

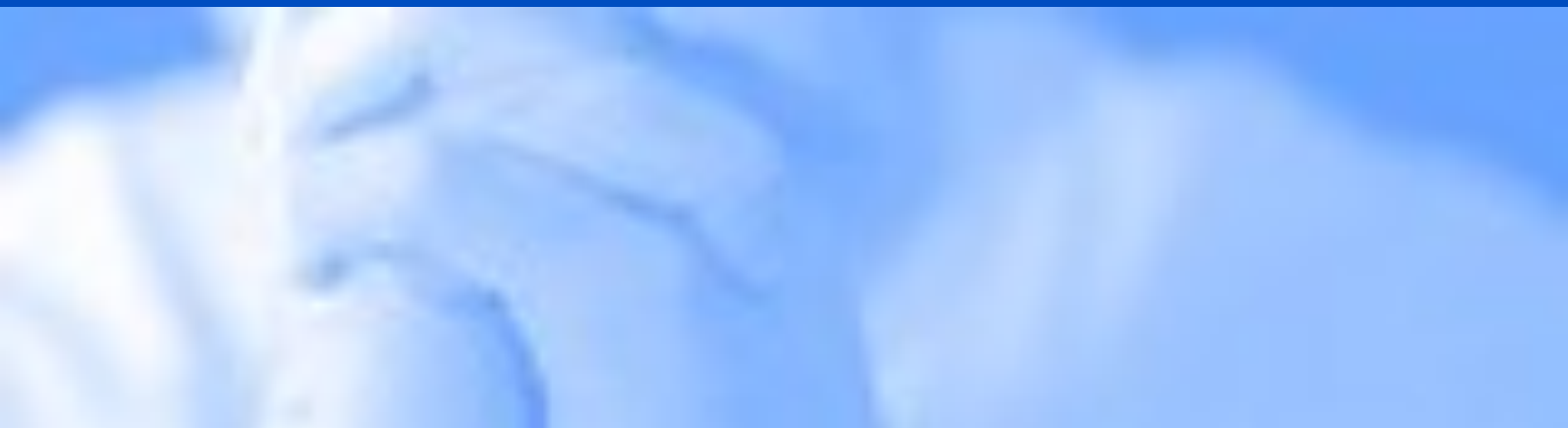


Praying Great Prayers

collected by Rowland Forman

*"May it be the real I who speaks.
May it be the real Thou that I speak to."*

- C.S. Lewis



How Then Do We Pray?

I was brought up to believe that extemporaneous prayers were the only way to pray. My experience as a student at Auckland Grammar School affirmed that. Most days at “Assembly” 1200 boys would mutter The Lord’s Prayer together. Often I would stand next to friends that chanted the prayer in the morning and blaspheme God’s Name when we met on the playing field. Clearly it meant nothing to them. Somehow that cemented the idea that all prayers need to be composed on the spot to be legitimate with God.

It’s interesting that when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, in Luke’s version (Luke 11:2-4) he records Jesus saying; “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name...” His followers were invited to use these actual words as they prayed. In Matthew’s account (Matthew 6:6-13), Jesus said,” This is then how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” Maybe this indicates that we are free to use the “Our Father” as a guideline on how to pray. I may be pressing the point, but I’m convinced that God is blessed when I say the actual words of the prayer Jesus taught, and equally delighted when I use the words as a template on how to pray.

I’m convinced that individual Psalms were used as songs and prayers by groups of Jewish believers, as well as actual prayers of individuals. At Winston Churchill’s funeral for example, the congregation in St. Paul’s sang Isaac Watt’s paraphrase of Psalm 90: “O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come...” I love singing that hymn as a prayer. Time and again though, I’ve used the words of Psalm 90 as my actual prayer, discovering that Moses’ prayer, captures thoughts and words I really wanted to pray. May I encourage you to take individual Psalms or the prayers of the Apostle Paul and pray God’s words back to him - out loud.

Since the Scriptures were written, many believers have recorded their prayers. *Praying Great Prayers* contain a few of them. They are in no way a substitute for praying the prayers of the Bible back to God. They are just another form of prayer, as prayers made up on the spot do. I love the thought that at any time I can come and bring words freely to God; my own words. God is not waiting until I bring high-sounding prayers to him. He just wants to hear his children praise him.

More recently I've discovered the joy of bringing ancient and more recent prayers to God. My hope and prayer is that some of these will capture thoughts that you have. Familiarize yourself with the three sections: Prayers of Worship and Adoration, Prayers of Confession, and Prayers for Transformation. Then from time to time use them in your times of meditation. As I've said about the Psalms, say them out loud. Maybe they will capture thoughts that you can't express unaided?

Never forget though to take the prayers of Scripture and either pray the actual words out loud to God, or use them as springboards to express what God has put on your heart.

Here are some compilations of prayers that I've used in putting this together:

- *A Diary of Private Prayer*, John Baillie, Scribner Classic, 1949
- *Classic Christian Prayers: A Celebration of Praise and Glory*, Ed. Owen Collins, Random House, 1999.
- *Hear Our Prayer: An Anthology of Classic Prayers*, Ed. Olivia Warburton, A Lion Book, 2005.
- *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers*, Ed. Arthur Bennett, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975.

Prayerfully,



Prayers of Worship and Adoration

Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, You have brought me to the valley of vision, where I live in the depths but see You in the heights; hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold Your glory. 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, that to give is to receive, that the valley is the place of vision.

Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from the deepest wells, and the deeper the wells the brighter Your stars shine; let me find Your light in my darkness, Your life in my death, Your joy in my sorrow, Your grace in my sin, Your riches in my poverty, Your glory in my valley.

- Puritan Prayers

O God the Holy Spirit, most loving Comforter, I pray that you will always turn what is evil in me into good and what is good into what is better; turn my mourning into joy, my wandering feet into the right path, my ignorance into knowledge of your truth, my lukewarmness into zeal, my fear into love, all my material good into a spiritual gift, all my earthly desires into heavenly desires, all that is transient into what lasts forever, everything human into what is divine, everything created and finite into that sovereign and immeasurable good, which you yourself are, O my God and Savior.

- Thomas a Kempis

Prayers of Worship and Adoration

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty; heaven and earth are full of Your glory; glory be to You, O Lord most high.

O God, I crave Your blessing upon this day of rest and refreshment. Let me rejoice today in Your worship and find gladness in the singing of Your praises. Forbid, I beseech You, that only my body should be refreshed today and not my spirit. Give me grace for such an act of self-recollection as may again bring together the scattered forces of my soul. Enable me to step aside for a little while from the busy life of common days and take thought about it's meaning and its end. May Jesus Christ be today the companion of my thoughts, so that his divine manhood may more and more take root within my soul. May he be in me and I in him, even as You were in him and through him may be in me and I at rest in You.

O You who are the Source and Ground of all truth, You light of lights, who has opened the minds of men to discern the things that are, guide me today, I beseech You, in my hours of reading. Give me grace to choose the right books and read them in the right way. Give me wisdom to abstain as well as to persevere. Let the Bible have proper place; and grant that as I read I may be alive to the stirrings of Your Holy Spirit in my soul.

I pray, O God, for all human hearts that today are lifted up to You in earnest desire, and for every group of men and women who are met together to praise and magnify Your name. Whatever be their mode of worship, be graciously pleased to accept their humble offices of prayer and praise, and lead them unto life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- John Baillie

To God the Father who first loved us and made us accepted in the beloved Son:
 To God the Son, who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood;
 To God the Holy Spirit, who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts;
 To the one true God, be all love and all glory for time and eternity.

- Thomas Ken

Prayers of Worship and Adoration

You are holy, Lord, the only God
and your deeds are wonderful.

You are strong.

You are great.

You are the most high.

You are almighty.

You, holy Father are King of heaven and earth.

You are three and one, Lord God, all Good.

You are Good, all Good, supreme Good,

Lord God, living and true.

You are love. You are wisdom.

You are humility. You are endurance.

You are rest. You are peace.

You are joy and gladness.

You are justice and moderation.

You are all our riches, and you suffice for us.

You are beauty.

You are gentleness.

You are our protector.

You are our guardian and defender.

You are our courage. You are our haven and our hope.

You are our faith, our great consolation.

You are our eternal life, great and wonderful Lord,

God almighty, merciful Savior.

- Francis of Assisi

Prayers of Worship and Adoration

Eternal Father of my soul, let my first thought today be of You, let my first impulse be to worship You, let my first speech be Your name, let my first action be to kneel before You in prayer.

For Your perfect wisdom and perfect goodness:

For the love with which You love mankind:

For the love with which You love me:

For the great and mysterious opportunity of my life:

For the indwelling Spirit in my heart:

For the sevenfold gifts of Your Spirit:

I praise and worship You O Lord.

Yet let men not, when this morning prayer is said, think my worship ended and spend the day in forgetfulness of You. Rather from these moments of quietness let light go forth, and joy, and power, that will remain with me through all the hours of the day;

Keeping me chaste in thought:

Keeping me temperate and truthful in speech:

Keeping me humble in my estimation of myself:

Keeping me honorable and generous in my dealings with others:

Keeping me loyal to every hallowed memory of the past:

Keeping me mindful of my eternal destiny as a child of Yours.

O God, who has been the Refuge of my fathers through many generations, be my Refuge today in every time and circumstance of need. Be my Guide through all that is dark and doubtful. Be my Guard against all that threatens my spirit's welfare. Be my Strength in time of testing. Gladden my heart with Your peace; through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

- John Baillie

Prayers of Worship and Adoration

You, O eternal Trinity are a deep sea
 into which, the more I enter, the more
 I find, and the more I find, the
 more I seek.

O abyss,
 O eternal Godhead,
 O sea profound,
 What more could You give me
 than Yourself?

- Catherine of Siena

Abbba,
 into Your hands I entrust my body, mind, and spirit
 and this entire day - morning, afternoon, evening and night.
 Whatever You want of me,
 I want of me,
 falling into You and trusting You in the midst of my life.
 Into Your heart I entrust my heart,
 feeble,
 distracted,
 insecure,
 uncertain.

Abba,
 unto You I abandon myself
 in Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

- Brennan Manning

Prayers of Confession



Lord, open our minds to see ourselves as you see us,
and from all unwillingness to know our weakness and our sin,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From selfishness;
from wishing to be the center of attention;
from seeking admiration;
from the desire to have our own way in all things;
from unwillingness to listen to others;
from resentment of criticism,

Good Lord, deliver us.

From love or power; from jealousy;
from taking pleasure in the weakness of others,

Good Lord, deliver us.

From the weakness of indecision; from fear of adventure;
from constant fear of what others are thinking of us;
from fear of speaking what we know is truth,
and doing what we know is right,

Good Lord, deliver us.

From possessiveness about material things and people;
from carelessness about the needs of others;
from selfish use of time and money;
from all lack of generosity,

Good Lord, deliver us.

Prayers of Confession

From laziness of conscience;
from lack of self-discipline; from failure to persevere;
from depression in failure and disappointment,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From failure to be truthful;
from pretence and acting a part; from hypocrisy;
from all dishonesty with ourselves and with others,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From impurity in word, in thought, and in action;
from failure to respect the bodies and minds
of ourselves and others;
from any kind of addiction,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From hatred and anger; from sarcasm;
from lack of sensitivity and division in our community;
from all failure to love and to forgive,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From failure to see our sin as an affront to God;
from failure to accept the forgiveness of others,
Good Lord, deliver us.

- Peter Nott

Prayers of Confession



God, early in the morning I cry to You.

Help me to pray

And to concentrate my thoughts on You

I cannot do this alone.

In me there is darkness,

But with You there is light;

I am lonely,

But You do not leave me;

I am feeble of heart,

But with You there is help;

I am restless,

But with You there is peace;

In me there is bitterness,

But with You there is patience;

I do not understand Your ways,

But You know the way for me...

Restore me to liberty,

And enable me to so live now

That I may answer before You and before me,

Lord, whatever this day may bring,

Your Name be praised.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Prayers of Confession

Lord, we are often guilty of focusing on our differences.
 Teach us to celebrate what we have in common.
 Reveal to us how to encourage one another
 with the truth of your love, grace and mercy that bless us all.
 Forgive us for the times when we belittle and judge each other,
 for those moments when malice or envy is our motivator.
 Replace those attitudes and insecurities with a love for you
 that spills over into a desire to support and encourage others.
 And, Lord, as we become encouragers to one another,
 we pray that we will become a shining light in this world.
 Amen.

- Terri Lynn Underwood

O God, I have tasted Thy goodness,
 and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more.
 I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace.
 I am ashamed of my lack of desire.

O God, the Triune God, I want to want Thee;
 I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still.
 Show me Thy glory, I pray Thee, that I may know Thee indeed.
 Begin in mercy a new work of love within me.
 Say to my soul, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away."
 Then give me grace to rise and follow Thee up from this misty lowland
 where I have wandered so long.

In Jesus' Name,
 Amen.

- A. W. Tozer

Prayers of Transformation

Lord Jesus, give me a deeper repentance, a horror of sin, a dread of its approach. Help me to flee it and jealously to resolve that my heart will be Yours alone.

Give me a deeper trust, that I may lose myself to find myself in You, the ground of my rest, the spring of my being. Give me a deeper knowledge of Yourself as Savior, Master, Lord and King. Give me deeper power in private prayer, more sweetness in Your Word, more steadfast grip on its truth. Give me deeper holiness in speech, thought, action, and let me know seek moral virtue apart from you.

Plough deep in me, great Lord, Heavenly Husbandman, that my being may be a tilled field, the roots of grace spreading far and wide, until You alone are seen in me, Your beauty golden like summer harvest, Your fruitfulness as autumn plenty.

I have no Master but You, no law but Your will, no delight but Yourself, no wealth but that You give, no good but that You bless me with, no peace but what You bestow. I am nothing but that You are making me to be. I have nothing but that I receive from You. I can be nothing but that grace adorns me. Quarry me deep, dear Lord, and then fill me to overflowing with living water.

- Puritan Prayers

Prayers of Transformation

A Prayer of Commitment and Surrender

Lord, I give myself to fully follow You, whatever it may mean. Take every aspect of my life and use me for your purposes to glorify Your Name.

I'm not here on earth to do my own thing, to seek my own fulfillment or my own glory. I'm not here to indulge my flesh, to increase my possessions, to impress people, to be popular, to prove I'm somebody important, or to promote myself. I'm not even here to be relevant or successful by human standards. I'm here to please You.

I'll do anything You want me to do as long as You lead me; go anywhere You want me to go since You will go with me; and say anything that You want me to say as long as You will fill me. Teach me, guide me, empower me as I climb the ministry mountain.

Father, there isn't any gift You have for me I don't want. If You want me to wait to accomplish Your work I will. If You want to use me in any way that I'm not used to, I yield myself to that. I trust You Lord, to do that which I cannot for myself. Today I affirm my love for You, my God and I choose to live and minister in Your way for the rest of my life.

To the glory of the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the health of the Church and the best of many everywhere, I ask these things. Amen.

- Compiled from Ruth Myers; Cindy Jacobs; Dale Schlafer; Ramesh Richard

Prayers of Transformation

Father;
You are good
I need help.
Heal me and forgive me
They need help.
Thank you.
In Jesus's Name,
Amen.

- *Max Lucado*

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

- *Peter Sutcliffe*

Lord, help me now to unclutter my life, to organize myself in the direction of simplicity. Lord, teach me to listen to my heart; teach me to welcome change, instead of fearing it. Lord, I give you these stirrings inside me. I give you my discontent. I give you my restlessness. I give you my doubt. I give you my despairs. I give you all the longings I hold inside. Help me to listen to these signs of change, or growth; help me to listen seriously and follow where they lead through the breathtaking empty space of an open door.

- *Shane Clairborne*

Prayers of Transformation

May the mind of Christ my Savior
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.

May His beauty rest upon me
As I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel,
Seeing only Him.

- Katie Barclay Wilkinson

Prayers of Transformation

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
 Where there is hatred, let me bring love;
 Where there is injury, pardon;
 Where there is doubt, faith;
 Where there is darkness, light;
 Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not
 So much seek to be consoled as to console,
 To be understood as to understand,
 To be loved as to love.
 For it is in giving that we receive,
 It is pardoning that we are pardoned,
 And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

God almighty, eternal, righteous and merciful, may we poor sinners, carry
 out your will and always do what pleases you. May we be so inwardly purified,
 enlightened and alight with the fire of the Holy Spirit that we follow in the footsteps
 of your well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ

- Francis of Assisi

O Lord, to be turned from you is to fall, to be turned to you is to rise, and to stand
 in you is to abide for ever. Grant us in all our duties your help, in all our
 perplexities your guidance, in all our dangers your protection, and in all our sorrows
 your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Augustine

Prayers of Transformation

Send out your light and your truth, that I may live always near to you, my God. Let me feel your love, that I may be as it were already in heaven, that I may do my work as the angels do theirs; and let me be ready for every work, ready to go out or go in, to stay or depart, just as you direct.

Lord, let me have no will of my own, or consider my true happiness as depending in the smallest degree on anything that happens to me outwardly, but as consisting totally in conformity to your will.

- Henry Martyn

Make us worthy, Lord,
To serve our fellow-men
Throughout the world
Who live and die in poverty and hunger.
Give them, through our hands,
This day their daily bread;
And by our understanding love,
Give peace and joy.

- Mother Teresa

Dearest Lord, teach me to be generous;
Teach me to serve you as you deserve;
To give and not to count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest,
To labor and not to seek reward,
Except to know that I do your will.

- Ignatius Loyola

Prayers of Transformation

A Soldier's Prayer

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,
 I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.
 I asked for health, that I might do greater things,
 I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
 I asked for riches, that I might be happy,
 I was given poverty that I might be wise.
 I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,
 I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
 I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,
 I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for
 but everything that I had hoped for,
 almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
 I am among all men most richly blessed.

- written by an anonymous confederate soldier in the US civil war.

Help me
 To live in purity;
 To speak in truth;
 To act in love
 All through today.
 This I ask for Jesus' sake.

- William Barclay

Prayers of Transformation

I am not worthy, Lord and Master, that you should come under the roof of my soul: nevertheless, since you desire, O lover of mankind, to dwell within me, I am bold to draw near. You invite me to open the door which you alone have made, that entering in there you may bring light into my darkened mind: I do believe that you will do this.

For you did not throw out the prostitute when she came to you with tears, neither did you reject the tax collector when he repented, nor did you reject the thief when he sought to enter your kingdom, nor did you reject the persecutor when he repented.

But you treated all who came to you in penitence as your friends. You alone are to be blessed, now and for ever.

- *Chrysostom*

Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere I go.
Flood my soul with your spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly that all my life may be

Only a radiance of yours.

Shine through me and be so in me that every soul we come into

Contact with may feel your presence I my soul.

Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus.

- *John Henry Newman*

used daily by the Missionaries of Charity.

Prayers of Transformation

I have prayed for new men, fiery, reckless men possessed of uncontrollably youthful passion - these lit by the Spirit of God. I have prayed for new words, explosive, direct, simple words.

I have prayed for new miracles. Explaining old miracles will not do. If God is to be known as the God who does wonders in heaven and earth, then God must produce for this generation.

Lord, fill preachers and preaching with Thy power.

How long dare we go on without tears, without moral passions, hatred and love? Not long, I pray, Lord Jesus, not long.

- Jim Elliot

Drop your still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease:
Take from our lives the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of your peace.

- J. G. Whittier

My life is an instant
a fleeting hour.
My life is a moment,
which swiftly escapes me.
O my God, You know that
on earth I have only today
to love You.

- Therese of Liseaux

Prayers of Transformation

Christ has no body now on earth but you;
 Yours are the only hands with which he can
 do his work,
 Yours are the only feet with which
 he can go about the world,
 Yours are the only eyes through which
 his compassion can shine for the upon a troubled world.
 Christ has no body on earth now but you.

- *Terese of Avila*

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;
 That I may be reasonably happy in this life
 and supremely happy with Him
 Forever in the next.
 Amen.

- *Reinhold Niebuhr*

Prayers of Transformation

It's sundown, Lord.
The shadows of my life stretch back
 into the dimness of the years long spent.
I fear not death, for that grim foe betrays himself at last,
 thrusting me forever into life.
Life with You, unsoiled and free.
But I do fear.
I fear the dark spectre may come too soon
or do I mean too late?
I fear that before I finish I might stain Your honor,
 shame your name,
 grieve your loving heart.
Few, they tell me, finish well.
Lord, let me get home before dark.

Will my life show the darkness of a spirit
 grown mean and small, fruit shriveled on the vine,
 bitter to the taste of my companions;
A burden to be borne by those brave few
 who love me still?
No, Lord, let the fruit grow lush and sweet,
 a joy to all who taste.
A Spirit-sign of God at work,
 stronger, fuller, brighter at the end.
Lord, let me get home before dark.

Prayers of Transformation

Will be the darkness of tattered gifts,
 rust-locked, half-spent, or ill-spent,
 a life that once was used of God now set aside?
 Grief for glories gone
 or fretting for a task God never gave?
 Mourning in the hollow chambers of memory, gazing on
 the faded banners of victories long gone.
 Cannot I run well until the end?
 Lord, let me get home before dark.

Of Your grace, Father, I humbly ask...
 Let me get home before dark.

- Robertson McQuilkin

The Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own but yours.
 Put me to what you will,
 Rank me with whom you will;
 Put me to doing, put me to suffering;
 Let me be exalted for you or brought low for you;
 Let me be full, let me be empty;
 Let me have all things, let me have nothing;
 I freely and heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.
 And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 You are mine and I am yours.
 So be it.
 And the Covenant which I have made on earth,
 Let it be ratified in heaven.

- John Wesley

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