

## 40 Days of Prayer

June 13 to July 22

St. Augustine wrote, "True whole prayer is nothing but love." The theologian Wayne Grudem writes, "Prayer is personal communication with God." 40 Days of Prayer is an invitation to grow in your relationship with Jesus, experience the manifold blessings of God's presence and love, participate in what the Lord is accomplishing in this world, and encounter spiritual breakthroughs. Whatever problems or struggles you are facing, Jesus can help you. James 4:2 says, "...You do not have because you do not ask God." Over the next 40 days, we are going to ask the Lord to do great things in our midst.

For those who choose to participate, we are asking you to add an additional 15 minutes of prayer to your day. We also encourage you to consider selecting a few prayer challenges, listed in this prayer guide, designed to provide new experiences in prayer and promote spiritual growth. Sunday sermons will be focused on prayer, and the study guide is based on the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew chapter 6. Additionally, we are providing book recommendations and periodic group prayer gatherings and events. I hope that you will join us.

### Recommendation:

Prayer is often thought of as an individual activity. Yet, Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "... where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." This implies that something unique happens when we gather with people to worship and pray. Over the next 40 days we would like to encourage you, to not only talk to Jesus on your own, but also to set aside time to pray with others. The church regularly gathers as a group on Sunday, however it is also helpful to find a prayer partner, attend a small group, and participate in larger prayer gatherings. Consider setting aside some time to pray with a spouse, family member, or close friend. This can be done in person, over the phone, or even through Zoom.

### A few helpful books about prayer:

There are numerous great books about prayer. Here are a few recommendations:

1. *Psalms*. The book of Psalms, found in the Bible, is filled with examples of people expressing their struggles, needs, fears, and wants to God.
2. Keller, Timothy. *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014. This is a fantastic book that increased my desire to come to the Lord in prayer. This seems like a successful outcome for a book about prayer.
3. Foster, Richard. *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. New York, NY: Harper San Francisco, 1992. This book is considered, by many, to be a modern Christian classic. Foster is an inspiring author and this book has great content.
4. Luther, Martin. Translated by Matthew C. Harrison. *A Simple Way to Pray*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2012. (Originally printed 1535) This is a short pamphlet style book that can be purchased but is also available online for free. It was used as the model for daily prayer in this prayer guide.
5. Batterson, Mark. *The Circle Maker: Praying Circles Around Your Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears*. Grand Rapids, MI. 2011. This is a helpful and engaging book if you are hoping and praying for a spiritual breakthrough.
6. Kent, Trey and Bowman, Kie. *City of Prayer: Transform Your Community through Praying Churches*. Terre Haute, IN. 2019. This is a book recommended by the City Church in Centre County that discusses the power of unceasing, non-stop, prayer.

### Group events:

Over the course of 40 days we are planning a group prayer gathering, a day of fasting, and a 24 hour prayer event. All group events are optional, but highly recommended. Dates and times will be sent out through our email list and will be posted at [newhopesc.org](http://newhopesc.org). If you would like to make sure you receive updates, please email pastor Ben at [benorshannon@gmail.com](mailto:benorshannon@gmail.com).

### Prayer challenges:

The following prayer challenges are optional activities designed to facilitate growth and provide new experiences with Jesus in prayer. Prayerfully consider selecting a few activities that seem appropriate and beneficial. If you are an over achiever, you may even attempt them all.

- Go on a prayer walk through your community. Walk around your neighborhood and ask the Lord to bless the people who live near you.
- Go to a group prayer gathering.
- Pick up a prayer candle on Sunday morning and over the next 40 days pray until it burns out. (about 15 to 30 minutes a day)
- Intentionally set aside some time to pray with your spouse, child, or family member. This can be done over the phone.
- Select a book on prayer and read it over the next 40 days.
- Make a detailed list of the blessings you have received. Spend some time thanking the Lord for all the good things he has given you.
- Memorize the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13).
- Memorize the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.
- One day, get up an hour earlier in the morning or stay up an hour later in order to pray.
- Fast and pray for a day. This might be something to attempt during the first week.
- Fast and pray for 3 days. Every time you think of food turn to Jesus in thanksgiving and prayer.
- Pick someone who has hurt you and pray that the Lord will forgive and bless them.
- Fast from social media and phone games for a day and replace the time with prayer.
- Read the Biblical book of Psalms (about four a day for 40 days).
- Pick a prayer partner and pray with them regularly (maybe Zoom or over the phone).
- Create a simple prayer journal and write out some of your prayers.
- Organize or participate in a Free Prayer outreach event. Go to a high pedestrian traffic area like Penn State Campus with friends and signs that say "Free Prayer." Ask people who talk with you about what they would like prayer for, then pray out loud with them.
- Participate in a 24h prayer initiative. Select an hour on a designated day to pray.
- Consider taking a day long personal prayer and study retreat. Maybe take time off of work, go to a park, rent a hotel room, or find a place with minimal distractions, and spend a day in prayer and personal study.
- Create your own prayer challenge and tell a friend about your experience.

### Prayer Guide:

Sometimes it is difficult to know what we should pray for. When the disciples came to Jesus and asked about prayer, he taught them to pray The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). The Lord's Prayer is the template for weekly and daily prayer in this guide. Each week will focus on a different phrase in the Lord's Prayer, and daily selected Bible verses are provided to expound on the theme.

I would like to suggest using Martin Luther's simple pattern of prayer when reading and praying through the selected Bible verses. The pattern may be summarized, "**Instruction, Thanksgiving, Confession and Supplication.**" First read and articulate the meaning of the selected verse of the day.

Second thank the Lord for something related to the verse. Third, spend some time in confession in response to the verse. Finally, allow the verse to prompt you in spontaneous prayer.

For example Romans 8:1 states, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” For instruction the verse might be summarized by the statement, “Lord, in Christ, you have completely forgiven all of our sins. There is not one sin past, present, or future that we commit that will be overlooked by your grace. When I die and stand before you, you will call me blameless, not because of the things I have done, but because of Jesus’ completed work on the cross. He was a sufficient sacrifice for our sins, therefore I am completely blameless in your sight.” For thanksgiving you may say something like, “Lord I thank you for forgiving me. I know that I have done wicked and evil things that you despise. Thank you for sending Jesus to die for my sins. Thank you for freeing me from the bondage of guilt. Thank you for not treating me as my sins deserve and showing me mercy. Thank you for demonstrating your great love for me by dying on a cross and being raised to new life.” For confession you could say, “Lord, please forgive me for not appreciating all that you have done for me. Forgive me for not trusting you with my life and future. Forgive me for falsely thinking that I can improve on your sinless perfection with the dirty rags of my good works. Please forgive me for not living in the freedom of Christ, for continuing to listen to the condemning voice of the devil, and being burdened with guilt. Lord, please forgive me for not trusting your word.” Finally, you can end with supplication, “Lord please help me to abide in you. You did not come and die so that I would be a slave to guilt and shame. Free me from all guilt and self-righteous, prideful, untrusting condemnation. Help me to experience your joy, peace and freedom. Lord, I want to be salt and light in this world. I want people to know the freedom and joy that only you can give. Please give me opportunities to share the good news of your forgiveness and abundant life. Amen.

I hope this is helpful. Remember that God loves you and delights in talking with you. If he did not want to hear from you, He would not have instructed us to pray. The apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians (3:16-21), “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (NIV) This is my prayer for you as we begin 40 Days of prayer.

#### The Lord’s Prayer recorded in Matthew 6:9-13

- 9 “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
- 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
- 11 Give us this day our daily bread,
- 12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (ESV)

#### **Prayer focus for week one, “Our Father in heaven,”**

In Christ, God loves you like a father loves a child. God is not a distant deity lost in the vast reaches of space or a watchmaker who wound up creation and set it loose. God knows your name, He cares for you, loves you, and delights in you. The phrase “in heaven” reminds us that the Lord is also the ruler of all creation. He is the one holding all the universe together by His sovereign will. He has authority as the creator and sustainer of all things. In other words, He has the power to be attentive to our cries and answer our prayers.

Day

1. 1 Corinthians 8:6 Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.
2. Malachi 2:10 Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?
3. Psalm 103:13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.
4. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
5. Galatians 4:6-7 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.
6. Matthew 7:7-10 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?"
7. Matthew 10:29-31 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

#### **Prayer focus for week two, "Hallowed be your name"**

Hallowed means holy, sacred, or set apart. This is not just a statement of reality, it is also a petition. In saying this phrase we are asking, "Lord may your name be honored, holy, sacred." It may be thought of as a request for ourselves and also for the people around us. One way to recognize the holiness of God is to see Him for who He is. Therefore, it is good and appropriate to ask the Lord to reveal himself to us, to show us His glory.

This petition might also be thought of as a request for others to come to know Jesus as Lord. We want God's name to be lifted up and honored. We want the people around us to see God through the person and completed work of Jesus. Therefore, we together ask the Lord to reveal His glory, beauty and goodness to our family, friends, and neighbors leading to repentance and faith.

8. Exodus 20:7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.
9. Malachi 1:11 For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts.
10. Proverbs 30:4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know!
11. Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."
12. 1 Peter 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.
13. James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
14. 2 Timothy 2:19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

**Prayer focus for week three:** “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

This is a beautiful prayer of submission. It is a recognition that God has a plan and that His will is the greatest good. It is not enough to realize that God exists. The devil knows that God is real and that Jesus is the savior of the world, and he shudders. The difference between a Christian and the devil is our willingness to follow. Actions speak louder than words. Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

15. Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
16. Luke 17:20-21 Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”
17. Matthew 19:14 But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”
18. Romans 12:1-2 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
19. 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.
20. John 6:38-40 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”
21. 1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

**Prayer focus for week four,** “Give us this day our daily bread,”

This phrase reminds me of Israel in the wilderness. God delivered His chosen people from Egypt, parted the Red Sea, and brought them to a desert, a place with limited food and water. He then provided Manna from heaven to sustain the people. God provided exactly what was needed at the proper time. The same God that provided for Israel is at work in our lives today. In teaching this prayer, Jesus is encouraging us to ask for what we need. There is no financial situation too difficult for the Lord to resolve, no relationship that is too damaged for the Lord to heal, no problem too big for Him to handle.

22. Matthew 6:30-34 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
23. Matthew 7:7-11 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good

gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

24. Matthew 4:4 "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."
25. Matthew 14:16-21 But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.
26. Luke 12:31-34 Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
27. James 1:16-18 Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.
28. 2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

**Prayer focus for week five,** "and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

I once had a friend tell me that forgiveness seems like a swell idea until we actually have something to forgive. This verse of the Lord's Prayer is not primarily talking about financial obligations, though it is honorable to cancel the debts of the poor. Jesus is talking about spiritual debt and forgiveness. When we sin, we rightly deserve God's condemnation because He is just. Yet, through Jesus' death on the cross, God cancels our debt and forgives our sin. Christians are commanded to forgive as we have been forgiven (Colossians 3:13). This is the path to freedom and peace.

29. Psalms 103:10-14 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.
30. 2 Chronicles 7:14 If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.
31. 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
32. Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
33. Micah 7:18-19 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

34. Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.
35. 2 Corinthians 2:5-8 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

**Prayer focus for week six, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”**

James 1:13 states, “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone”. The Lord is not the author of temptation, He is the deliverer. When we pray “lead us not into temptation” we are asking the Lord to act in accordance with His will and character. When we pray “deliver us from evil” we are asking the Lord to rescue us from the many distractions and temptations of this world. The Lord is quick to respond to His children when they are in need. God responds to us like a loving father and will protect us when we cry out for help.

36. 1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.
37. James 1:12-16 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers.
38. Hebrews 2:18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.
39. Romans 6:12-14 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.
40. Romans 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.