

THE 28-DAY

Prayer

JOURNEY

A DAILY GUIDE TO
CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

CHRYS TAL EVANS HURST

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The 28-Day Prayer Journey

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I decided to put together a 28-Day Prayer Challenge on Instagram. I'd been feeling guilty about my lack of consistent and fervent prayer, so I figured I'd commit to providing twenty-eight days' worth of prayer prompts to hold me accountable to pray and to encourage others to do the same.

While I knew the basic format for prayer, as Jesus modeled in Matthew 6 (what we commonly call The Lord's Prayer), I made up the content, one day at a time, throughout the challenge. As I paused to think about what I needed to talk to God about, I shared those thoughts with others and encouraged them to do the same.

I honestly didn't think I'd finish.

I was afraid I'd fall off the wagon and fail myself and everyone doing it with me.

But I didn't. I finished the challenge and invigorated my prayer life by doing so.

Praying intentionally—bit by bit, day by day—made the idea of regular, consistent prayer much less formidable. I did it because one day at a time seemed *doable*.

This book is born of that challenge and is written with the same goal in mind. I want you to commit to prayer, but I also want you to view this commitment as *doable*.

And if you skip a day (or a few days), that's okay! Lord knows I

have done the same. But don't give up. Pick up where you left off. Ignore the day of the week if you have to and just pray. Keep going. Perfection is not required. Simply show up to talk to God knowing that He wants to talk to you.

This book gives you three prompts a day—morning, afternoon, and evening. The first four days of the week, we'll cover the basic tenets of prayer:

1. Monday: **Praise** and Thanksgiving (offering gratitude to God)
2. Tuesday: **Repent** (seeking forgiveness from God)
3. Wednesday: **Ask** (presenting your requests to God)
4. Thursday: **Yield** (surrendering to God)

While we'll be praying for others throughout the week, during the last three days we'll be more intentional about moving outside of ourselves and toward our families, friends, community, and world.

5. Friday: Family and friends
6. Saturday: Saturday challenge
7. Sunday: Sabbath prayers

As you pray, I will gently lead you through each tenet so that you can understand and think deeply about it. Then, slowly but surely, we'll put it all together.

The goal is for you to keep this little book with you for twenty-eight days. Glance at it three times a day so that you are prompted to talk to God every morning, afternoon, and evening.

If you think you might forget, try doing it every time you eat. Grabbing a bite? Open up the book. Or try setting an alarm on your watch or phone (but don't dismiss the reminder until you've picked up the book!).

After making this twenty-eight-day journey twice, I know one thing for sure: slow and steady wins the race. This method will help you form new habits if you'll commit to it, little by little, one day at a time, for the next four weeks.

If you want to learn more about having a dynamic connection with God through prayer, I encourage you to check out the video curriculum and study guide for *The 28-Day Prayer Journey*. These complementary materials are a perfect way to learn more about the powerful impact talking to God can have on your life. To get all the details and help for using the study along with the book or for studying with a friend or your small group, go to:

www.ChrysalEvansHurst.com/pray

My prayer is that God will become more real to you than ever before as you spend time abiding with Him.

It's possible. How do I know? Because it's happened for me.

DAY 1 · *Monday*

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

*Today we are praising and thanking God
for His spiritual work in our hearts.*

MORNING MEDITATION

Sometimes when we go to God in prayer, we do it with a big laundry list of what we want God to do for us! (Not me, of course. Other people.) And thankfully, God is gracious to hear and receive our prayers for what we need and want.

But the first day of our prayer journey, and the first day of each prayer week, is dedicated to praising and thanking God. When we praise God, we adore Him for who He is. When we thank God, we express our gratitude for what He has done. Rather than beginning with ourselves, our prayers of praise begin with God. If God never did another thing for us, these are the reasons we would still love, admire, and honor Him.

Here's the real deal: when you praise God, you don't need a bunch of religious fanfare. Just tell Him what you think about Him that's good. Compliment Him like you would compliment a friend. Seriously, it's as simple as taking a moment—any moment during your day—and telling God what you know to be true about Him.

And thanking God is pretty simple too.

Do you remember a few years back when it became “the thing” to keep a gratitude journal? Perhaps you’ve already discovered for yourself how powerful it can be to choose gratitude every day. Research has demonstrated that we can transform our attitudes—toward God, toward others, and even toward ourselves—when we practice gratitude. When we slow down to pay attention to our lives—spiritually, physically, relationally—we notice all that God has provided for us. And we have the opportunity to give God thanks.

Today, we’re going to thank God for what He has done for us spiritually. And over the next several weeks, we’ll thank God for what we’ve been given physically and socially. We’ll even thank God for the challenges we face. (Stay tuned to learn more!) This morning, thank God for all that He has done, spiritually, in *you*. (Later on today, you’ll pray for others.)

PRAYER PROMPT

Dear God, thank You for my salvation and my life with You.

- If you can recall the particular moment of your salvation, give God thanks for all that led you to that moment.
- If God gave you a family—parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles—who nourished your faith as a child, thank God for each of them.
- If your spirit was nurtured in a community of faith, give God thanks for all those in Christ’s body who cared for you and loved you to faith in Jesus.

This morning, give God thanks for your relationship with Him through Jesus.

AFTERNOON REFLECTION

Today you're thanking God for all that He's done for you and others spiritually. This morning you thanked God for your salvation, and this afternoon I want you to thank God for what He's done in the lives of others: loving and redeeming and guiding them.

One of the people whose faith I thank God for is my mom. Her faithful walk with Jesus not only shaped me but also formed faith in my sister and my brothers. As we watched her depend on God—in good times and in trying times—we learned what it looks like to trust God and walk with Him. God used my mother's spiritual life in our lives, and in the lives of so many others, and so I thank God for her faith in Him.

- Maybe you had grandparents or parents whose faith was a solid rock for your family. Thank God for their faith.
- Maybe you had a sibling or some other peer who shepherded you by taking you to youth group or summer camp, where you met Jesus. Thank God for their faith.
- Maybe there's a pastor or other spiritual leader who invested in you and brought you near to God. Thank God for their faith.
- Maybe you see faith forming in the life of your child, a niece or nephew, or another young person. Thank God for their faith.

This afternoon, give God thanks for His grace in calling others to Himself.

EVENING INSPIRATION

In his letter to the Romans, Paul addresses the hope of believers. They've received spiritual salvation, but they're waiting for the

redemption of their *bodies*. He explains, “But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently” (Rom. 8:24–25).

Isn't the same true as we hope for the salvation of loved ones who don't yet know Christ? With confidence in God, we wait for what we don't yet see. Maybe it's the salvation of an older relative who's close to death. Or maybe we've prayed for years that a dear friend would come to know the Lord. Or maybe you're the parent of a wayward child, and you're praying for God to take ahold of his life or her life in a powerful way.

Tonight, thank God for what you don't yet see! Offer Him the ones you love who don't yet know Him, and thank Him in advance for their salvation.

DAY 2 • *Tuesday*

REPENT

Today we are considering the gift of God's invitation to repent.

MORNING MEDITATION

Repentance. To be honest, this is the part of prayer I really don't like. It's the part where I examine my heart to notice my thoughts, my actions, and areas of my life where I am not pleasing God. And when the Spirit reveals them, I have the opportunity to seek God's forgiveness.

So there is beauty in repentance! By asking for forgiveness when I have offended God, hurt others, or harmed myself, I clear the way for Him to work more deeply and fully in my life.

Take a moment to ask God where you are not in right standing with Him. Don't rush through it. Ask Him to show you where there is a disconnect between what He wants for you and how you are living. Then sit for a few minutes to listen to Him. You'll be surprised by what He wants to say to you when you give Him a few minutes to talk.

If you are so led, share your areas of struggle on the blank page at the end of this day's prayers. Want to go a step farther? Confess your area of struggle to a friend during a visit or a phone call or even in a text or an email. Ask your friend to hold you accountable over the next seven days to consistently please God in that area of your life. Your bravery to acknowledge your sin to another might even help them do the same.

AFTERNOON REFLECTION

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

test me and know my anxious thoughts.

Point out anything in me that offends you,

and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

—Psalm 139:23–24 NLT

The reason sin is so destructive is that—in addition to harming us—it offends God and it also hurts others. This morning we talked about how confessing our sins to God helps us find freedom. Our honesty with God is the key that unlocks our ability to walk in the fullness of who we really are and who God wants us to be. And this afternoon, we’re considering the ways that our sin offends God.

Sometimes the enemy can twist our thinking to make us believe that as long as no one gets hurt, anything goes. Whether it’s our sexual behavior, harmful habits, or any other sinful behaviors, we want to believe that sin isn’t a big deal. If we convince ourselves that no one’s getting hurt, we can make excuses, justifying our sin instead of dealing with it.

But Psalm 139 reminds us that all sin offends God.

Is there a sin in your life that offends God? Ask God’s Spirit to reveal it to you. Pause for a “heart check.” Is your life pleasing God today?

PRAYER PROMPT

Dear God, I don’t want to hurt You with my thoughts or actions. I’m sorry for _____.

Stop here and there throughout the day to check in with God. Ask Him how you can please Him, and ask His forgiveness where you have not. Repentance is not so much about finding fault as it is about finding freedom—freedom to walk in honesty with a God who loves you dearly and wants the best for you.

If it helps you, take some notes about what the Spirit is showing you. If you can, share with a friend some of the thoughts you write down. Your honesty with God, whether or not you share with a friend, allows you to talk to Him with a clear conscience, knowing that you have acknowledged your areas of weakness and sought His help.

EVENING INSPIRATION

This morning we looked at how we find freedom when we confess our sins. And this afternoon we considered the ways our sin offends God. This evening, ask God to help you notice the ways your sin hurts others.

- Does your temper hurt the people with whom you do life?
- Does your addiction or habit waste time, money, or energy that could bless others?
- Does your behavior toward others set a poor example for those who are watching your life?
- How else does your sin affect others? Ask God to show you.

Here's the good news: God's mercy is bigger than any of your mistakes. It's not too late to talk to God and clear the air. You'll be glad you did.

And what if today wasn't a good day? What if you know you have blown it in some way?

Well, guess what? He knew you would need His help. That's exactly why He came.

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

—*Luke 5:31–32*

Don't be ashamed to tell Him that you need Him. He's listening.

Do you need Jesus today? Tell Him so.

If today was a day of victory for you, tell Him that too.

DAY 3 · *Wednesday*

ASK

Today we are expressing our confidence that God sees and hears us when we pray.

MORNING MEDITATION

This is the day that you have been waiting for, right? The day you get to present your *requests* to God! So don't be shy: talk to God about all of it. Often. As soon as a need, a concern, a decision, an emotion, or a hard circumstance arises, let it remind you to chat with Him. You are not bothering Him. He likes to hear from you.

This morning, what request are you champing at the bit to ask of God? No need to fake the funk and request what you *ought* to pray for. Think of something you really *want* to pray for. He knows your heart anyway, right?

This morning, pray for the desires of your heart.

Start today by being honest. What do you desire most from God for yourself?

- A home that you can own?
- Healing of a disease that's impacting your health?
- A partner with whom to share your life?
- A job that will allow you to provide for your family?

Share your big heart's desire on the blank page at the end of this day's prayers. Doing so creates a great opportunity for a heart check in the future. When you return to this book during a new season of life, you will see whether the desire of your heart has remained steadfast or if it has changed.

Pick at least one thing—the thing your heart burns for—and go for it.

Pause. Be still. Lay it at Jesus' feet and just ask.

Know that when you pray, God hears more than you say, answers more than you ask, and gives more than you imagine in His time and in His way.

AFTERNOON REFLECTION

This morning you let it all hang out by asking God for what you most want. God loves it when you trust Him with what's in your heart. This afternoon, ask God for what you *need*.

Often there will be overlap between what you want and what you need. If you need a safe place to live, owning your own home might be a want but not a need. If you have a car that gets you to work, a new model SUV might be a want and not a need. But if you're unemployed, securing a job that you love is both a want and a need. And if you're battling cancer, healing is both a want and a need.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow, born at the beginning of the twentieth century, identified our basic human needs as air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, and reproduction. The next tier of needs he identified were needs for personal security, employment, resources, health, and property. Next, he named relational needs: friendship, intimacy, family, and a sense of connection. There are a few higher-order needs, but these are the basics.

This afternoon, beloved, be bold in coming before the God who longs to meet your needs.

PRAYER PROMPT

God, You know that I need _____.

Today I am trusting You to be my good Provider.

Jot down your needs and notice how God meets them.

EVENING INSPIRATION

If God answered all your prayers, would the world look different, or just your life?

—Dave Willis, pastor

Ouch.

Convicting.

It's natural to ask God for what we want and need. But God also welcomes us to pray for others!

Author Philip Yancey offers:

When I pray for another person, I am praying for God to open my eyes so that I can see that person as God does, and then enter into the stream of love that God already directs toward that person.

Isn't this such a comfort? Maybe you know exactly what a person needs from God. Great! But often we don't know exactly how to pray for another. Romans 8:26 encourages us: "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for,

but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.”
And our joining the Spirit’s groans is what Yancey is describing.

Tears are prayers too. They travel to God when we can’t speak.

—See *Psalm 56:8*

This evening, notice one person whom God has put on your heart to pray for. Who in your life most needs God’s touch, God’s word, God’s leading? Ask God to open your eyes to see that person as God does. And then, as you pray with the power of the Spirit operating in you, join the stream of love God is already pouring out upon that person.

And here’s another thought: Who or what do you *not* want to pray for? That’s convicting too.

If there is a person or situation that you should pray for but don’t really want to pray for, do *that* today.

Why, you ask?

Because it brings glory to God when you push past your feelings to have His heart for people, hard circumstances, and difficult challenges. When you pray for those who hurt or persecute you and show concern for circumstances that you’d rather not be a part of, you experience the heart of God. And He smiles.

DAY 4 · *Thursday*

YIELD

Today we are considering what it means to surrender to God.

MORNING MEDITATION

I am not in control, but I am deeply loved by the one who is.

—Glenn Packiam

What does it mean to yield?

The dictionary defines *yield* as “to give way to arguments, demands, or pressure; to relinquish possession of something or to give something up; to cease to argue about.”

So my question to you is, Where do you need to quit arguing with God? What do you need to simply give Him control of?

The answer doesn't have to be life altering.

I mean, sure, He could be asking you to move to Costa Rica to be a missionary, but He's probably asking you to be a faithful servant on the mission field down the hallway.

Take a moment and think of where God has been convicting you, nudging you, or speaking to you. What has been coming to your mind and your heart frequently this week? What step do you sense you need to take? Where in your life do you need to surrender to God's plan?

Surrender. That's another word for yield.

The more you surrender your life to God's will by spending time with Him and walking in obedience, the more you will also get out of the way and allow God's power to fill you and work in and through you.

So think about it.

Ask Jesus what He thinks.

Then, if you are so inclined, write about it on the blank page at the end of today's prayers.

What will you give to God this week as a result of your praise, your gratitude, your need for forgiveness, and the requests you've made of Him?

PRAYER PROMPT

Dear God, you can have _____. Help me to get out of the way.

AFTERNOON REFLECTION

*We aren't called to walk in our strength;
we are called to work in His.*

And think about this: how do you need to let go and follow God's leading instead of trying to orchestrate your life?

I know it's hard to let go. We like to feel that we are in charge of our lives. But I want you to know that some things end up being harder than they have to be because you insist on doing them in your own strength.

This is a lesson that I've had to learn the hard way. Yielding to God and releasing my grip makes life easier. While I'm responsible

for what I do with my life, living a yielded life allows me to rest knowing that Someone else has an even greater responsibility for my life and is invested in guiding my steps.

Have you surrendered *that* area to God, the area where you've been working so hard?

Surrender doesn't mean you don't work, it just means you don't move ahead of God and what He has clearly asked you, convicted you, or empowered you to do.

His strength can take you so much farther than your will.

Each Friday of this prayer journey, the focus is on yielding or surrendering your life—in big ways and small ways—to the Father.

Do you trust Him? Answer the question truthfully. Then tell Him. Tell Him whether the answer is a resounding yes or a bit of a shameful no. He knows anyway. Be honest for the sake of authenticity with God.

Even if you don't feel like you trust Him, *do* something today to act like you do. Trust Him to take care of what you hand Him today.

What does trusting Him actually look like in your life? What would you do differently if you chose to rely on God to do the heavy lifting?

Breathe deeply. Take a chance on Him. What's your first step if you believe that He's good and that He's got everything under control?

It's okay if your heart is beating a little faster.

Feet don't have to follow feelings, but they should always follow the Father.

EVENING INSPIRATION

Lord, I can't say it in words.

Can You please just listen through my heart?

I know you may be tempted to jump into bed. Maybe it has been a long day, a long week, or even a long year. I know you are tired.

But yesterday we discovered that the Holy Spirit can share the deepest parts of our hearts when we don't have the insight or energy to utter a single word.

Get still and talk to God from your heart. Praying from your heart works when you're praying for others and you don't know how to pray. It also works when you want to yield your entire being to God.

Tell God that you want to surrender your life to Him. And then once you run out of words, just ask Him to read between the beats of your heart and decode the message you can't put together. He will hear. He will comfort. He will answer. Consider tipping your hands up to God, palms open, to demonstrate a posture of yielding to His will and not your own.

DAY 5 • *Friday*

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Today we're focusing on the needs of others by praying for family.

MORNING MEDITATION

A major motion picture about prayer. Your sister starring in that movie. Neither of these things is what I would call normal. Seeing my sister, Priscilla, in *War Room* left me speechless, and you better believe I was praying for her and for the people watching her. But this got me thinking. Do I pray for my sister in the normal times too?

During our prayer challenge, we're going to be praying for our families on Fridays. Just like some families and restaurants have Taco Tuesdays, Fridays are going to be Faith, Friends, and Family Fridays!

Sometimes we'll notice that we're praying for ourselves, but we've been slow to pray for others—especially those who are familiar to us, those whom we see every day and whose lives seem to be going fine.

If my sister is starring in a movie, am I praying for her? Sure. But if my sister is sitting behind the wheel taking her kids to

baseball practice, am I praying for her then? Does the normal in my life converge with the normal of my lips? Because there doesn't have to be a special crisis to force us into our prayer closets and motivate us to go to war for our lives and for the lives of others.

Prayer offers to God the stuff of our everyday lives. People *are* the stuff of our everyday lives! And those two should converge regularly. This is the discipline of prayer. Your prayers, even the ones for everyday concerns and everyday people, matter.

What normal people or circumstances do you want to bring to the Most High God?

He wants to hear about your normal.

Make it a point to pray about your normal every day.

And be sure to include your family members.

PRAYER PROMPT

God, today I pray for the family member
whom you've laid on my heart: ____.

AFTERNOON REFLECTION

To win the fight, you have to have the right strategy and the right resources, because victories don't come by accident.

—From *War Room*

Where does your family member need victory in his or her life? Have you been praying about it? Start praying or keep praying about it here.

PRAYER PROMPT

Dear God, my _____ (relative) needs victory in _____.

Your prayers, even the normal everyday ones, matter.

In order to be victorious, you must recognize that Satan is a thief who comes to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10) and that he works nonstop to disable, discourage, and defeat believers every minute of every day.

You must realize that if he has a bold strategy to overpower you, you should use your fervent prayers as a bold, strategic weapon to overcome and have the victory through Christ Jesus. Be a fierce warrior by fighting for your family in prayer.

EVENING INSPIRATION

What audiences learned from *War Room* is that prayer changes things. Do you believe it?

My middle son suffered a birth injury following a difficult birth. I was as devastated as any young mother would be that her son has a physical challenge. I took my son to the altar at church every Sunday for seven Sundays in a row, begging God to heal and to make a miracle out of this son. While my boy still has residual effects of that injury, *because of the injury* he has developed a perseverant spirit, and there is nothing that he wants to do that he cannot. While all of my children give me joy, I know all of the things the doctors said my son would not be able to do, and I've seen God answer my prayers over and over again that my son would accomplish over and above what medical science expected of him.

Tonight I encourage you to be systematic in praying for your family. (That's just a fancy way of saying, "Don't leave anyone out!") A great way to do that is to mentally picture your family tree.

- Pray for your maternal and paternal grandparents, if you know them.
- Pray for your mother, your father, and any other adult who helped to raise you.
- Pray for aunts, uncles, and cousins.
- Pray for any siblings you have, and if they have spouses and kids, pray for them.
- Pray for your spouse, if you're married.
- Pray for your future spouse, if you desire to be married.
- Pray for your children, if you have them.
- Pray for your children's children, if you've got grandbabies!

If praying through your whole family tree tonight feels overwhelming, I get that. Consider asking God to lay one person on your heart this evening, and continue to pray for that person throughout the weekend. Maybe write her name someplace you'll notice it or make his picture the background on your phone. Even after the prayer journey ends, you can continue with Friends and Family Fridays by choosing one person to pray for on Fridays.

How are you feeling about the prayers you're offering to God in this prayer journey? Sometimes we can be fooled into thinking that our prayers depend on finding the right words or having more faith than other people. But those are lies of the enemy. Are you praying based on who God is and what He can do? Or are you limiting your prayers based on what you can see or what you can make happen on your own? If you are limiting your prayers, don't.

God is who He says He is.

DAY 6 · *Saturday*

SATURDAY CHALLENGE

Today we're noticing the needs of the neighbors who live near us.

MORNING MEDITATION

One day when Jesus was teaching, a smarty-pants professor asked him what was the most important commandment of all. Maybe he was sincere. Or maybe he was trying to trap Jesus. (I'd have to hear the tone of his voice to know for sure.)

Jesus' answer actually wasn't *one* thing, it was *two* things. He said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Then he added, "The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30–31).

For Jesus, loving God and loving people couldn't be separated. And that's why we're spending Saturdays praying for *and* loving others.

Although Jesus didn't mean at all that our love should be limited to those whose homes or properties bump up against our own, that's who we're going to pray for this first Saturday of our prayer journey: the neighbors who live near us.

So close your eyes and picture the people who live on your street, in your condominium, in your apartment building and offer them to God. Write down their names in this book. Be sure to include all the members of each household near you: singles, couples, babies, children, teens, grandparents, and anyone else who lives near you.

AFTERNOON REFLECTION

This morning you noticed and prayed for all the folks who live near you. This afternoon, pray for the physical needs of these neighbors:

God, provide _____ with clean air, water, and food to eat.

God, provide _____ with adequate shelter and sleep.

God, provide _____ with clothing for their bodies.

God, provide _____ with the work they need to survive
and thrive.

God, provide _____ with good physical health.

God, provide _____ with the belongings they need.

God provide _____ with transportation for school
and work.

As you pray, expect that God's Spirit will remind you of your neighbors' physical needs. As you notice these needs, offer them to God and be open to ways God might use you to meet them. (Let's be clear: this doesn't mean that you're the Savior. But it may mean that you can connect a neighbor to another who drives to the same school, or that you can share clothes your kids have outgrown. Let God provide for others through you!)

As God leads, jot down the needs you're lifting up for your neighbors beside their names in this book.

EVENING INSPIRATION

Pray for your neighbors' "heart" needs:

God, provide _____ with good emotional and mental health.

God, provide _____ with healthy relationships.

God, provide _____ with the partner or child or other good relationship for which they long.

God, provide _____ with a relationship with you.

God, provide _____ with the spiritual nurture they need to flourish.

As you pray, expect that God's Spirit will remind you of your neighbors' emotional or spiritual needs. Offer them to God and be open to ways He might use you to meet them. (Reminder: you're *not* the Savior. In case you were confused. But God may nudge you to invite a neighbor to join you at church or to share a spiritual book that's been a blessing to you.)

Beloved, this evening and throughout our prayer journey, I want to remind you that you are not alone:

"The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

—*Exodus 14:14*

Do you know what that means? You can let it go and wait on God for His intervention in the lives of your neighbors. You can cease striving to fix things yourself and watch God work things out for you. You can relax and let Him fight for souls.

The more you trust Him, the easier it will be. And trust is built with time.

As God leads, jot down the needs you're lifting up for your neighbors in your prayer journal.

DAY 7 · *Sunday*

SABBATH PRAYERS

Today we're supporting the body of Christ by praying for our pastors.

MORNING MEDITATION

Yesterday, we were challenged to pray for neighbors who live near us. And on Saturdays, we'll continue to pray for others near us and those farther away.

On Sundays, we'll be praying for our spiritual community, our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Today I want you to pray for your pastor.

By pastor, I mean the primary person who feeds you spiritually. Think of the person who teaches you on Sunday morning as you sit in the pew or who ministers to your heart as you watch online or who preaches God's Word as you drive back and forth to work each day. If multiple people nourish your soul, help you draw closer to God, or teach you His Word, don't worry about covering them all today. Focus on the one who's most responsible for spiritually nurturing you in this season of your life.

Still don't know what to pray exactly? Let me offer you a way to pray for your pastor: this morning, pray for your pastor's health and well

being; this afternoon, pray for your pastor's family and relationships; this evening, pray for your pastor's ministry to you and to others.

PRAYER PROMPTS

"God, I pray for the physical health of _____, my pastor." (Pause to let God lead you as you pray for your pastor's physical health.)

"God, I pray for the mental and emotional health of _____, my pastor." (Pause to let God lead you as you pray for your pastor's mental and emotional health.)

"God, I pray for the spiritual health of _____, my pastor." (Pause to let God lead you as you pray for your pastor's spiritual health.)

Every week, your pastor is pouring out into others: teaching, preaching, counseling, leading, and more. Ask God to fill your pastor with His love. Prayerfully picture an empty vessel and God filling it up with His presence, His love, His power.

Your prayers matter. Spend time this morning praying for the person who helps you grow spiritually and encourages you in faithfulness to God.

AFTERNOON REFLECTION

This afternoon you'll be praying for your pastor's ministry.

1. Preaching

Pray that your pastor's preaching would be bold and Christ-centered. In a world that is growing antagonistic to

Christianity, pray that your pastor or spiritual leader would have the courage and tenacity to preach God's Word fully and to focus on the saving work of Jesus Christ.

2. Teaching

Pray that your pastor's teaching would be faithful to the Scriptures. Ask God to bless your pastor's study and preparation. Ask that your pastor's teaching would glorify Jesus Christ and build up the body of Christ.

3. Leadership

Pray that your pastor would lead well. Ask God to give your pastor vision for the life of the church and the growth of its people. Ask God to give your pastor wisdom for how to execute that vision. Ask God to bless your pastor with other strong healthy leaders in the body to do the work your church has been called to do.

4. Ministry to Individuals

Pray that your pastor would be faithful in ministering to those in your congregation. As you do, pray through your pastor's various weekly interactions with people: counseling, meetings, phone calls, emails, personal visits, meetings before ceremonies like marriages and baptisms, and so on.

EVENING INSPIRATION

This evening, pray for your pastor's family. Be thoughtful in how you think of your pastor's family!

- Perhaps your pastor shares life with a spouse. Pray for that precious one to be blessed and to be a blessing to your pastor.

- Maybe your pastor is parenting young children or older ones. Pray for the needs of those children, as well as wisdom and insight for your pastor.
- Your pastor may be caring for family members—siblings, parents, or others—with special challenges. Pray that your pastor will have strength to be faithful in these duties.
- If your pastor is single, pray that the Lord will meet the deep relational needs of your pastor’s heart. If your pastor desires to be wed, pray for that person who has not yet been revealed.
- Ask God to cover what you don’t know about your pastor’s family. Maybe it’s a health condition that’s private. Maybe it’s an addiction. Maybe it’s a difficult relationship. Ask for God’s Spirit to join your prayers for your pastor and your pastor’s family.

Satan is real, and he has drawn a target on the backs of those who lead others toward righteousness. Pray for protection, covering, wholeness, and deep abiding love and commitment.

END OF WEEK 1

Reflection

This week we have begun to lay the groundwork for a lifetime of prayerfulness. You've started to create rhythms and habits so that you can become a person who petitions God regularly. It's important that we take a minute to reflect on the week. What has been hard for you as you have started to take regular time to pray? For some of us, the hard part is simply remembering to do it.

If you've been struggling to consistently make prayer part of your day, consider using some of the following easy reminders to help you:

- Set a timer on your phone for each of the daily prayer opportunities described in this book. You can also use the timer on your watch the same way. When the timer goes off, you will be reminded to engage the rhythms of Morning Meditation, Afternoon Reflection, and Evening Inspiration.
- Wear a reminder. Use an article of clothing or an accessory to keep you mindful of your need and desire to talk to God. Perhaps the best reminder is a rubber band on your wrist, a bandaid on your finger, or even the word PRAY written in the palm of your hand.
- Grab some three by five cards and write down words or phrases that will remind you to talk to the Lord. Put them

in the places you will most likely be in the morning (on the bathroom mirror), afternoon (in the car), dinnertime (inside the seasoning cabinet), or evening (on your nightstand).

- Have a friend who is really good at this? Ask them to check in daily or weekly with you for accountability!

Sometimes it just takes a few simple things to help us keep our focus and not to forget what we are trying to cultivate through these twenty-eight days. Don't let bumps in the road keep you from continuing the journey!

Now that you've spent a week talking to God, take some time to reflect on your prayer journey. Select at least one of the following questions to contemplate your experience thus far. You can share your answer with God or a friend, or jot your thoughts down in a journal.

- What has kept me from remembering to pray? How can I create a simple reminder to help me?
- What part of the day am I finding most impactful? Mornings? Afternoons? Evenings? How can I use the momentum during that time to spur me on at the times it can be more difficult?
- What has God taught me this week about Himself through my prayer time? What has He taught me about myself? What has He taught me about others?
- What prayers have I seen answered this week? How can I use that as an encouragement when I feel like God isn't listening or that prayer doesn't really matter?