

DAILY
PRAYERS
for
UNCERTAIN
TIMES

Richella J. Parham

Dear friend,

I'm so grateful for this chance to partner with you in the practice of speaking to God every day. If you're like me, you want to pray. You believe strongly in the power of prayer. You're grateful for the opportunity to talk with God. You may even be able to quote Bible verses about prayer.

And yet, you sometimes struggle to pray. And in times of uncertainty, that struggle is magnified many times over.

Perhaps you think you can't possibly go to God with your confusion, your doubts, or your fears. Maybe you feel ashamed of the mixed motives you bring to praying. Perhaps you don't even want to pray; maybe prayer seems futile, a waste of valuable time.

I'm guessing that most of us have experienced one or more of those hesitations at some point. But I find it helpful to remember that, as Richard Foster says, God "is big enough to receive us with all our mixture. We do not have to be bright, or pure, or filled with faith, or anything. That is what grace means, and not only are we saved by grace, we live by it as well. And we pray by it."

[*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco, HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), p. 8.]

But what if you can't find the words?

For many years I believed that only spontaneous, unrehearsed prayer could be acceptable to God. I thought that anything else would be the kind of "vain repetition" that Jesus warns about in Matthew 6.

I had no idea that there was a rich history of written prayers spoken by the people of God across the centuries. Of course, if I had known about them, I might have rejected them anyway. But I've learned that written prayers can be very helpful to focus my heart and mind.

In that spirit, I've put together seven sets of "daily prayers" for you to use. Perhaps you'll pray these prayers for just one week and then move on to other prayers. Or perhaps you'll utilize them again and again, every week for many months. However you choose to use them, please remember not only to read the words, but to *pray* them. Go as slowly as you can. Address them to God.

You'll notice that each day's prayer includes The Lord's Prayer. If you haven't already memorized this prayer, taken from Matthew 6:9-13, I encourage you to do so. I use the familiar words of the King James Version to pray the Lord's prayer:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

But you may also want to use the words from another Bible version. I especially like the way Eugene Peterson phrases the prayer in

The Message:

Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are.
Set the world right;
Do what's best—as above, so below.
Keep us alive with three square meals.
Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others.
Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil.
You're in charge! You can do anything you want! You're ablaze in beauty!
Yes. Yes. Yes.

You'll also see that many of the prayers are taken from the book of Psalms. Sometimes these are direct quotations; other times I have re-phrased them a bit. And each day's prayer includes quotations from old Christian hymns, many of which are no longer routinely sung, but all of which I believe are worthy of reading as prayers.

In addition to memorizing your favorite version of The Lord's Prayer, I encourage you to memorize Psalm 23. Many times when I'm troubled, reciting Psalm 23 to myself is the most calming thing I can do. Here's the version I learned in 2nd grade. Somehow the language of the King James Version makes the poetry especially comforting to me. Use BibleGateway.com to read the passage in many different versions, then choose the one you like best.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters;
He restoreth my soul.
He leadeth me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup overfloweth.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I hope these prayers are helpful to you. I like to picture you in my mind's eye, saying these prayers along with me. I believe that God is always available to us, always willing to listen when his children speak to him. In uncertain times, may we take great comfort in the knowledge that God's love for us never wavers.

Difficult though it may be, let's walk this path together.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richella". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R'.

Richella J. Parham

I'd love to connect with you!

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Day One

Morning Prayer

I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love;
For you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. (Psalm 59:16)

The Lord's Prayer

Lord, we come before thee now, at Thy feet we humbly bow.
Oh, do not our suit disdain; shall we seek thee, Lord, in vain?
Lord, on thee our souls depend: in compassion now descend.
Fill our hearts with thy rich grace, tune our lips to sing thy praise.

You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you.
I give thanks to you, Lord, for you are good; your love endures forever. (Psalm 118:28-29)

Dear Lord, I come to you this morning trusting in your strength and your might. I am so grateful that I don't have to depend on my own strength for this day. Sustain me, Lord. Amen.

Midday Prayer

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. (Psalm 139:7-10)

In Thine own appointed way, now we seek thee, here we stay.
Lord, we know not how to go till a blessing thou bestow.

Show me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. (Psalm 25:4-5)

Lord, you are so good, and I am so glad that you are with me! Help me to be aware of your presence all day long. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Lord, You are my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear?
You are the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1-2)

Grant that all may seek and find thee a God supremely kind;
Heal the sick, the captive free; Let us all rejoice in thee. (William Hammond, 1745)

I will lie down and sleep in peace,
For you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. (Psalm 4:8)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit: I am reminded tonight that you have brought me safely through this day, and you will now be with me through the night. I place myself into your care once again. Help me to trust you more and more each day.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen.
(from Compline, *Book of Common Prayer*)

Day Two

Morning Prayer

Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

○ satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. (Psalm 90:12,14)

The Lord's Prayer

Savior, breathe a morning blessing
As we rise to greet this day,
Sin and want we come confessing;
Guard and keep us in thy way.

I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.

Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. (Psalm 145:1-2)

You will be with me all this day, Lord. I know you have promised to be with me, and I am choosing to take you at your word. I praise you for your goodness and faithfulness. Help me this day to cling closely to you. Amen.

Midday Prayer

God, you are our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
Though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. (Psalm 46:1-3)

Though destruction walk around us,
Though the arrows past us fly,
Angel guards from thee surround us:
We are safe if thou art nigh.

Lord, my help comes from you, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:2)

You are with me, God. Right here, right now, right in the middle of my busy day, you are here with me. Once again I claim this truth. Help me when I falter, Lord. Give me grace to trust you more and more. Amen.

Evening Prayer

By day you direct your love, Lord; at night your song is with me—

A prayer to the God of my life. (Psalm 42:8)

Though the night be dark and dreary,
Darkness cannot hide from thee;
Thou art He who, never weary,
Watchest where thy people be. (James Edmeston, 1820)

I keep my eyes always on you, Lord; with you at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure. (Psalm 16:8-9)

Dearest Lord, you have been with me every moment of this day. I ask your help to remember this truth no matter what my circumstances. Write the truth on my heart while I sleep, Lord.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen.

Day Three

Morning Prayer

O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;
In the morning I plead my case to you, and watch. (Psalm 5:3)

The Lord's Prayer

Father, hear the prayer we offer:
Not for ease that prayer shall be,
But for strength that we may ever
Live our lives courageously.

Lord, your steadfast love never ceases. Your mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning.
Great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul; "therefore I will hope in him." (Lamentations 3:22-24)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit: I ask your help to face this day secure in the knowledge of your steadfast love, your never-ending mercies, and your great faithfulness. Amen.

Midday Prayer

Have mercy on me, Lord, for I call to you all day long.
Bring joy to your servant, Lord, for I put my trust in you. (Psalm 86:3-4)

Be our strength in hours of weakness;
In our wand'rings be our guide;
Through endeavor, failure, danger—
Father, be thou at our side.

Let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. (Psalm 5:11)

Lord, I know that your mercies are new every morning. Help me now to remember that they are also here for me throughout the day, no matter what happens. Remind me that I always have refuge in you. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Lord, the day is yours, and yours also the night;
You established the sun and moon. (Psalm 74:16)

Let our path be bright or dreary,
Storm or sunshine be our share;
May our souls in hope unwearied
Make thy work our ceaseless prayer. (Love M. Willis, 1857)

Keep me as the apple of your eye, Lord;
Hide me in the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 17:8)

Dear Lord, as I lie down to sleep this night, I pull the knowledge of your love and care over me like a blanket. Help me to understand that I can rest safe and secure in the palm of your hand.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen.

Day Four

Morning Prayer

Lord, you are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you.
May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry. (Psalm 88:1-2)

The Lord's Prayer

My Jesus, as thou wilt! O may thy will be mine;
Into thy hand of love I would my all resign;
Through sorrow and through joy, conduct me as thine own;
And help me still to say, "My Lord, thy will be done."

You make known to me the path of life;
You will fill me with joy in your presence,
With eternal pleasures at your right hand. (Psalm 16:11)

Lord, I pray every day for your will to be done, but sometimes I forget how good and right that prayer is. Help me, God, to trust that your will is the very best for me and for everyone I love. Amen.

Midday Prayer

Lord, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God.
Come quickly to help me, my Lord and my Savior. (Psalm 38:21-22)

My Jesus, as thou wilt! If needy here and poor,
Give me thy people's bread, their portion rich and sure;
The manna of thy word, let my soul feed upon,
And, if all else should fail, My Lord, thy will be done.

When I thought, "My foot is slipping," your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up.
When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul. (Psalm 94:18-19)

Lord, I ask for your help. This day is full, and sometimes I do not feel able to do all that I need to do. Help me, Lord, to once again place my trust your steadfast love. Amen.

Evening Prayer

Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness;
Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.
I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify your name forever. (Psalm 86:11-12)

My Jesus, as thou wilt! Though seen through many a tear,
Let not my star of hope grow dim or disappear;
Since thou on earth hast wept, and sorrowed oft alone,
If I must weep with thee, my Lord, thy will be done. (B. Schmolke, trans. Jane Borthwick, 1854)

I sought you, Lord, and you answered me;
You delivered me from all my fears. (Psalm 34:4)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit: as this day ends, I turn to you once again. I praise you for your goodness, and I thank you for the way you've brought me through this day. Quiet my heart with your love, O God; calm me with your presence.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen.

Day Five

Morning Prayer

Great are you, Lord, and most worthy of praise; your greatness no one can fathom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations.
You are trustworthy in all you promise and faithful in all you do. (Psalm 145:3, 13)

The Lord's Prayer

Father and Friend! thy light, thy love,
Beaming through all thy works we see;
Thy glory gilds the heavens above,
And all the earth is full of thee.

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. (Psalm 63:3-4)

Lord, when I say that you are great I find myself wishing there were a better word to describe you. You are wonderful! You are magnificent! I hold tightly to the knowledge that you are on my side. Help me to remember this day that you are for me. Amen.

Midday Prayer

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast,
Because they trust in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

Thy voice we hear, thy presence feel,
While thou, too pure for mortal sight,
Involved in clouds, invisible,
Reignest the Lord of life and light.

You uphold all who fall, and lift up all who are bowed down. (Psalm 145:14)

Lord, I long for your peace, but my mind is not always steadfast. Help me to re-center my thoughts on you, and to remember that you are always willing to lift me up when I fall. Amen.

Evening Prayer

How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty!
Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.
Lord almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you. (Psalm 84:1, 4, 12)

Thy children shall not faint nor fear,
Sustained by this exalted thought—
Since thou, their God, art everywhere,
They cannot be where thou art not! (John Bowring)

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. (Psalm 34:4-5)

Lord, as this day ends, I thank you for all the ways you answered me when I sought you. My fears are great, but your deliverance is greater. I thank you for allowing me to dwell with you, both now and forever.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen.

Day Six

Morning Prayer

The heavens declare your glory, O God; the skies proclaim the work of your hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

They have no speech; they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4)

The Lord's Prayer

Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou fount of life, thou light light of men,
From all the bliss that earth imparts
We turn, unfilled, to thee again.

The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders;

Where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy. (Psalm 65:8)

God, the earth is full of your glory. Give me eyes to see your glory this day, dear Lord, and to trust that the work of your hands is good. I entrust myself to your care this day. Amen.

Midday Prayer

Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure.

I keep my eyes always on you, Lord.

With you at my right hand, I will not be shaken. (Psalm 16:5,8)

On thee we feed, thou living bread,
And long to feast upon thee still;
We drink of thee, thou fountainhead,
Whose streams each thirsting soul can fill.

I trust in you, Lord; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands;

Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love. (Psalm 31:14-16)

Lord, as I make my way through this day, I want to keep my eyes always on you, trusting that you are my portion. You are my God; I place my confidence in you. Give me strength to remember that you provide everything I need. Amen.

Evening Prayer

We wait in hope for you, Lord; you are our help and our shield.

In you our hearts rejoice; we trust in your holy name.

May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you. (Psalm 33:20-22)

O Jesus, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world thy holy light. (Bernard of Clairvaux; trans. Ray Palmer, 1858)

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

O Lord, as this day ends, I do ask that you chase the dark night of sin away and shed over this world your holy light. Help me to remember that my place is with you, where my heart can rejoice as I trust in your unfailing love.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen.

Day Seven

Morning Prayer

Let the name of the Lord be praised, both now and forevermore.

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,

Your name, Lord, is to be praised. (Psalm 113:2-3)

The Lord's Prayer

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side; bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;

Leave to thy God to order and provide; in ev'ry change he faithful will remain.

Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you;

I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you,

In a dry and parched land where there is no water. (Psalm 63:1-2)

Lord, as this day begins, I praise your name, and I ask for faith to trust that you will order and provide and also for courage to leave things in your capable hands. Amen.

Midday Prayer

I call on you, my God, for you will answer me;

Turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.

Show me the wonders of your great love. (Psalm 17:6-7)

Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake to guide the future as he has the past;

Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake; all now mysterious shall be bright at last.

Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know his voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.

For in the time of trouble you shall hide me in your pavilion;

In the secret place of your tabernacle you shall hide me;

You shall set me high upon a rock. (Psalm 27:5)

Gracious God, even as I walk through all the uncertainties of this day, I want to remember that the future is in your hands. You have always been good and faithful, Lord, and I know that you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Let me never forget that I can trust in you. Amen.

Evening Prayer

On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night.

Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings.

I cling to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:6-8)

Be still my soul: the hour is hastening on when we shall be forever with the Lord,

When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone, sorry forgot, love's purest joys restored.

Be still my soul: when change and tears are past, all safe and blessed we shall meet at last. (von Schlegel; trans. J. Borthwick, 1855)

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High

Will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,

My God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2)

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, blessed Holy Spirit, I place myself in your care once again, asking that you fill my heart with peace and gird my soul with abounding hope.

Now guide me waking, O Lord, and guard me sleeping; that awake I may watch with Christ, and asleep, I may rest in peace. Amen.