



Prayer Primer

Collected and Arranged by

David W. Jones

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INTRODUCTION

When I became a pastor, my family responded, “Hurray! Now we have a professional prayer, someone to say the blessing at Thanksgiving.”

To their disappointment, at holiday gatherings, I, the ordained, the minister, the reverend, responded, “Me? Pray? I’m on vacation. Someone else do it.”

I pray. I pray regularly and often, but my prayers usually lack nouns and verbs. The Apostle Paul seems to have prayed in a similar fashion as he talked to God in “groanings too deep for words.”¹

I’m comfortable with my private groanings, and to date, God has yet to complain. There are times, however, when my personal sighs are not enough, and my prayers seek words, if not for God, for my own sake, for my own expression, for my own offering.

This book is a collection of prayer starters, not prayers, but prayer helps, prayer primers. A primer is an elementary instruction book. A primer is also something used to begin flow, like water poured in an old hand pump.

¹ Romans 8:18

These starters are from hymns, scriptures, and poets, known and unknown.

I have taken their words, reformatted, restructured and often rewritten them into a construction that helps me, and I hope you, pray. Where the prayer is close to the original, I have cited the author. Where I have altered the verse far from their beginning, I left those unnotated.

I've phrased almost all the prayer starters in simple, four to five word lines. In all the prayer books I have, the prayers are written across the page. I find over and back reading inhibits my praying. With the short lines, I can pray down or up, moving through the prayer, flowing, choosing, repeating. I encourage you to repeat phrases from these prayers over and again, chanting one, two, or three lines. Chanting in your mind or out loud opens the door to the soul.

The final section is a reworking of a selection of the prayers from the first part of the book for praying publicly in groups. I found changing from *I* to *we*, *mine* to *ours* too difficult to transfer mid-prayer, so I made the changes for you.

Again, both the individual and group prayers are just starters. My

structures are just suggestions. If you don't like my phrasing or form, change it. There is plenty of blank space to the side of each prayer to write in words that work for you. Use these prayers as beginnings, as doorways to your own words, your own prayers, your own groanings with God.

Enjoy them. Write your own. Add others. Pray.

Respectfully submitted,
David W. Jones
2012

PRAYING HYMNS



*Pray as you can,
for prayer doesn't consist
of thinking a great deal,
but of loving a great deal.*

St. Teresa of Avila



Breathe on me
Breath of God

Fill me
with life anew

I want to love
as You love
and do
as You want me to do.

Breathe on me
Breath of God
until I
am wholly Thine
until this
earthly part of me
glows with
Your fire divine.

Edwin Hatch, 1835-1889

Immortal
Invisible
God only wise

In light
Inaccessible
Hid from my eyes

Most blessed
Most glorious
Ancient of Days

Almighty
Victorious

Your great name
I praise.

Walter Smith, 1876

Guide me
O Thou
Great Jehovah.

I am a pilgrim
in a barren land.

I am weak
but Thou art mighty.

Hold me
with Your
powerful hand.

William Williams, 1745

Open my eyes
that I may see
glimpses of truth
Thou hast for me.

Place in my hands
the wonderful key
that shall unclasp
and set me free.

Silently now
I wait for Thee

Ready my God
Thy will to see

Open my eyes
illumine me,

Spirit divine!

Clara Scott, 1895

Be Thou my vision
O Lord of my heart.

Naught be all else to me
save that Thou art.

Thou my best thought
by day or by night,

Waking or sleeping
Thy presence my light.

Mary E. Byrne, 1905

Be my vision
Heart Lord

all else
to me is
nothing
except
You

my best thought
You

by day
by night
You

awake
asleep
You

my light
my vision
You.

Riches
I need them not
nor people's empty praise.

You
are my inheritance
for now
and always.

You
and You alone
are first in my heart.

Mary E. Byrne, 1905

“Forgive our sins as we
forgive,”
You taught, Lord, to pray.
Grant me the grace
to live these words I say.

Rosamond E. Herklots, 1969

In my trials
Lord walk with me.

In my trials
Lord walk with me.

When
my
heart
is
almost
breaking,

In my trials
Lord walk with me.

Unknown

Tossed about
with many conflicts
many doubts
just as I am
to You I come.

Fightings and fears
within and without
just as I am
to You I come.

You will receive
You will welcome
pardon cleanse relieve
just as I am
to You I come.

Your promise
I believe
just as I am
to You I come.

Just as I am
to You I come.

Charlotte Elliott 1834

Make me a captive
Lord
then I shall
be truly free.

Force me
to give up my sword
and I shall
conqueror be.

George Matheson 1890

O Savior
in this quiet place
where anyone may kneel
I also come
to ask for grace
believing You can heal.

Fred Pratt Green 1974

Take my life
and let it be
consecrated
Lord to Thee.

Take my silver
and my gold
not a cent
do I withhold.

Take my moments
and my days
let them flow
in ceaseless praise.

Take myself
and I will be
ever only
all for Thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal 1874

Take Thou my mind
dear Lord
I humbly pray.

Give me
the mind of Christ
each passing day.

Teach me
to know the truth
that sets me free.

Grant me
in all my thoughts
to honor Thee.

William H. Foulkes 1918

Precious Lord
take my hand
lead me on
help me stand.

I am tired.
I am weak.
I am worn.

Through the storm
through the night
lead me on
to the light.

When my way grows drear
precious Lord linger near.

When my life is almost gone...

hear my cry
hear my call
hold my hand
lest I fall.

Take my hand
precious Lord
lead me home.

Thomas A. Dorsey 1938

I give Thee
but Thine own

Whatever
my gift
may be.

All I have is
Thine
alone

A trust
O Lord
from Thee.

William Walsham How 1858

Joyful, Joyful,
I adore Thee
God of glory
Lord of love.

My heart unfolds
a flower
before Thee
opening to
the sun above.

Melt my clouds
of sin and sadness
drive my gloom
and doubts away.

Giver of
immortal gladness
fill me
with the light of day.

Henry Van Dyke 1907

O Lord my God
when I
in awesome wonder
consider
all the works
Thy hands have made

I see
the stars
I hear
the rolling thunder
Your power throughout
the universe displayed...

Then sings my soul
my Savior God
to Thee
how great Thou art!
how great Thou art!

Carl Gustav Boberg 1885
English Version Stuart K. Hine
1953

For the beauty
of Your earth
for the beauty
of Your skies
for the beauty
of Your love
which from my birth
over and around me lies...

Lord of all to You I raise
this my prayer of grateful
praise.

For the beauty
of each hour
of the day
and of the night
hill and vale
tree and flower
sun and moon
stars of light...

Lord of all to You I raise
this my prayer of grateful
praise.

Folliott Sanford Pierpoint 1864

Have Thine own way Lord!
Have Thine own way!

You are the potter
I am the clay.

Mold me and make me
after Thy will
while I am waiting
yielded and still.

Have Thine own way Lord!
Have Thine own way!

Wounded and weary
help me I pray!

Power all power
surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me
Savior divine!

Have Thine own way Lord!
Have Thine own way!

Adelaide A. Pollard 1880

I need Thee
every hour
hours of joy
hours of pain
come quickly
abide
without You
my life
I live in vain.

I need Thee
O I need Thee
every hour
I need Thee
O bless me now
my Savior
I come to Thee.
I come to Thee.
I come to Thee.

Annie S. Hawks 1835-1918

All to You
I surrender.

All to You
I freely give.

I will ever love
and trust You
in Your presence
daily live.

All to You
I surrender.

Humbly
at Your feet
I bow.

Worldly pleasures
all forsaken
take me Jesus
take me now.

I surrender all.
I surrender all.

Judson W. Van DeVenter 1896

When peace
like a river
attendeth my way

when sorrows
like sea billows roll

whatever my lot
thou hast taught me to say
“It is well
it is well
with my soul.”

It is well
it is well
with my soul.

It is well
it is well
with my soul.

Horatio Spafford 1873

Nearer
my God
to Thee.

Nearer
my God.
to Thee.

Even though
it be a cross
that raiseth me,

Nearer
my God
to Thee.

Sarah F. Adams 1805-1848

PRAYING SCRIPTURE



Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray...”

Luke 11:1



When I look at the stars,
the skies,
the heavens...

I think, “Who am I?”

Who am I that You

Creator of the ends of the
universe

Notice me?

Think of me?

Care about me?

Who am I?

I am Yours.
Yours.
Yours.

Thank You...
Thank You...
Thank You...
For caring about me.

Psalm 8

Lord,
You are my shepherd.

You guide me
down the right path,
to green pastures,
by quiet waters,
where You restore my soul.

I trust and am not afraid,
even in the darkest valley
where death seems all around
I trust and am not afraid
because You comfort me.

You prepare me a table,
You anoint my head,
You fill my cup.

I trust and am not afraid,
because in Your house
I will dwell forever.

Lord,
You are my shepherd.

Psalm 23

O Lord,
all my longing
is surely known to You,
all my sighing
cannot be hidden from You.

My heart throbs...
My strength fails...
The light of my eyes
is going out...

I am hurting,
and my pain is ever with me.

For You, O Lord,
I will wait.
In You, O Lord,
I will trust.

Do not forsake me,
Do not be so far from me,
Come closer to me,
Quickly!
Help me.
You, O Lord,
are my only hope.

Psalm 38

I waited for You,
and You heard my cry.
You picked me up
from the mire I was in,
from the bog that was my life.

You picked me up
and put me on solid ground.

You put a new song in my
mouth,
a song of praise to You.

I will sing a new song,
for You,
to You,
because of You.

Psalm 40

As a deer
thirsts for a stream,
so my soul
thirsts for You.

I start to weep,
I begin to moan,
then I say to my soul,
“Soul, why so cast down?
“Trust God,
"Hope again."

As a deer
thirsts for a stream,
so my soul
thirsts for You.

Psalm 42

Have mercy on me,
according to
Your steadfast love,
according to
Your abundant mercy,
blot out my transgressions.

Wash me
thoroughly
from my iniquity,
cleanse me from my sin.

I know my transgressions,
my sin is ever before me.

Teach me.
Purge me.
Wash me.
Speak to me.

Create in me
a clean heart, O God,
put a new
and right spirit
within me.

Psalm 51

Here am I,
send me.

Isaiah 6:8

I thank You.

You comfort me.

You are my refuge.

You are my sanctuary.

In You,

I trust.

With You,

I will no longer fear.

You are my strength,

my song,

my salvation.

Isaiah 12:1-5

People are grass
that wither and fade,
but You are forever.

Eternal and everlasting,
the Creator of the earth,
You never faint
and never grow weary.

Empower me,
lift me up,
renew my strength,
set me high
on wings of eagles,
lift me up,
and I will fly,
and not fall.

Eternal and everlasting,
Creator of the earth,
lift me up...

Isaiah 40

I called out to You,
out of my deep distress,
and You answered me.

From the grave,
from deep darkness,
I cried, and You heard my
voice.

You threw me into the deep,
You cast me into
the heart of the sea,
where the torrent surrounded
me,
where Your surf,
Your waves,
crashed over me.

Then, I said, “I am lost,
out of even the sight
and presence of God.
I am truly alone.”

The waters closed in over me.
The deep encompassed me.
Weeds wrapped around my
head.
At the base of the mountains,
I fell into the deep where the
darkness closed upon me.
I surrendered. Gone forever.
(Continued on next page...)

Yet, You pulled me
up from the Pit.
My Lord! My God!
As my life faded, vanished,
I remembered You!
My prayer came to You!
My voice entered into
Your holy presence,
where You heard me!

Salvation and deliverance
I am Yours.
This day, this moment, this
instant
are all Yours.

Amen.

Jonah 2
(from inside the Great Fish)

My Father,
in heaven,
Hallowed is Your Name.

Your kingdom NOW.
Your will NOW.
in me
as in heaven,
in my home
as in heaven,
on earth
as in heaven,
in me
as in You.
NOW,
not tomorrow,
TODAY,
not later
NOW!

Matthew 6:9-13

Father,
thank You,
for I know You hear me.

John 11: 41-42

Abba, Father...

Mark 14:36

God,
be merciful to me,
a sinner.

Luke 18:13

Father,
my soul is troubled,
What shall I say?
“Save me from this hour?”

No.

Your purpose is lived out
in this moment.

For Your purpose,
I have come to this place,
this time,
this moment.

I,

Here,

Now,

for You.

Glorify Your Name
in me.

John 12:27-28

Lord,
the one You love
is ill.

John 11:3

Jesus,
Remember me
Into Your kingdom.

Luke 23:42

In my weakness
make perfect Your strength.

1 Corinthians 12:9

Lord,
You know
that I love You.

John 21:16

Amen.
Come,
Lord Jesus.

Revelation 22:20

PRAYING CLASSICS



*The world may doubt
the power of prayer,
but the saints know better.*

Gilbert Shaw



I am empty.
Fill me.

I am weak.
Strengthen me.

I am cold.
Warm me.

Martin Luther

You love,
all that is,

You abhor,
nothing You created,

You,
Lover of souls,

Love me.

God,
You,
my thoughts cannot conceive.

God,
You,
my thoughts cannot reach.

God,
You,
my thoughts cannot better.

God,
You...

God,
You...

God,
You...

God,

My heart is not large enough,
enlarge it.

My vision is not clear enough,
enlighten it.

My will is not tough enough,
strengthen it.

I can't get there on my own,
take me.

From the cowardice
that dare not face new truth,

From the laziness
that is contented with half
truth,

From the arrogance
that thinks it knows all truth.

Good Lord,
deliver me!

from Kenya

God,
be good to me.
The sea is so large,
and my boat is so small.

Unknown

As the rain
hides the stars,
as the autumn mist
hides the hills,
as the clouds veil
the blue of the sky,
so the dark
happenings
of my life
hide the shining
of Your face
from me.

I am reaching out to You.

If You will let me
take hold of Your hand,
though I may stumble,
I will not fall,
because You,
unfailing,
never falter.

Alistair MacLean

I believe
You are real
though
I cannot
see You.

I believe
You are near
though
I cannot
sense You.

I believe
You care for me
though
I cannot
feel You.

Draw me closer
so that I may
see You,
feel Your presence,
sense Your love.

I believe,
Help my unbelief.

Lord, make me an instrument
of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred,
let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is error, truth;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And 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 in pardoning
that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying
that we are born
to eternal life. Amen.

St. Francis

Most High,
glorious God,
enlighten the darkness
of my heart
and give me
true faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
with sense and knowledge,
Lord, that I may carry out
Your holy and
true command.
Amen.

St. Francis

God be with me,

before me,
behind me,
in me,
beneath me,
above me,
on my right,
on my left,
where I lie,
where I sit,
where I rise,
in my heart,
in my mouth,
in my ears,
in my eyes,

God be with me.

Wherever I go
only You!

Wherever I stand
only You!

Just You!
Again You!
Always You!

You!
You!
You!

When things are good,
You!

When things are bad,
You!

You!
You!
Always You!

Hasidic

Lord,
Give me
 the power to be gentle,
 the strength to be merciful,
 the will to forgive,
 the patience to understand,
 the endurance to be faithful,
 and the love
 the world needs
 from me.

Show me,
Gracious Lord,
 the peace I should seek,
 the peace I can keep,
 the peace I must forgo,
 and the peace I must give,
For Your kingdom's sake.

God,

Give me a pure heart
that I may see Thee,

a humble heart
that I may hear Thee,

a heart of love
that I may serve Thee,

a heart of faith
that I may abide in Thee.

Dag Hammarskjold

God,
be in my head
and in my understanding,

be in my eyes
and in my looking,

in my mouth
and in my speaking,

in my mind
and in my thinking,

at my end
and at my departing.

Old Sarum Primer

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

I am not eager,
bold,
or strong.

All that is past.

I am ready,
not to do.

At last.
At last.

Peter Canisus

From the unreal,
lead me to the real.

From darkness,
lead me to light.

From death,
lead me to life.

Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad

Dear God,

I am so afraid
to open my clenched fists!

Who will I be when I have
nothing left to hold on to?
Who will I be when I stand
before you with empty hands?

Please help me
to gradually open my hands
and to discover
that I am not what I own,
but what you want to give me.
And what you want to give me
is love,
unconditional,
everlasting love.
Amen.

Henri Nouwen

God,
come to me,
be near me,
with me.

Come
as water
and cleanse me.

Come
as fire
and refine me.

Come
as a spring
and refresh me.

Confront me.
Convert me.
Consecrate me.

Turn my heart,
and my life,
toward Your greater good.

In me
there is darkness,
but with You
there is light.

I am lonely,
but You do not leave me.
I am feeble,
but You give me help.
I am restless,
but You give me peace.
In me there is bitterness,
but with You there is patience.

I do not understand Your
ways.
but You are the way for me.

Restore me to liberty,
enable me to live free, now,
that I may answer before You,
and before me,
whatever this day may bring.

Your name be praised.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer
(written while awaiting
execution)

Good morning, God,
and thank You for another day.

Good night, God,
and thank You for another day.

Now, into Your keeping,
I give all doings of today.

All disappointments,
hindrances,
forgotten things,
negligences.

All gladness and beauty,
love,
delight,
achievement.

All that people
have done for me,
All that I have done for
them,
All my work, and my
prayers,

And I commit to You,
All the people I love,
to Your shepherding,
Your healing,
Your restoring,
Your calling,
Your making,
Your care.

Margaret Cropper

Night is drawing near

For all that has been –
Thanks!

For all that will be –
YES!

Dag Hammarskjold

PRAYING TOGETHER



*What life have you
if you have not life together?*

*There is no life
that is not in community,
And no community,
not lived in praise of God.*

T.S. Eliot



Breathe on us
Breath of God

Fill us
with life anew

We want to love
as You love.

We want to do
as You want us to do.

Breathe on us,
Breath of God

until we
are wholly Thine

until this
earthly part of us

glows with Your
fire divine.

Edwin Hatch, 1835-1889

Be Thou our vision
O Lord of our hearts.

Naught be all else to us
save that Thou art.

Thou our best thought
by day or by night.

Waking or sleeping
Your presence is our light.

Mary E. Byrne 1905

Take our lives
and let them be
consecrated
Lord to Thee.

Take our silver
take our gold
not a cent
do we withhold.

Take our moments
take our days
let them flow
in ceaseless praise.

Take us our very selves
and we will be
ever only
all for Thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal 1874

Take Thou our lives
dear Lord
we humbly pray.

Give us
the life of Christ
each passing day.

Teach us
to know the truth
that sets us free.

Grant us
in all we do
to honor Thee.

adapted from
William H. Foulkes 1918

Joyful, Joyful,
We adore Thee
God of glory
Lord of love.

Our hearts unfold
as flowers
before Thee
opening to
the sun above.

Melt our clouds
of sin and sadness
drive our gloom
and doubts away.

Giver of
immortal gladness
fill us
with Your light today.

Henry Van Dyke 1907

Have Thine own way Lord!
Have Thine own way!

You are the potter
we are the clay.

Mold us and make us
after Thy will
while we are waiting
yielded and still.

Have Thine own way Lord!
Have Thine own way!

Wounded and weary
help us we pray!

Power all power
surely is Thine!
Touch us and heal us
Savior divine!

Have Thine own way Lord!
Have Thine own way!

Adelaide A. Pollard, 1880

When we look at the stars,
the skies,
the heavens...

We think, “Who are we?”

Who are we that You

Creator of the ends of the
universe

Notice us?

Think of us?

Care about us?

Who are we?

We are Yours.
Yours.
Yours.

Thank You...
Thank You...
Thank You...
For caring about us.

Psalm 8

Lord, You are our shepherd.

Guide us down the right paths.
Guide us to green pastures.
Guide us to quiet waters.
Restore our souls.

In You, we trust
and will not be afraid,
even in the darkest valleys,
where death seems all around,
we will trust You
and not be afraid,
because You will comfort us.

Prepare us a table,
anoint our heads,
fill our cups,
lead us to that place,
where we can dwell
with You forever.

Lord, You are our shepherd.

Psalm 23

God,

From the cowardice
that dare not face new truth,

From the laziness
that is contented with half
truth,

From the arrogance
that thinks it knows all truth,

Good Lord,
deliver us!

Our hearts are not large
enough,
enlarge them.

Our vision is not clear enough,
enlighten us.

Our will is not tough enough,
strengthen us.

We can't get there on our own.
Take us.

Lord, make us instruments
of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred,
let us sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is error, truth;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness,
joy.

O Divine Master,
Grant that we 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 in pardoning
that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying
that we are born
to eternal life. Amen.

St. Francis

God be with us,
before us,
behind us,
in us,
beneath us,
above us,
on our right,
on our left,
where we lie,
where we sit,
where we rise,
in our hearts,
in our mouths,
in our ears,
in our eyes,

God be with us.

God,

Give us pure hearts
that we may see Thee.

Give us humble hearts
that we may hear Thee.

Give us hearts of love
that we may serve Thee.

Give us hearts of faith
that we may abide in
Thee.

Dag Hammarskjold

God,
come to us,
be near us,
with us.

Come as water
and cleanse us.

Come as fire
and refine us.

Come as a spring
and refresh us.

Confront us.

Convert us.

Consecrate us.

Turn our hearts,
and our lives,
toward Your greater good.

Lord,

During this time, be in
our heads
and in our understanding,
our eyes
and in our looking,
our mouths
and in our speaking,
our minds
and in our thinking.

While we are here,
and after we leave,
give us
the power to be gentle,
the strength to be merciful,
the will to forgive,
the patience to understand,
the endurance to be faithful,
and the love
the world needs
from us.

Amen.

Appendix: Quotes for Meditation

In our congregation, on the front of the bulletin each Sunday is a different quote to help participants prepare for worship.

Here are some quotes you can use to prepare your mind and heart for prayer or use as a starting point to talk with God. The quotes are divided in progressive sections: *Attend; Accept; Let Go; Orient; Appreciate; Trust; and Leap!*

Attend

In order to prepare yourself, just pay attention, attend to your body, your mind, your thoughts, your emotions. Before a person can fully be open to God, there is much we need to see first.

Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way into the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace. Frederick Buechner

In the name of God, stop a moment, cease your work, look around you. Leo Tolstoy

Caretake this moment. Immerse yourself in its particulars. Respond to this person, this challenge, this deed. Quit evasions. Stop giving yourself needless trouble. It is time to really live; to fully inhabit the situation you happen to be in now. Epictetus

What the undeveloped man seeks is outside, the advanced man seeks within himself.
Confucius

People travel to wonder at the height of mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long courses of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars; and they pass by themselves without wondering. Augustine

Listen. Your life is happening. You are happening. Think on your journey. The music of your life... Frederick Buechner

You must have a room, or a certain hour or so a day, where you don't know what was in the newspaper that morning, you don't know who your friends are, you don't know what you owe anybody, you don't know what anybody owes you. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be.

Joseph Campbell

A waiting person is a patient person. The word patience means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us. Henri Nouwen

Seek not the good in external things; seek it in yourself. Epictetus

You cannot find peace by avoiding life.
Virginia Woolf

What deadens us most to God's presence within us, I think, is the inner dialogue that we are continuously engaged in with ourselves, the endless chatter of human thought. I suspect that there is nothing more crucial to true spiritual comfort . . . than being able from time to time to stop that chatter. Frederick Buechner

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Instead of clearing his own heart the zealot tries to clear the world. Joseph Campbell

Most of the shadows of this life are caused

by standing in one's own sunshine. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Wipe out imagination. Stop the pulling of strings. Confine thyself to the present.
Marcus Aurelius

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. Rumi

Accept

Wherever you are when you stop to pray, whatever your surroundings, atmosphere, mood, or feelings, accept them. Pay attention to your body, if there is stiffness, don't resist it. If your thoughts are scattered, just watch them come and leave. To push against your thoughts or emotions is to push against a stream. Instead, accept them all and let them flow past.

As soon as we are alone, inner chaos opens up in us. This chaos can be so disturbing and so confusing that we can hardly wait to get busy again. Entering a private room and shutting the door, therefore, does not mean that we immediately shut out all our inner doubts, anxieties, fears, bad memories, unresolved conflicts, angry feelings and impulsive desires. On the contrary, when we have removed our outer distraction, we often find that our inner distraction manifest

themselves to us in full force. We often use the outer distractions to shield ourselves from the interior noises. This makes the discipline of solitude all the more important.

Henri Nouwen

This being human is a guest house. Every morning is a new arrival. A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor...Welcome and entertain them all. Treat each guest honorably. The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in. Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond. Rumi

Peace is first of all the art of being. Henri Nouwen

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing there is a field. I'll meet you there. Rumi

So, this is my life. And I want you to know that I am both happy and sad and I'm still trying to figure out how that could be. Stephen Chbosky

I may not have gone where I intended to go,

but I think I have ended up where I needed to be. Douglas Adams

*Experience is a brutal teacher, but you learn.
My God, do you learn.* C.S. Lewis

If you are irritated by every rub, how will you be polished? Rumi

Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world. C.S. Lewis

Let Go

Suffering comes when we hold too tightly to the people, possessions, and memories of our lives. Letting go is the path toward peace.

Stop trying to protect, to rescue, to judge, to manage the lives around you . . . remember that the lives of others are not your business. They are their business. They are God's business . . . even your own life is not your business. It also is God's business. Leave it to God. It is an astonishing thought. It can become a life-transforming thought . . . unclench the fists of your spirit and take it easy. Frederick Beuchner

Hold everything in your hands lightly, otherwise it hurts when God pries your fingers open. Corrie ten Boom

It's hard to let go anything we love. We live in a world which teaches us to clutch. But when we clutch we're left with a fistful of ashes. Madeleine L'Engle

Finish every day and be done with it. You have done what you could; some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; you shall begin it serenely and with too

high a spirit to be encumbered with your old nonsense. Ralph Waldo Emerson

People want you to be happy. Don't keep serving them your pain! If you could untie your wings and free your soul of jealousy, you and everyone around you would fly up like doves. Rumi

I think joy and sweetness and affection are a spiritual path. We're here to know God, to love and serve God, and to be blown away by the beauty and miracle of nature. You just have to get rid of so much baggage to be light enough to dance, to sing, to play. You don't have time to carry grudges; you don't have time to cling to the need to be right.
Anne Lamott

To love or have loved, that is enough. Ask nothing further. There is no other pearl to be found in the dark folds of life. Victor Hugo

We must be willing to let go of the life we planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us. Joseph Campbell

Orient

When I approach God in prayer, I usually

remind myself, “God is God, and you’re not.” I find it amazing how liberating that simple phrase can be. Apparently, in their own way, so did these people.

The difference between you and God is that God doesn't think He's you. Anne Lamott

We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito.
C.S. Lewis

All that we call human history – money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery – is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy. C.S. Lewis

You can be competent in many things, but you cannot be competent in God. Henri Nouwen

If you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans. Woody Allen

I didn't come here of my own accord, and I can't leave that way. Whoever brought me here will have to take me home. Rumi

My arms are too short to box with God.
Johnny Cash

I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time – waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God – it changes me. C.S. Lewis

Man has not invented God; He has developed faith, to meet a God already there.
Edna St. Vincent Millay

The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays. Soren Kierkegaard

*Knock, And He'll open the door.
Vanish, And He'll make you shine like the sun.
Fall, And He'll raise you to the heavens.
Become nothing, And He'll turn you into everything.*
Rumi

Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart. Ghandi

My concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side. Abraham Lincoln

Solitude begins with a time and a place for God, and God alone. If we really believe not only that God exists but also that God is actively present in our lives-- healing, teaching and guiding-- we need to set aside a time and space to give God our undivided attention. Henri Nouwen

In a very real sense not one of us is qualified, but it seems that God continually chooses the most unqualified to do his work, to bear his glory. If we are qualified, we tend to think that we have done the job ourselves. If we are forced to accept our evident lack of qualification, then there's no danger that we will confuse God's work with our own, or God's glory with our own. Madeleine L'Engle

If in thirst you drink water from a cup, you see God in it. Those who are not in love with God will see only their own faces in it. Rumi

Appreciate

Gratitude is an attitude, a perspective, a choice. Consider the challenge of the following sages in how you approach your life.

Cultivate the habit of being grateful for

every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude. Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is nothing so secular that it cannot be sacred, and that is one of the deepest messages of the Incarnation. Madeleine L'Engle

I always think that the best way to know God is to love many things. Vincent van Gogh

Even after all this time the sun never says to the earth, You owe me. Look what happens with a love like that.

It lights the whole sky. Hafiz

Wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants.
Epictetus

The earth laughs in flowers. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Life consists of what man is thinking about

all day. Ralph Waldo Emerson

People are not disturbed by things, but by the views they take of them. Epictetus

Trust

Too often faith is associated with what you think, believe, or understand. For the following people, faith is more akin to trust, and its opposite is not doubt but fear.

There is nothing anti-intellectual in the leap of faith, for faith is not believing without proof but trusting without reservation.
William Sloane Coffin

There is nothing that wastes the body like worry, and one who has any faith in God should be ashamed to worry about anything whatsoever. Mahatma Gandhi

I must say a word about fear. It is life's only true opponent. Only fear can defeat life. It is a clever, treacherous adversary, how well I know. It has no decency, respects no law or convention, shows no mercy. It goes for your weakest spot, which it finds with unnerving ease. It begins in your mind, always ... so you must fight hard to express it. You must fight hard to shine the light of words upon it.

Because if you don't, if your fear becomes a wordless darkness that you avoid, perhaps even manage to forget, you open yourself to further attacks of fear because you never truly fought the opponent who defeated you.

Yann Martel

In order for one to learn the important lessons of life, one must first overcome a fear each day. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones; and when you have laboriously accomplished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake. Victor Hugo

I have a lot of faith. But I am also afraid a lot, and have no real certainty about anything. I remembered something Father Tom had told me – that the opposite of faith is not doubt, but certainty. Certainty is missing the point entirely. Faith includes noticing the mess, the emptiness and discomfort, and letting it be there until some light returns. Anne Lamott

Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid. Frederick Buechner

It is not my ability, but my response to God's ability, that counts. Corrie ten Boom

We must be willing to fail and to appreciate the truth that often Life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived. Scott Peck

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise. Victor Hugo

The wise man in the storm prays to God not for safety from danger but for deliverance from fear. Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is but one way to tranquility of mind and happiness, and that is to account no external things thine own, but to commit all to God. Epictetus

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved -- loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves. Victor Hugo

Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the

sacred voice that calls us the Beloved. Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence. Henri Nouwen

Turn around and believe that the good news that we are loved is better than we ever dared hope, and that to believe in that good news, to live out of it and toward it, to be in love with that good news, is of all glad things in this world the gladdest thing of all.
Frederick Buechner

The future has several names. For the weak, it is impossible; for the fainthearted, it is unknown; but for the valiant, it is ideal.
Victor Hugo

Always do what you are afraid to do. Ralph Waldo Emerson

Leap

Since faith is trust, faith enacted is a hopeful and trusting leap.

If you are falling....dive. Joseph Campbell

I love the recklessness of faith. First you leap, and then you grow wings. William Sloane Coffin

A bit of advice given to a young Native American at the time of his initiation: As you go the way of life, You will see a great chasm. Jump. It is not as wide as you think.
Joseph Campbell

There's a reason we refer to leaps of faith - because the decision to consent to any notion of divinity is a mighty jump from the rational over to the unknowable, and I don't care how diligently scholars of every religion will try to sit you down with their stacks of books and prove to you through scripture that their faith is indeed rational; it isn't. If faith were rational, it wouldn't be - by definition - faith. Faith is belief in what you cannot see or prove or touch. Faith is walking face-first and full-speed into the dark. If we truly knew all the answers in advance as to the meaning of life and the nature of God and the destiny of our souls, our belief would not be a leap of faith and it would not be a courageous act of humanity; it would just be... a prudent insurance policy. Elizabeth Gilbert

There is a candle in your heart, ready to be kindled. There is a void in your soul, ready to be filled. You feel it, don't you? Rumi

The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure

you seek. Joseph Campbell

If you stumble about believability, what are you living for? Love is hard to believe, ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer. What is your problem with hard to believe? Yann Martel

If you want to improve, be content to be thought foolish and stupid. Epictetus

Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

The leaders of the future will be those who dare to claim their irrelevance in the contemporary world as a divine vocation.
Henri Nouwen

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. Frederick Buechner

Don't be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All life is an experiment. The

more experiments you make the better.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, I used everything you gave me. Erma Bombeck

I do not understand the mystery of grace -- only that it meets us where we are and does not leave us where it found us. Anne Lamott

Look for God. Look for God like a man with his head on fire looks for water. Elizabeth Gilbert

Thus, when you wake up in the morning, called by God to be a self again, if you want to know who you are, watch your feet. Because where your feet take you, that is who you are. Frederick Buechner

If you do follow your bliss you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. Follow your bliss and don't be afraid, and doors will open where you didn't know they were going to be. Joseph Campbell

*The grace of God means something like:
Here is your life. You might never have been,
but you are because the party wouldn't have
been complete without you.* Frederick
Buechner

*No, life cannot be understood flat on a page.
It has to be lived; a person has to get out of
his head, has to fall in love, has to memorize
poems, has to jump off bridges into rivers,
has to stand in an empty desert and whisper
sonnets under his breath... We get one story,
you and I, and one story alone. God has
established the elements, the setting and the
climax and resolution. It would be a crime
not to venture out, wouldn't it?* Donald Miller

Go where your best prayers take you.
Frederick Buechner



David Jones is a pastor
and author of the following books:

*The Psychology of Jesus:
Practical Help for Living in Relationship*

*In the Beginning Were the Words:
A Look at the First Chapters of Genesis
through Poetry*

*The Enlightenment of Jesus:
Practical Steps to Life Awake*

*Enough!
And Other Magic Words to Transform Your
Life*

*Moses and Mickey Mouse:
How to Find Holy Ground in the
Magic Kingdom and Other
Unusual Places*

*For the Love of Sophia
Wisdom Stories from Around the World
And Across the Ages*

Prayer Primer

Going Nuts! (Fiction)

For more information on these books,
go to: www.davidjonespub.com