing. In a sense, it's true; being controlled by anger and anxiety is not good! But emotions are not inherently evil. Jesus had emotions, and in Him, we see that holiness does not equal stoicism and emotionlessness.

Emotions are not supposed to be expunged; they're to be purified. In our natural state, emotions are contorted and controlled by our flesh. Even among the redeemed, our emotions fail us. The sorrows we feel are worldly. The anger we exhibit is murderous rather than righteous. The loves we share are reciprocal and deficient of self-sacrifice. The holy affections prescribed in Scripture and modeled by Christ are rendered unfeeling by our callousness and apathy.

Consider 1 Peter 4:7–8. The apostle says, “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.” But the text does not end there. Peter continues, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.” We are commanded to live with self-control and sober-mindedness, denying our passions. Yet, we can pursue a life of true affection—the love modeled by God Himself. Today, let us die to the old way of emoting, and partake in the affections of God.

Father God,

I confess that my emotions are controlled by my flesh. Grant me true sorrow. Instead of sorrowing over my losses in this world, would You provoke in me a deep pain for the perishing, the unreached? I want to yearn for the lost, those who do not know Your name.

Grant me true anger. I am too often given to rage, bitterness, and hate because of the things of this world. Would You stir up in me a holy jealousy for Your fame? I want to burn when so-called Christians misrepresent You, maligning You and Your Word. May this zealousness strengthen my legs to stand for the truth.

Grant me true love. While the world wishes to enthrall me with lesser loves of romance and loving those who love me, I want to love like You. Would You instigate in me a longing to give my life away for those who can never repay me?

In You, because of You, and for You, I ask for true sorrow, anger, and love.

Help me, Your child.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



A Prayer for the Father's Discipline

The zeitgeist, the “spirit of the age,” circulates a counterfeit love, often as a cover for sin. The love on offer today is the blind acceptance of the behaviors of others with no regard for the morality they exhibit. Everyone does what is right in their own eyes. Refusing to disturb that order and affirming that arrangement is deemed love.

God's love is not so feckless. With His good and immutable character as the backdrop, He loves us and changes us. Like a wise Father, He disciplines us that we might reflect His qualities in the world, just as He intended humanity to do from the beginning. Hebrews 12:7–11 says:

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later

it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness
to those who have been trained by it.

He cares for us. He acts so that we can share in His
holiness. Encounter true love in God’s discipline.

Father of unending compassion,

You deserve glory, adoration, and devotion!

*But no child of yours, including me,
consistently bestows this to You.*

*I am a sinner. I stray. I wander. I have set up
idols of worthless things and sadly misplaced my
affections. I disobey. I fail to do what is right. I do
what is right with bad motives and a poor attitude.*

*Do not stand by when I have need of my
good Father. Keep me from my potential
sins, and drive me from my current sins.*

Father, Your compassion is unfailing.

You will not let me sin without recompense.

Your infinite love leads to divine discipline.

I accept Your chastisement.

Lead me again and again to my knees.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



A Prayer for a Mind Completely Focused on God

God is not the problem. We are. We fall short. He does not. The divine mind is not in tension, division, or frustration. Meanwhile, sin has caused human disintegration on an unfathomable scale. The human mind is corrupted, not God's.

Our right desires, our pursuit of relationship, our religious activities—we imbue each one with duplicitous schemes. Jesus warns us, “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 6:1). Our prayers are so easily tainted. Yet the Spirit cries out to us, that we may live in simplicity and unity of mind before God.

We must stop being double-minded. Let us renounce the hypocrisy that taints and stains our every thought and deed lest we outwardly ally with Christ while covertly gratifying the flesh and supporting the enemy. Spend time in Matthew 6 and then let us pray together.

Immutable God,

*Restore my disintegrated mind, for I am fractured
by indwelling sin, longing to exemplify*

the cross yet selfishly gratifying the flesh.
Often do I claim Christ only with my lips,
Behave biblically for self-glory,
Attend church only for social ends,
Pursue holiness with a competitive spirit.
Though redeemed through faith in Christ,
Which shelters my soul from wrath, which
grants everlasting righteousness,
Which relieves sin’s condemnation,
which beckons me to godly living;
My sinful desires are many.
Unchanging Father,
Unite my mind that I may be
Wholly following the guidance
of the Spirit of the Holy,
Completely imitating the attitude of Christ.
In Jesus’ name, Amen.



A Prayer for Attentiveness to God

When a child discovers a new toy—a doll, a ball, or even an interesting stick—the rest of the world fades from their sight. They lock their gaze, focusing their attention on nothing else. And if you are a parent, you probably know the challenge of tearing them away from that toy. You must repeat the child's name before they snap back into reality.

What has arrested your vision in this world? Binge watching shows is one common example. Someone finds a new series, then their whole week's schedule revolves around when they will be able to watch the next episode. While it may not be a show, what has drawn your attention, crowding out all competitors—whether they be worthy or worthless?

Whatever draws your gaze, it has probably sidelined the theme of redemption. The Scriptures reflect that the Father, Son, and Spirit are wholly interested in the redemption of humanity, yet we rarely are engrossed by the wonders of salvation—purchased in the past, applied in the present, concluded in the future. Let us return to the glories of redemption and reflect deeply.

Take a moment to slowly read through Ephesians 1 before you pray.

Jesus,

Rescue me!

You are the Redeemer King,

Who purchased me as a possession out of the nations,

Who restored my life through an excruciating death,

Who walked without wrong in a wicked world,

*Who stained the earth with blameless
blood to cleanse hearts.*

Rescue me!

You are the One who redeems still,

*Who reminds me of His personal
ownership over my estate,*

Who provides abundantly for every need and worry,

Who grants the Spirit that holiness may increase,

*Who illumines my daily path of following You,
denying myself, and carrying my cross.*

Rescue me,

From my ignorant eyes and my narrow vision.

I look to You today.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



A Prayer in the Paradoxical Path

God's purposes are somehow revealed, yet still paradoxical. Even the most devout Christian can still feel bewildered, wondering why God's children suffer so much in this world. Let us to look to Jesus afresh today. According to the will of God, the exalted Son of God came to us. Yet His route to resurrection and glory involved starving (fasting for forty days qualifies in my book), suffering (even before the cross), studying Scripture (as He grew up), foot-washing (like a servant), forgiving (friends and enemies), and resisting temptation (after starving). That is a path of humility. Why did He have to suffer so much in this world?

God's purposes extend to us, including suffering, whether it finds us in persecution or we find it in fasting. This is the paradoxical path of God: His people would accomplish much by being little in this world. In the words of Arthur Bennett:

Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up,
that to be low is to be high,
that the broken heart is the healed heart,
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,
that to have nothing is to possess all,
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown.²

The world will never understand the paradox, but as children of God, we can by faith. Let us follow Jesus in His humility until the day that the Father raises us to glory.

Meditate on 1 Peter 2:20–21. “For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.” Let us pray.

Lord of hidden purposes,

Thank You that Your Son shows me that I can live with humility as I follow You.

Will You help me to offer humble prayers by keeping my focus on You?

To ascend to a heavenly perspective by descending to my knees,

To stand boldly before all by sitting in private meditation,

To devour the fruit of the Spirit by fasting from the fruit of the earth,

To lead among the rulers by living as a servant,

To live eternally by dying daily?

Remind me to crush sinful behaviors by constructing holy habits,

To dismiss demonic doctrines by receiving the Spirit’s instruction,

To release selfishness by clinging to selflessness,

To withdraw from shame by approaching the cross,

*To forget others' wrongs by
remembering Your forgiveness,*

*To ignore the world's temptations by
acknowledging Christ's freedoms.*

Help this weary servant, for Your glory's sake.

*May I follow You into suffering, trusting
that everlasting glory is coming.*

*According to Jesus' example and
in Jesus' name, Amen.*



A Prayer to Be Like Our Master

Are we servants who are greater than the Master? If we remember Matthew 10:24, we instinctively respond “No, of course not!” But by the way we pray and the contents of those prayers, we betray our self-seeking attitude. We expect God to give us a life that looks very little like Christ’s. We presume ourselves to be disciples who don’t have to face any of the challenges of the biblical disciples!

Grief, sorrow, and rejection were with Jesus constantly. He was treated poorly by His human family. Some of you know that feeling all too well. And many Christian converts around the world are completely abandoned by their loved ones. Jesus knew that grief. But more than that, Jesus’ heavenly Father crushed Him. Isaiah 53:4–6, 10–11 says:

Surely he [the Messiah, Jesus] has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all . . . Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul

makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

According to the will of God, the Father crushed His Son. Can you imagine the possibility where being crushed and afflicted fulfills the purposes of God? Can you imagine such a possibility? Many people can't fathom the idea that God would want to crush them. If you can't see how your heavenly Father could do such a thing to you, then admit it: You think you're a servant who is greater than your Master.

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for Your gracious will to redeem me through the sacrifice of Your Son.

Extend to me Your wisdom, which You offer from Your abundance.

In these trying times where I fight to focus, long to care, hope for holiness;

Guide me, by Your wisdom, not mine.

Tear me, then mend me anew.

Crush me, then build me up.

For Your glory, mold me and change me,

To be like Your Son, prepared to do Your will, no matter the cost.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

A Prayer for Better Prayer

Prayer is the privilege of God’s people. In prayer, our Father hears us, communes with us, and prepares us for His purposes. Just as prayer nourishes us in our private moments with God, prayer also revitalizes and mobilizes the corporate gathering of the church.

I hope you are praying with others. Pray together with your church, your family, your friends. Start a prayer group, and see what God does when His people pray together for His glory, kingdom, and will.

Some people are slow to pray in groups. They quote Matthew 6:5–6 to support their solitary prayer life:

And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

I don’t think Jesus is prohibiting public prayer in this passage; rather He is rebuking showmanship and providing a straightforward remedy for it.

Jesus is on to something. We can so easily corrupt prayer—whether it is public or private. Christians are recovering sin addicts, and hindrances and

temptations abound both in church meetings and prayer closets. We need to pray for better prayer.

Father,

Ward off everything that hinders my communication with You, especially timidity and pride.

Provoke me to pray—

Individually with consistency and secrecy,

Corporately with courage and fervency.

Utilize every means,

Whether by good or ill, by health or pain, by wealth or lack, by presence or absence,

To demand my prayers.

May I not grow quiet.

Father,

When I am alone in prayer,

Wash away my self-righteousness from godly obedience,

Wash away my callousness from faithful recurrence,

Wash away my restlessness from holy stillness,

Wash away my timidity from heavenly humility,

That I may speak with You, my Master and friend.

Father,

When I am united with Your people in prayer,

Challenge us to offer bold requests,

Challenge us to lift wholehearted thanks,

*Challenge us to display an unwavering
voice, not given to fear,*

Challenge us to have a hearing heart,

That we may pray as one for Your kingdom to come.

Father,

Why do our churches forget public prayer?

*Why do we hide amid adorned
walls to pray for the world?*

Drive prayer to the streets for the hurt,

to the schools for the lost,

to the internet for the addicted,

*May we pray at all times in all
places, seeking the good of all.*

Father,

*Why does my mind wander when I
pray? Where do my priorities lie?*

*Why do I turn to my own thoughts
instead of turning to You?*

*I confess that I have too often
abandoned private prayer.*

I have ignored You, my own Father.

Steal me from my attention to cluttered schedules.

*Steal me from my affection to
degrading entertainment.*

Steal me from my associations with fruitless company.

Steal me from my fondness of iniquity,

May I pray consistently and constantly.

Father,

Why do my feet wander from prayer?

Where would I rather be?

*Why do I busy myself with selfish activities
instead of resting with You?*

Occupied by foe or friend, by work or pleasure,

May I obediently sequester myself with You.

As you beckon me to Yourself in prayer,

Overlook my shortcomings!

*I often pray with pagan repetition, as if You
do not hear and recognize my needs.*

*I often pray with reciprocal motives, as if You
will repay blessing for eloquent words.*

*I often pray with a controlling will, as if
You could be manipulated by me.*

*I often pray with a pharisaical spirit, as if
You do not notice my exhibitionism.*

Accept my wavering hands!

Acknowledge my fumbled words!

Redeem my inadequate prayers!

*May Your Spirit convey my intentions
and cleanse my requests.*

I long to pray better prayers.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Notes

Chapter 1: Claiming Promises God Did Not Make

1. See D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel* (Hendrickson, 2004), 29–54.
2. For an overview of the history and doctrine of the Christian Science movement, please consult Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Bethany House, 2003), 148–91.
3. “Is the Word of Faith Movement Biblical?,” GotQuestions.org, <https://www.gotquestions.org/Word-Faith.html>.
4. Kris Vallotton, “How to Pray Prayers That Shape History,” Kris Vallotton, <https://podcast.krisvallotton.com/how-to-pray-prayers-that-shape-history>.

Chapter 2: When You Pray, “Lord Help Me! But Don’t Change Me!”

1. D. L. Moody, *Prevailing Prayer* (Moody, 2016), 125.

Chapter 3: When the Answer Is Yes but Not What You Expected

1. Athanasius, *The Life of Antony*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. H. Ellershaw (Hendrickson, 2004), 210–11.

Chapter 4: When a Prayer for Peace Ends in a National Disaster

1. John Piper, “Depression Fought Hard to Have Him,” *Desiring God*, November 26, 2019, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/depression-fought-hard-to-have-him>.
2. William Cowper, “Sometimes a Light Surprises,” *Hymnal.net*, <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/706>.

Chapter 5: When the Request Is Denied

1. John MacArthur, "How God Uses Suffering, Part 1," Grace to You, February 1, 1998, <https://www.gty.org/sermons/47-83/how-god-uses-suffering-part-1>.
2. Dr. Howard Taylor, Geraldine Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Moody, 2009), 165,
3. Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, 165,

Chapter 6: God in the Garden

1. C. S. Lewis, *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis and Walter Hooper (Harcourt Books, 1993) 305.
2. Jonathan Edwards, "Christ's Agony," CCEL, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/sermons.agony.html>.
3. Anne Ross Cousin, "O Christ, What Burdens Bow'd Thy Head!," Hymnal.net, <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/94>.
4. Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (IVP, 1993), 176.
5. "Prayer and Other Religious Practices," Pew Research Center, February 7, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/02/26/prayer-and-other-religious-practices/>.
6. "We must remember the love of God, which ever desires only what is best for us. We must remember the wisdom of God, which alone knows what is best for us. We must remember the power of God, which alone can bring to pass that which is best for us. He who prays with a perfect trust in the love, wisdom and power of God will find God's peace." *Barclay's Daily Study Bible*, <https://studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb/philippians-4.html>.
7. Benjamin Schmolck, "My Jesus, as Thou Wilt!" (1704), Hymnary.org, https://hymnary.org/text/my_jesus_as_thou_wilt.
8. Charles Gabriel, "I Stand Amazed in the Presence," (1905).

Chapter 7: Managing the Disappointment of Unanswered Prayer

1. For the entire narrative, the ancient historian Josephus records both the defilement and the cleansing of the Temple (Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* [Hendrickson, 1987], 322–88). Second Maccabees 6:2 specifically mentions the worship to Zeus.
2. The Voice of the Martyrs website: www.persecution.com.

Chapter 8: Getting Beyond Requests to God Himself

1. John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Multnomah, 2011), 10.
2. Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude King, *Experiencing God* (B&H, 2008), 69.
3. John G. Paton, *Missionary to the New Hebrides: An Autobiography*, vol. 2 (Hodder and Sloughton, 1889), 11.

4. Jonathan Edwards, *Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd: Missionary to the Indians* (S. Converse, 1822), 50.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., 65.
7. Robert Burns, “Tam o’Shanter,” Scottish Poetry Library, <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poem/tam-o-shanter-tale/>.
8. Bernard of Clairvaux, “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” Hymnary.org, https://hymnary.org/text/jesus_the_very_thought_of_thee.
9. Graham Kendrick, “Knowing You (All I Once Held Dear),” <https://grahamkendrick.co.uk/knowning-you/>.

Chapter 9: Why Pray If God Is in Control

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (HarperOne, 2001), 148.

Appendix: Prayers for “Stuck” People

1. Arthur Bennett, ed., “God the All,” in *The Valley of Vision* (Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 4–5.
2. Arthur Bennett, ed., *The Valley of Vision* (Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), xxiv–xxv.