

A
Pastor Prays
for His People

*A Collection of Wise and Loving Prayers
to Help You through Life's Journey*

WENDELL C. HAWLEY

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

Visit Tyndale's exciting Web site at www.tyndale.com.

TYNDALE and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

A Pastor Prays for His People: A Collection of Wise and Loving Prayers to Help You through Life's Journey

Copyright © 2010 by Wendell C. Hawley. All rights reserved.

Cover red background pattern copyright © by Selahattin Bayram/iStockphoto. All rights reserved.

Cover gold background pattern copyright © by Ashwin Kharidehal Abhirama/iStockphoto. All rights reserved.

Cover illustration of church copyright © by Christain Tölg/iStockphoto. All rights reserved.

Author photo copyright © April 2009 by Sean Shimmel at TimeStandStillStudio.com. All rights reserved.

Designed by Ron Kaufmann

Edited by Bonne Steffen

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version.® Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, second edition, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. (Some quotations may be from the NLT, first edition, copyright © 1996.) Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the *Holy Bible*, King James Version.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*,® NIV.® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible,® copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked RSV are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1952 [2nd edition, 1971] by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Hawley, Wendell C., date.

A pastor prays for his people : a collection of wise and loving prayers to help you through life's journey / Wendell C. Hawley.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-4143-3908-5 (sc)

1. Pastoral prayers. I. Title.

BV250.H39 2010

264'.13—dc22

2010022910

Printed in the United States of America

16 15 14 13 12 11 10
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

P R E F A C E

WHEN our senior pastor, R. Kent Hughes, retired from College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, after twenty-seven years of exemplary leadership, I was asked to take the position of nonpreaching interim pastor. Since the other nine pastors on staff were relatively young, Dr. Hughes and the elders thought it would be helpful both to the congregation and to the staff for an older, more seasoned pastor to be there for the congregants. It had been many years since I had been an undershepherd, but I was honored to step in. Two of my assignments were to visit the parishioners and to write and deliver the pastoral prayer each Sunday morning.

I had grown up in a church that only believed in extemporaneous prayers; indeed, spontaneity was considered *more spiritual* than carefully prepared prayers. But as I matured in my faith and studied the prayers preserved throughout Christian history, I discovered the richness and depth of prayer that teaches and elevates the hearers. I gravitated to the words of Puritan pastors who combined the teaching of God's Word with presenting the needs of their people to God.

As I visited our parishioners month after month, it became abundantly clear that many of them were privately struggling with life's common issues: unemployment, deteriorating health, financial crisis, family disruption, wrenching loss, seemingly unanswered prayer. The list included every kind of human frailty. Their hearts cried out to me and to God. When I sat down to write my pastoral prayer each week, I tried to express their feelings, voice their concerns, and ask their questions. The prayers in this book are the result.

Following the Puritans' example, I drew inspiration from the heartfelt needs of God's people in my own church, but I also have drawn from scriptural phrases and passages as well as words from hymns. Sometimes I quote a Scripture verse directly; in other cases, I adapt it slightly. As you read

through the prayers, these words from the Bible and other sources are set in italics and the respective sources are included at the end of each prayer.

The number of prayers for each month varies; sometimes there are more or fewer prayers than there are Sundays in a month. Rather than presenting a designated week-by-week selection, I've offered a collection of prayers from over the years for your discretionary use. Some prayers commemorate particular events that are either on the church-year calendar or the secular calendar, but the majority of the prayers were written as expressions of personal praise and petition. Almost every week someone would ask me for a copy of the Sunday prayer to share with a friend or loved one. I am grateful to know that some of these prayers have been sent around the world or reprinted in various publications.

I gratefully acknowledge Pauline Epps, who successfully deciphered and typed my handwritten notes, and Beth Bergman, who shaped the spoken words into a more readable form.

WENDELL C. HAWLEY

JANUARY

Talking to men for God is a great thing,
but talking to God for men is greater still!

E. M. BOUNDS



PRAYER NUMBER ONE

Gracious God, eternal Father,

Maker and master of all things,

We praise you that with endless bounty you have made provision for **every**
need experienced by your children.

We rejoice as we contemplate the truth

that not one solitary need among us today

finds you indifferent or helpless or catches you by surprise.

No one but our God could say:

“Before you call, I will answer.”

We are staggered by such divine munificence.

Help us to really believe that

you know,

you care,

you will answer.

Now in this moment, all who come to the house of worship with a heavy
burden are going to leave it with you.

{ SILENT PRAYER }

O Lord, we praise you for a faith that teaches us

to sing,

to pray,

and to hope.

To **sing** . . .

Others from yesteryear’s household of faith honored God while facing
overwhelming circumstances.

They sang of the *wonderful goodness* of the Lord.
Moses, Deborah, David, and Mary teach us
to sing—when being tested;
to sing—when sorrow has us in its grip;
to sing—when we don't feel like it;
to sing—*a new song*
when we've passed through a crisis;
when we've had a fresh experience of God's provision;
when we've been given *songs in the night*.
Someday we shall join Moses and the hosts of heaven in singing:
*"Great and marvelous are your works,
Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are your ways."*

We praise you for a faith that teaches us to **pray**.
Not endless repetitions,
not mindless mantras,
not magical incantations,
not with ringing of bells and clapping of hands,
not in a catatonic stupor.
Rather, as a redeemed soul in fellowship with the Redeemer.
So, like the disciples, we say, *Lord, teach us to pray*.

We praise you for a faith that teaches us to **hope**.
Hope is our anchor in the storms and stresses of life.
We hope in God.
We have a *blessed hope*.
We have the *confident hope of heaven*.
Your promises, Father God, are sure and reliable—
that gives us hope.

✠ *Amen.*

Isaiah 65:24; Psalm 145:7, NLT; Psalm 149:1; Job 35:10; Revelation 15:3;
Luke 11:1; Titus 2:13; Colossians 1:5, NLT



PRAYER NUMBER TWO

God of all grace, God of my salvation,

I praise you because you are *the same yesterday, today, and forever*.
You never grow old; you are not impoverished, enfeebled, forgetful;
 your *faithfulness continues to each generation*—
 more enduring than the earth itself.

And yet, wonder of wonders, you have entered into our existence,
for the eternal *Word became flesh and dwelt among us*.
And because of that, Jesus knows all about life's struggles.

We thank you, Father God, that Jesus had to earn a living.
 He did a day's work like any working person;
 he had to face the wearying routine of everyday work,
 work that sometimes becomes a chore . . . a struggle.
He knew the frustration and irritation of serving the public . . .
 some people are never pleased.

Jesus knew the problems of living together in a family.
He knew what it was like to have unbelieving relatives.
And he knew the reality of temptation and the attacks of Satan.

We thank you, Father God, that Jesus shared in happy social
 occasions . . .
 that he was at ease at weddings, and at dinner parties,
 and at festivals in the homes of the rich and the poor . . .
 and people just like us.

Grant, Father, that we may ever remember that in his unseen, risen presence,

he is a guest in our homes and a listener to every conversation.
We thank you that Jesus knew the meaning of friendship,
that he had his own circle of friends with whom he wanted to be;
that he knew how to catch fish and how to prepare a meal;
and that he was there, standing alongside loved ones, when they
needed him most.

He also knew what it was like to be disappointed by a friend,
to suffer disloyalty,
to have love repaid by rejection.

He experienced unfair criticism,
prejudiced opposition,
deliberate misunderstanding.

He was lied about and abandoned—he knew what it was like
to be alone.

We thank you, Father, that whatever circumstances we face,
Jesus has been there before.

Because *he faced all of the same testings we do,*

he is able to help those who are going through them.

Touched with the feeling of our infirmities, *he knows our frame;*

he remembers that we are dust.

Therefore, we come boldly to the throne of grace,

that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need.

Lord, we are a needy people . . . in need of your assurances.

As we hide your Word away in our hearts,

make every promise real to us this year.

Great peace have those who love your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.

And so, sovereign Lord, as we face the New Year,

we do so in the confidence that you are with us in the midst of every
situation:

sickness or health;

empty purses or stretched dollars;
business losses or economic gains;
family disruption or family delights.
Whatever, Lord, we are yours!

✠ *Amen.*

Hebrews 13:8; Psalm 100:5, NLT; John 1:14; Hebrews 4:15, NLT; Hebrews 4:15, KJV;
Psalm 103:14; Hebrews 4:16; Psalm 119:165



PRAYER NUMBER THREE

Our Father and our God,

You are eternal; as for us, *our days are numbered.*

Seasons and years come and go, but they do not diminish you one iota;
meanwhile we are very much aware of what the march of time
does to us.

You, O Lord, are *the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

We begin life's journey thinking that we are invincible,
only to find out we are very fragile.

You are the **source** of all life; every breath we take is a gift from you.

We learn from your eternal Word of our destitute condition, and we praise
you for permission
to approach your *throne of grace.*

We give thanks for your matchless condescension,
that we fallen creatures, desperately in need of reconciliation,
may experience the imputed righteousness of Christ, our Savior.

Your gracious announcement to us is:

"The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out."

With that assurance ringing in our hearts, we come boldly to the mercy seat
and spread our desires and needs before you.

Cleanse our hearts,
remove our iniquities,
soothe our hurts,
establish our steps,
take away our fears,

lift our burdens,
and may we see your work of saving grace among our loved ones.
Tune our hearts to anticipate with great joy the awesome cry,
“Behold, the bridegroom is coming!”

Give shelter to the homeless,
food to the hungry,
work to the unemployed,
care and assistance to the needy,
comfort to those who mourn.

Give us receptive hearts to the message from your Word today.

✠ Amen.

Psalm 39:4, NLT; Hebrews 13:8; Hebrews 4:16; John 6:37; Matthew 25:6



PRAYER NUMBER FOUR

Our Father and our God, God of our heart's desire,

We fail in our attempts to adequately describe you.

We marshal all the adjectives of adoration we can think of,
and when we have exhausted our vocabulary,
we have not begun to encompass you.

Blessed Redeemer, Sweet Rose of Sharon, Balm in Gilead,
we worship you and praise you for revealing yourself, even in part,
to us, your creatures;
to us, your children.

Father, since last we entered this place of worship, a shadow has crossed
our pathway.

We wanted only sunshine . . . but experienced a chill.

The enemy of our souls cast doubts by saying:

"Has God said?"

"Those promises are not for you."

And in that hour our trust wavered.

Merciful God, strengthen our faith and trust in you,
for we are *the sheep of your pasture*;
we need our Shepherd's presence.

Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,
and we are made overcomers by the blood of the Lamb.

God of compassion, as you look upon your children around the world,
many are suffering.

We pray that you will
deliver the oppressed,
encourage the seemingly insignificant,
raise the fallen,
provide for the needy,
heal the sick,
bring back those who have gone astray.

Make wars to cease and every nation come to know that
you alone are God and that
your Son, Jesus Christ, provides plenteous redemption.
Today, wherever the gospel is preached,
when the Good News is declared,
may your people rejoice and may many others come to faith.

And now we pray the prayer guide you gave the disciples:

*Our Father which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.*

Give us this day our daily bread.

*And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

‡ *Amen.*

Genesis 3:1; Psalm 79:13; 1 Corinthians 15:57, NIV; 2 Kings 19:19, NLT; Matthew 6:9-13, KJV



PRAYER NUMBER FIVE

Gracious God, Comforter of all who put their trust in you,

We acknowledge that our trust is wavering.

So many stressful things are happening:

health issues . . . life is so fragile;

financial pressures . . . loved ones are dependent on me;

family situations . . . bad decisions have led to bad attitudes.

Lord, like David, I need to *tell you all my troubles*.

I feel battered, pummeled, overwhelmed, helpless—

fearful in the midst of my circumstances.

My vision is limited to this day . . .

I can't see over or around or through or beyond my circumstances.

In such a time as this, David said:

“God is our refuge.”

Refuge . . .

God is my shelter, protection,

safety, security, anchorage,

resource, seclusion, aid,

defense, support, guardianship,

haven, fortress, provision,

harbor, sanctum.

When I consider what you are, I echo the poet:

Other refuge have I none;

Hangs my helpless soul on thee.

*Leave, ah, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.*

Lord, your eternal Word assures me that you are *a very present help*,
not a distant help,
not a begrudging help,
not a delaying help,
not an inadequate help,
not an illusory nor a fickle help . . .
but a prevalent, substantial, immediate, efficacious, powerful help in time
of need.
Now, in your house, in your presence,
each of us confess our sins,
confess our needs,
confess our utter trust in you.

{ SILENT PRAYER }

Thank you, Father God. With renewed vigor, we refresh our souls by the
words of Scripture:

The Lord will work out his plans for my life.

They will see in our history the faithful love of the Lord.

Great Shepherd, make this true:

that our children, grandchildren, neighbors, friends,
extended family, unbelievers, coworkers . . .

*Everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear will know . . . **God is faithful!***
Praise his name forever!

✠ *Amen.*

Psalm 142:2, NLT; Psalm 46:1; Charles Wesley, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"; Psalm 46:1;
Psalm 138:8, NLT; Psalm 107:43, NLT; Isaiah 32:3, NLT



PRAYER NUMBER SIX

Almighty God, holy God,

We approach your throne as did Solomon of long ago, acknowledging,
there is no God like you in all of heaven or earth.

You are more holy than we can imagine:

so pure, unregenerate eyes will never see you,

so powerful, no force on earth can thwart your sovereign will.

Ah, but so gracious, none are turned away who earnestly seek you.

The heavens cannot contain you, yet you deign to be present,

where even *two or three are gathered in your name.*

Blessed be your name forever.

This is the day of worship, the day set aside because of Jesus’
resurrection.

May this hour be rich in blessings that the Lord’s Day was designed
to impart,

rich in

heart-centered worship,

food from the Word,

invigorated faith,

renewed spiritual purpose.

I praise you for your *throne of grace*. . . .

by your invitation we have open access, through the blood
of Jesus Christ.

It is here we find you ready to hear our plea,

waiting to show mercy and offer grace for every need,
inviting us to pour out our confessions.

Here you promise to give *more than we can ask or think!*

This is the place . . . the hour . . . of full and free forgiveness.

So with contrite hearts we confess our times of irreverent worship,
ingratitude,
listless praise,
worldly cares,
misplaced affections.

{ SILENT PRAYER }

Forgive us, Lord. We thank you, God, for hearing our prayers
and removing our sins.

✠ Amen.

1 Kings 8:23, NLT; Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 4:16; Ephesians 3:20, NLT

TOPICAL INDEX BY PRAYER NUMBER

- Advent 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60
Attributes of God 11, 13
Authority of God 7, 36
Beauty 49, 72
Bitterness 34, 54
Caregivers 33
Celebrations 2
Children 5, 7, 22, 32
Church, the 22, 32, 51, 53, 64
Comfort of God 5, 24, 25, 48, 53, 55, 56, 68, 71
Compassion of God 4, 13, 21, 35, 46, 59, 62, 72
Confession 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 20, 25, 28, 29, 30, 33, 35, 37, 39, 57, 62
Conviction of sin 10, 26, 36, 38, 43
Creation 30, 44, 51, 52, 62
Cross 16
Death 16, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73
Deception 12, 33
Deliverer, God as 5, 8, 17, 19, 33, 34
Dependence on God 20
Despair 30, 36, 54, 72
Disappointment 17, 49, 51, 55, 59, 62
Doubt 4, 5, 13, 30, 34, 35, 39, 40, 43, 49
Easter 15, 16
Elderly 18, 32
Eternal life 36, 48, 60
Eternity 16
Eternity of God 7, 18, 39, 59, 60
Faith 1, 5, 11, 18, 19, 29, 43, 58
Faithfulness of God 5, 19, 21, 39, 53
Family 2, 5, 15, 28, 34, 41, 42, 49, 52, 53, 62
Fear 33, 35, 44, 46, 58
Foreknowledge of God 1, 24
Forgiveness 3, 10, 11, 13, 21, 25, 32, 37, 39, 48, 56, 58, 61, 62
Freedom 27, 32, 50
Friendship 2, 62
Friendship of God 2
Future 18, 46, 61, 62
Generations 2, 18, 19, 22, 24, 39, 41
Generosity 40
God as Shepherd 4, 5, 21, 38, 41, 46, 48, 51, 53
God, triumph of 14, 16, 70, 72
God's power 31, 43, 58, 59
God's presence 6, 19, 21, 41, 55, 56
Goodness of God 35, 39, 44, 45, 49, 51, 53
Grace 2, 12, 17, 27, 28, 35, 37, 38, 43, 45, 61, 62
Grief 7, 15, 16, 20, 27, 33, 39, 40, 48, 50, 55, 68, 71
Healing 19, 27, 37, 42, 50
Health 53
Heart, changes in 10, 23, 25
Heaven 1, 22, 24, 26, 27, 29, 35, 50, 69
Help, God's 5, 23, 29
Holiness of God 6, 21
Holiness, praying for ourselves 7, 9, 13, 19, 25, 26, 37, 54
Holy Spirit 7, 9, 10, 19, 24, 25, 26, 29, 39, 41, 48, 55, 63, 64
Holy Spirit, gifts of 26, 63
Home 24, 66, 67
Hope 1, 13, 15, 16, 21, 22, 27, 50, 55, 73
Hopelessness 33
Hypocrisy 9, 10, 12, 14, 28, 33
Incarnation, the 55, 56, 57, 58
Independence Day 32, 33
Inheritance 50
Integrity 9, 14, 18
Jesus, humanity of 2, 57
Joy 42, 45, 62
Judgmentalism 10
Leaders 18, 30, 32, 64
Life 18

Lord's Day 6, 21
 Lord's Prayer, the 4, 14, 17, 22, 34, 47, 48, 50
 Love, God's 18, 23, 43, 53, 58, 71
 Marriage 32, 66, 67
 Memorial Day 27
 Mercies of God 8, 11, 19, 25, 31, 39, 43, 44, 50, 53, 54
 Military 17, 27, 32, 50
 Missions 32, 47, 48, 54, 65
 Money 30, 42
 Mortality 7, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72
 Mothers 24
 Muslims 11, 47
 Names of God 4, 13, 53, 55, 59, 60
 Nation, prayers for the 18, 32, 72
 Needs 2, 3, 5, 11, 20, 23, 28, 38, 40, 42, 50
 New Year 2, 61, 62
 Obedience 39, 43, 57, 58
 Omniscience of God 13, 59
 Palm Sunday 14
 Parents 19, 22
 Pastor 55, 63
 Patience 19, 28, 47
 Peace 16, 41, 45, 54, 59, 60, 62, 73
 Pentecost 26, 40
 Perseverance 29
 Perspective 5
 Plan, God's 23
 Poverty 45, 46
 Praise 14, 15, 16, 22, 25, 31, 38, 46, 49, 54
 Prayer 1, 9, 20
 Pride 37
 Priorities 8, 24, 34, 42
 Promises of God 2, 5, 8, 21, 34, 39, 58, 61, 62
 Protection 17, 20, 27, 48, 50
 Providence 9, 11, 17, 18, 19, 29, 30, 38, 40, 51, 52, 53, 59, 61, 68, 72
 Purposes of God 18, 45, 47, 48, 49, 51, 58, 59
 Rebellion 23, 43, 57, 59
 Refuge, God as 5, 38, 46, 53
 Refugees 40
 Rest 23, 41
 Resurrection 15, 16, 68, 69
 Righteousness 21
 Rule of God 14, 15, 25, 31, 44, 49, 59
 Salvation, praying for others' 3, 4, 7, 10, 39, 41, 47, 54
 Salvation, thanks for 15, 18, 21, 24, 27, 29, 38, 52, 53, 65
 Sanctification 26, 36, 43
 Satan 2, 27, 54
 Sickness 20, 27, 32, 33, 49
 Singing 1, 49
 Singles 32
 Sleep 11
 Sovereignty of God 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 18, 20, 30, 31, 36, 40, 44, 45, 47, 48
 Suffering 4, 5, 15, 18, 21, 25, 27, 28, 40, 45, 48, 54, 72
 Sufficiency of God 35, 38, 41
 Teachers 22
 Temptation 2, 21, 27, 29, 48, 50
 Thankfulness 46, 52, 53
 Thanksgiving 21, 38, 51, 52, 53, 54
 Thought life 10, 25
 Throne of Grace 2, 3, 6, 12, 20, 28, 37
 Time 3, 7, 61, 62, 65
 Tongue, the 10, 25
 Traditions 60
 Trinity, the 48
 Trust 19, 34, 40, 45, 49, 55
 Unbelief 33, 34, 37, 40, 65
 Unchangeableness of God 2, 3, 7, 18, 70
 Unemployment 19, 27, 34, 50, 58
 Veterans Day 50
 Word of God, proclamation of the 10, 11, 18, 24, 39, 40, 46, 51, 53, 55
 Word of God, the 2, 7, 21, 24, 34, 37, 39, 45, 52, 58, 65
 Work 2
 Worldliness 8, 36
 Worship 6, 15, 18, 27, 35, 42, 48, 59