

LOOK UP

ONE-TWENTY-DAYS
OF PRAYER



This devotional and prayer guide
belongs to

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How to Use This Guide	1
Jesus' Model of Prayer	3
Week One	5
Week Two	21
Week Three	37

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This devotional is designed to give purpose and structure to your prayer life. It is a tool designed to help you get more comfortable with prayer so that it becomes more natural, effective, and enjoyable for you to experience.

The most important goal of this guide is to help you *consistently grow* in entering God's presence through prayer. Here is how this guide is designed to help you:

WEEK 1

During the first week of 21 Days of Prayer, use these pages to take notes from each day's prayer service in real time. Use the prayer points that each speaker asks us to pray for, following the guide to write your daily prayer entries. This guide follows the "ACTS" acronym, which is based on Jesus' model of prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13. If you are unfamiliar with how to use this acronym, we can help you with that! Turn the page to see how to use the ACTS model to guide your prayer time.

WEEKS 2 & 3

Following the first week in our 21 Days of Prayer, we encourage you to independently work through the devotionals we have prepared for you. These weeks will consist of a self-guided walk through each day's devotion and prayer time. Choose the time of day that works best for you, keeping in mind that the goal of these three weeks is to establish a consistent, long-term practice of prayer. Continue following this guide the same way you did during week 1.

KEEP USING THIS GUIDE

We encourage you to continue referring to this guide after the initial 21 Days of Prayer ends. Use this guide and the things you learn over these three weeks as a model to continue meeting with God each day.

You can use any sort of journal to continue this practice. As a quick tip, we also recommend adding a section at the end of your journal (or the end of each week, month, etc.) to jot down answered prayers. Our hope is that over the course of this year, you will witness God do extraordinary things in your life—"exceedingly and abundantly more" than you could ever imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

JESUS' MODEL OF PRAYER

*“This, then, is how you should pray:
‘Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.’”*

MATTHEW 6:9-13 (NIV)

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us how to pray more than he teaches us what to pray. A closer evaluation of this prayer from Jesus reveals a guide, or model, for your daily conversation with God. You can follow the acronym, ACTS:

ADORATION - Acknowledge God's greatest attributes and creations. (Matthew 6:9)

Say: *“God, I adore you for _____.”*

CONFESSION - Cleanse your heart before God. (Matthew 6:12-13)

Say: *“God, I am sorry for _____. Please forgive me.”*

THANKSGIVING - Have a spirit of gratitude. (Matthew 6:10)

Say: *“God, I am so thankful for _____.”*

SUPPLICATION - Tell God what you need in this season. (Matthew 6:11)

Say: *“God, if it is your will, I need/want _____.”*

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WEEK
O N E

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

COLOSSIANS 3:1-2

“Ready...Set...[]” I didn’t have to write the word “Go” in the brackets for those of you raised in the culture of America from the 1960s into the 2000s because it’s a phrase we’ve been raised with; it’s second nature to us. (Especially if your favorite class in school was gym class, like me.)

I wish “looking up spiritually” were as second nature to me as the words “Ready, Set, Go!” In Colossians 3:1-2 we see the words, “If... Seek...Set,” that teach us a culture and lifestyle of prayer and kicks off our 21 Days of Prayer season at Journey. Let’s set the tone for the next three weeks of dedicated time to daily prayer with these words:

- “If” – You are a Christian (hopefully that’s you!)
- “Seek” – Pursue spiritual things, not just earthly things, every day
- “Set” – Your thoughts on Heaven AND Heaven on your thoughts

That’s a nice definition of our next 21 days. “Set” your thoughts on heaven...AND (maybe more importantly) set “heaven on your thoughts.” Or, to say it another way, “bring Jesus into your circumstances.” That’s what “Looking Up” in prayer is intended to do. I hope to see you in person every day in the coming week for our time of corporate prayer, and I hope you will continue every day in personal prayer through the 21 days. Lastly, I hope you’ll join us for our Revival Nights on January 29th, 30th, and 31st to celebrate the end of this prayer season. It’s going to be a great 21 days!

Ready...Set...Look Up!

A God, I adore you and praise you because you are visible to me when I look up, and you become more present in my circumstances as I look around. Praise God for the first thing that comes to mind when you focus your thoughts on Him, and for one thing that you can see Him doing in your life as you begin 2025.

C Confess to God three areas from 2024 that you didn't experience peace consistently because you didn't set your thoughts on Heaven or set Heaven on your thoughts (i.e. "bring Jesus into your circumstances").

T Thank God that prayer changes perspective, even when it doesn't immediately change circumstances. And thank God for what your current circumstances are doing for you spiritually. List three things you're going through that could result in spiritual growth if you turned them over to God.

S As you look around your circumstances to begin the new year, what three things, and what three people, do you need to ask God to be with and help you with? Write them down, along with what you would like God to do for each in one short phrase.

“Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.’ So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

2 KINGS 6:17

A Praise God that He surrounds us with his omnipresence. What are the first three words that come to mind when you think, “God is always here”? Write them down below.

C Confess to God the top three to five circumstances in 2025 where you question whether or not He’s in the middle of things. Ask Him to give you eyes to see what He wants to do in you.

T Thank God to the top three times in 2024 where it was clear He was present and working in a situation that you didn’t see Him in at first.

S Write down the names of three to five people going through something who really need to be able to trust that God is in charge and present in their situation. Pray that God will open their eyes to His presence and purpose for this season.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:7

A Praise God that He is there. Even when we don't see Him, He's working! List three times God was working in your life, but you could only see it after the fact.

C Have you been living by sight instead of faith? Confess three areas where you've let worry, despair, and negativity replace faith.

T Thank God for three things you know He will do for you, return to you, or give back in the resurrection life.

S Make three requests of God, and pledge to walk by faith and not by sight in the days, weeks, months, or years to come as He works out the details.

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

ROMANS 10:17

A Praise God for the good news of the Gospel by which we are saved. Write down the first two or three thoughts that hit you when you think about the Word of Christ that brought you salvation.

C Confess to God some occasions over the course of your recent past where your actions have not been consistent with what you believe. Ask God for His grace and mercy to meet you where you are today.

T Thank God for the message of the Word of Christ that has changed the world. Write down three ways you see the world differently because of Jesus.

S Who are three to four people who God has laid on your heart to share the message of Christ with in 2025? Write down their names and a brief prayer for each of them.

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people...”

EPHESIANS 1:18 (NIV)

A Praise God that because of Jesus you are HIS child and an heir in His family. (*1 Jn. 3:1-2, Jn. 1:12, Gal. 3:26, Rom. 8:15-17*) How does this make you feel today? What joy does this bring to your heart? Write three words to describe these feelings and thoughts and use them in praise.

C Confess to God an area of blessing (inheritance) in Christ you have taken for granted or failed to fully appreciate. In which area of inheritance do the scales need to come off the eyes of your heart so that you may see more clearly and appreciate more fully your inheritance in Jesus?

T List the area(s) of blessing (inheritance) you are most thankful for today and write a brief description of why you are thankful for this blessing. Thank God for His provision in this area!

S Ask God “to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do...” (*Eph. 1:18 MSG*) as a result of more fully understanding your inheritance and blessing in Christ. If there is an area of growth or further discipleship needed, ask Him for His help.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

ISAIAH 55:8-9

A Spend some time reflecting on God's infinite wisdom and sovereignty. Praise Him for His greatness, His higher ways, and His perfect plans that exceed your understanding.

C Isaiah 55:8-9 reminds us of how often we rely on our own understanding instead of trusting in God's ways. Confess the areas in your life where you've resisted His guidance or doubted His wisdom.

T Even though God's ways are higher than ours, He graciously invites us into His plans and gives us the gift of His presence. Thank God for His steadfast love and the assurance that His ways always lead to our ultimate good.

S As you submit to God's higher ways, you can boldly bring your needs before Him, trusting that His will is best. Pray for wisdom, patience, and faith to align your desires with His plans.

"In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me. Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.

What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue? A warrior's sharp arrows, with glowing coals of the broom tree!

Woe to me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war!"

PSALM 120:1-7

A Praise God that His presence and His Church provide comfort and shelter in the midst of a sinful and broken world each week. Write down three words that describe how coming to church impacts your soul each Sunday.

C Confess the top three reasons that you find yourself not in church on Sunday mornings. Ask God to help you to be more faithful in 2025 to coming to church, even in the midst of these three reasons,

T Thank God that he has provided a place of spiritual rest for you, a pace of spiritual rest for you, and a person of spiritual rest for you. Write a one-phrase prayer of thanks for the below words:

Weekly Sabbath: _____

Stopping Daily: _____

Jesus Always: _____

S As you reflect on what kept you from daily stopping, weekly Sabbath, and walking with Jesus daily, what are the things you need to pray go differently in 2025 than they did in 2024? Write them below.

WEEK
T W O

"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore."

PSALM 121:1-8

There's a line in one of my family's favorite movies (many of you will know this one) where the family in the movie is sitting down for dinner, and as they do there's some emotional tension brought out in the conversation amongst father, mother, and preteen daughter. The scene eventually ends with the father attempting to bring fatherly leadership to the rising emotional tension, but instead blurting out, "Go to your room.....now!" We, the audience, get a glimpse inside the father's mind and emotions as he prides himself in saying internally, "The foot is down! Repeat, the foot is down!"

This expression "put your foot down" is a means of expressing how to assert authority or control over a situation. Verse 3 mentions God not letting our foot be moved. So often we attempt to put our foot down within our own lives as we attempt to control and be the boss. Yet six out of the eight verses in today's passage reference God's position as Lord and King over our lives, and positions Him as the One who keeps our foot from moving. Not us. The psalmist shows it is God who "keeps our foot down" as He steadies our balance and keeps us standing.

Take a moment today when you find yourself in a standing posture to pause and picture God keeping your feet down, your balance steady, and your heart ready for the next spiritual step. Enjoy that moment of pause and remember that God is the keeper of your life. Remember that He is watching over all your going out and coming in. Remember that the maker of Heaven and Earth is the One who is helping you, right now. God is where your help comes from.

A Thank God for balancing the steps of your coming and going to lead you to where you are today spiritually. Jot out a few steps in your story where you could clearly feel God's hand over your life.

C Confess to God the steps ahead of you that are unclear, uncomfortable, or that maybe you just don't want to take. Invite God into your thoughts about those future steps, believing that He will show up and step in for you.

T Thank God for His power, wisdom, and omniscience that is big enough to handle all the unknowns of your life and circumstances. Praise Him for His loving care and provision over all of your life.

S Reflect on situations in the past in which you've tried to control and be the boss of your life. Ask God to reveal ways in which you can continually surrender those desires and trust in God's direction and influence in your life.

*"I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!
 Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
 There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.
 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they be secure who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!" For my brothers and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!" For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good."*

PSALM 122:1-9

When I was young, the local church saved my family. I was not raised in a church-going family. After my father's unexpected death when I was six years old, my family floundered. My amazing mom did her best to raise us on her own, but after a few very challenging years, we raised the white flag and did two things: 1) We moved to a new city to be closer to one of my uncles; 2) We started going to church for the first time as a family.

Through the ministry of that church, all of us came to know Jesus. Mom got connected with a group of about a dozen ladies who became her spiritual family. The youth group at that church became a centerpiece of my life—friendships, spiritual growth, and mentoring from youth pastors and leaders who took me under their wing.

I love the local church. Going to church is a "get to" in my life, not a "have to." I pray that, if it's not already, you would see being connected in this body of believers at Journey become more central in your life, for it is here that we grow spiritually, find community, and find our place of service and mission!

As the writer of Hebrews so beautifully says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (*Heb 10:24-25*)

So whenever there's an opportunity to "go to the house of the Lord," I pray that makes you glad!

A Praise God for the bride of Christ, the local church. Write down three ways God has used the church to impact and change your life, and then take some time to praise God for how He works.

C Confess to God those times when being connected in church has felt more like a “have to” than a “get to.” Talk to God about why that sometimes happens and bring those reasons to God as a confession. Pray for strength and clear eyes to see the local church as God sees it—as the bride of Christ!

T Thank God for this specific church, Journey Church International. What three people and ministries at Journey come to mind that you would like to thank God for? Write them down and take a minute to thank God for them!

S Pray specifically for those people and ministries the Lord brought to mind under the “Thanksgiving” portion of this prayer time. Let those folks know that you prayed for them today!

“To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.”

PSALM 123:1-4

“You flinched!”

It’s a time-honored test of middle school nerve. Someone pretends to throw a punch at you and supposedly, if you have nerves of steel, you’ll make no move to avoid it. Of course, the notion is ridiculous. No one wants to be hit. Not flinching is more apt to be a sign of not being aware than of being tough. In fact, the more people get hit, the more likely they are to flinch at sudden movements. They know the pain of getting hit, so their body is always watching for it.

Sadly, on my first reading of Psalm 123, when it says, “Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master”, I thought to myself, “Oh! That’ a disobedient servant looking to get whacked by their master’s hand. We should be watching God’s hand fearfully for judgment.” But no!

Then I read *Treasury of David*, Charles Spurgeon’s 1882 commentary on the Psalms, where he says, “Orientals speak less than we do, and prefer to direct their slaves by movements of their hands.” I quickly revised my thinking, embarrassed I’d thought we should watch for God to slap us. “Of course, they’re watching for a command to obey! We should watch God’s hand dutifully, ready to obey His next directive.” Wrong again!

Spurgeon went on to point to the text of the Psalm itself. “[S]o our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.” They’re waiting for a gesture of mercy and of rescue.

It’s the world who heaps contempt and judgment on us. Why do we so easily assume God will do the same? We should be looking to Him hopefully, waiting for the gesture of mercy He’s promised will come!

A Write three words about God that mean roughly the same as mercy. (Yes, “merciful” counts!) Let God know how much you adore these things about Him.

C Confess three times in your life when you accused God of being cruel to you, abandoning you, or otherwise “attacking” you.

T Think of three to five times in your life when God has shown you mercy and rescue. Give thanks to Him again!

S Ask God for a gesture of mercy in three areas in your life. Commit yourself to watching for His hand instead of running off to solve the problem yourself.

“If it had not been the Lord who was on our side— let Israel now say— if it had not been the Lord who was on our side when people rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us; then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; then over us would have gone the raging waters.

Blessed be the Lord, who has not given us as prey to their teeth! We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped! Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

PSALM 124:1-8

I grew up going to church. In fact, I can’t remember a Sunday that I didn’t go to church *for the Sunday night service* until the week before my eighth birthday, when my parents let me stay home to watch Super Bowl XX because the Chicago Bears were my favorite team. (I was a kid! Now I know better and love the Chiefs!) Literally every other Sunday morning, Sunday night, AND Wednesday night I remember being at church (even if my memory isn’t perfect).

The first song I remember from church is “Jesus Loves Me.” It has a line in it that says, “We are weak, but He is strong.” I’ve never forgotten the song, but man do I forget the truth of that line too often. In Psalm 124, the psalmist reminds himself over and over again, “if it’s to me...I’m in trouble.” “If the Lord wouldn’t have helped us...” he starts, and then says over and over again, “then bad things would have wiped me out!” However, in verse 6, he says, “but God does help us,” and even though not everything and everyone in life is okay, I’m okay with God, who is always with me.

I’m not sure what you’re facing today, but I’m sure you’re not strong enough on your own to handle the heavy stuff. If God wasn’t there to help you, you could be in trouble. However, “blessed be the Lord...your help is in the name of the Lord.” Look up today, remember that God is in Heaven, ask Heaven to be with you today, and bring God into your situation. Your prayer might not change your circumstance but it can change your perspective by reminding you of one little phrase in one little song:

“You are weak, but God is strong.”

Yes, Jesus loves you—remember that today as you pray.

A Praise God that He is strong even when you are weak. Reflect on, write down, and praise God for three times in your life you were too weak to handle something that should have wiped you out, but He helped you.

C Confess to God what you're facing in life today that's too heavy for you, that you fear might take you out. Confess the reality that if it's up to you, it probably won't end well, and then ask God to step into your situation to help.

T Thank God that when you're weak, He's still strong. Write down and thank God for three areas of your faith walk that grew stronger in 2024 because of your walk with Jesus.

S If you know somebody facing something that is going to take them out if God doesn't step into their story, write their name down and pray that God would help them. Pray that they might see clearly and to turn to Him in what they're facing. After you pray today, text them to let them know you see what they're facing and that you're praying for them.

“Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore. For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong. Do good, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts! But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the Lord will lead away with evildoers! Peace be upon Israel!”

PSALM 125:1-5

I grew up an athlete—and by athlete, I mean I was a cheerleader. (Cheerleaders are athletes; I don’t care what PC says!) There are three key positions in cheerleading: the bases, the flyers, and the spotters. The flyers are the ones who are being lifted in the air or thrown up in a stunt; the bases are the foundation, lifting or throwing the flyers up; and the spotters are the ones supporting the stunt and rescuing anyone who falls.

In cheerleading, the flyers must have absolute confidence and trust in their bases and spotters because these positions are responsible for supporting them and ensuring their safety. If the flyers have confidence in their teammates, the formation and stunt will be strong and steady, much like a mountain that cannot be moved. Our relationship with the Lord is the same way. As Psalm 125:1 says, if we place our full trust in Him, we are steady, immovable, enduring, strong, and dare I even say peaceful. In fact, Isaiah 26:3 (NLT) says, “You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!” So not only does trust in God make us strong but it also brings peace to our souls.

Sadly, we don’t inherit deep peace and confidence automatically at salvation. As part of our sanctification, trust in our relationship with God must be built. One of the greatest ways trust is built between flyers and their bases is through good communication. The best teams have the best communication. If you want to be filled with trust and strength like Psalm 125 describes, lean into regular connection with the Lord through prayer. As you do, watch God grow your trust and peace in ways that impact your life and the lives of everyone around you!

A Spend time praising God for the example of trust and peace Jesus set in His relationship with His Father. Jesus trusted and obeyed His Father in everything He did, even unto death on the cross. Write down two to three characteristics of Jesus' example to reflect on and use in praise today.

C Confess to God the areas of your life you are struggling to trust Him with and the areas which might be stealing your peace and hindering your relationship with Him. What people, situations, or trials are you facing that you haven't fully trusted Him with?

T Thank God that He can keep in perfect peace all who trust in Him. (*Is. 26:3*) Thank God that He "surrounds his people" (*Ps. 125:2*) and that He is surrounding you right now, even in this moment.

S Ask God to increase your desire to communicate continuously with Him so that you can grow your trust and be a pillar of strength, a mountain that cannot be moved. Ask Him to grow your relationship so that you will live in peaceful trust with Him, regardless of your circumstances.

“When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb! Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.”

PSALM 126:1-6

Every year of our lives is different, as is each day of our lives. Some years are easier, as are some days. But some years are filled with difficulty and pain. I don't know what kind of a year you had last year, but my prayer is that this year is filled with joy. And believe it or not, joy can come out of previous pain and difficulty when we see God working in it and through it.

In this Psalm, we see the phrase “sow in tears”. The phrase uses the metaphor of farming to convey the idea that tough decisions can lead to great outcomes. The seeds sown in tears are like tears themselves, and the process of sowing is like anguish. The seed, which is underground, lingers in darkness for a season, but through the growing process is transformed in a way that is not immediately evident. Similarly, the psalmist sees a parallel process in the life of his grieving people, who are on a journey from sorrow to joy.

Psalm 126 offers hope during times of trouble and sorrow and tells us that God will turn sorrow to joy and tears to laughter. It may take time to see the good, the joy, or even God's work in the midst of the pain, but we must trust that God is with us and transforming us, helping us to find joy out of hardship and in His presence.

A Thank God that His Word says He will never leave you nor forsake you. Spend a few moments resting in His loving presence, letting Him know you love Him.

C Confess to God a time you lost trust or hope that He was with you or would see you through a trial or difficulty.

T Thank God for His presence during a time of difficulty. List a couple of ways you felt His presence or saw Him at work.

S Ask God to help you find joy in the midst of or after a recent difficulty. What areas do you need His help in to find joy or peace?

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”

PSALM 127:1-5

As a “Psalm of Ascent”—a song sung by a pilgrim on a weeks-long journey to Jerusalem for one of the annual Jewish feasts (Passover/Unleavened Bread, Pentecost/Weeks, Tabernacles)—a person wasn’t just *going* some place. They were also *leaving* some place. As they drifted from their home, and their city, and their jobs, and their families and children, there had to be a point where this thought (summarized by me) had to come into their heads and hearts:

“If God doesn’t protect my home and village and job and family while I’m gone, then I’m probably in trouble.”

Thankfully in Psalm 127, that “thought” becomes a prayer, and that prayer ends with *confidence*—the confidence that if we place those things in God’s hands, then we won’t end up in a place of shame, even in the presence of the enemy! In 1 Peter 5:8, the Apostle Peter says that our spiritual enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone (or something) to devour. When we think about our homes, our cities, our jobs, and our families being invaded by an enemy, it could cause extreme fear and anxiety...UNLESS God is there taking care of things. That’s what Psalm 127 feels like, and that’s what Psalm 127 is asking for and recognizing. If God wasn’t good and strong and active in our lives, we’d be in trouble. But HE IS, so we’re not! As you fill out your prayer guide today, ask for the same things and to have the same confidence.

A Praise God that He's good and strong and active. Write three of your own "Unless God..." statements and then praise that HE IS, so you're okay.

C Confess to God there areas where your fear and anxiety clearly aren't confident in God's goodness, His strength, and His activity. Confess what you feel and ask God to strengthen your faith in these areas.

T Thank God for areas in your past where UNLESS He showed up, you would have been in deep distress; but HE DID, so you *were* okay and you *are* okay.

S Pray specifically for the areas represented by your "Confession" prayers.

WEEK
T H R E E

“Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.

The Lord bless you from Zion! May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life! May you see your children’s children! Peace be upon Israel!”

PSALM 128:1-6

Psalm 128 says that fearing the Lord—having reverence and awe towards Him—and walking in His commands will bring about blessing in your life. Following God’s ways and understanding the path He would have us take requires more than just doing what we love to do. It requires obedience.

Some of you may know the clothing company Life Is Good. Their original t-shirt logo was a cartoon smiley face with sunglasses and a bucket hat on. But in that brand, the company realized something. They could stick this iconic smiley face on a stick figure body and have that stick figure body basically be doing any kind of recreational activity, sporting interest, or leisure activity, and people would buy into the “Life Is Good” brand. Now you can find a smiley face snowboarding, walking the dog, or my favorite, riding a motorcycle! The Life Is Good brand says, “Do what you want and that will make your life enjoyable.” It will be GOOD! Do what you love!

This is where God’s Word describes to us a different worldview and a spiritual reality better than the best clothing trends or sales gimmicks. To fully experience God’s perfect peace, (1s. 26:3) we have to trust God’s heart and His leadership in our lives. Much like a good father hopes his kids and grandkids and spouse will trust his heart and leadership, our desires should be to obey God, and therefore experience His perfect peace in our lives.

A Thank God for His perfect, sinless nature that sets the standard by which we can be in relationship with Him. Write down a few words describing who God is as our perfect and just heavenly Father.

C Confess to God some of the steps you've walked that have not been in His way. Ask that He would guide your future steps to not stray from His path and to walk in obedience to Him.

T Write out anything that has brought a smile to your face recently, big or small. Recognize the blessing and provision of God over your life.

S Reflect on the things in your life that make you feel like "life is good." Pause and consider if those are the right things to be pursuing and engaging, and ask God if those are things that He desires you to be obedient in.

“Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth”— let Israel now say— ‘Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows.’ The Lord is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked. May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward! Let them be like the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up, with which the reaper does not fill his hand nor the binder of sheaves his arms, nor do those who pass by say, ‘The blessing of the Lord be upon you! We bless you in the name of the Lord!’”

PSALM 129:1-8

Psalm 129 gives us an image of Israel's journey as a nation. Verses 1 through 4 tell not only of the great suffering that was endured, but also the hope, protection, and freedom the Lord provided. While Israel was “born” into slavery as a nation, the Lord freed Israel from that slavery.

In the same way, we also experience struggle, affliction, and disappointment, all of which can feel like a constant attack at times. We experience the reality of a broken “adolescence” in a broken world. Like Israel, freedom from our own struggle can only be found in God. Israel could not escape slavery without the Lord, and we cannot escape our brokenness without the Lord. We would stay broken EXCEPT FOR the blessing and name of the Lord!

“Yeshua,” the Hebrew name for Jesus, means, “the Lord is salvation.” God has provided a path to freedom for all of us. Through Jesus, Yeshua, we experience true freedom.

Psalm 129 offers a message of hope, a message of freedom, a message of God's faithfulness. We may experience seasons where everything seems to be coming against us—illnesses, financial struggles, fractured and broken relationships, one thing after another after another. In those seasons we can cling to the hope we have through the blessing of the Lord and the name of the Lord. He is our strength and our shield, (*Ps. 28:7*) our refuge and our fortress. (*Ps. 91:2*)

Today, we can rest in the same words Jesus told his disciples in John 16:33: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

A Reflect on these verses: Psalm 28:7, Psalm 91:2, John 16:33. In light of these, praise God for who He is in your life.

C Often in seasons of struggle, we forget to look up and trust God with our circumstances. Confess to God the struggles you haven't fully released to Him and surrender those to Him today.

T Thank God today for the gift of salvation—the gift of freedom that is available to you through Jesus.

S Who in your life has not yet found the freedom of salvation through Jesus? Pray for them today by name and commit to pray for them each day as you continue on this 21-day prayer journey.

“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

PSALM 130:1-8

I don't care a whole lot for waiting on things. I don't like to wait in line at the grocery store to check out, although I usually pick the longest line. I don't like to wait in traffic or at every stop light on the way to my destination. I don't like to wait in the TSA line at the airport or in the line to board the plane. Basically, I don't like waiting if I have no other choice *but to wait*.

However, some things are worth waiting for. For example, waiting for the right person to marry or waiting in the hospital for your first child to be born. It's worth waiting in that long line at KC Joe's for a Z-Man (which, of course, doesn't compare to the previous two things listed). It is worth waiting for just the right time to head to the mountains to ski in the fresh powder.

In life, we wait because we have no other choice or because we are waiting on some of the best things in life. As I read Psalm 130, I think the psalmist is combining both! It begins with the state of desperation from which the Lord is needed. But in verse 5 the psalmist waits with hope and anticipation that only God can satisfy.

Recently, I was in Uganda visiting a boarding school in the city of Kampala where we met a girl named Oliver Mesiya. She shared how she'd been praying for over five years that God would allow a school to be built in her home village. The name of that village is Zimudi, which is the same village where our church is building a school. Oliver provides us with a great expression of Psalm 130. She cried “out of the depths” because she had no other choice or place to turn. She waited and prayed steadfastly, and now she is seeing something that ONLY God could have orchestrated!

A Spend some time recognizing and praising God for His steadfast love. Dig a little deeper by thanking God for His goodness regardless of our iniquities.

C When have you been impatient or unwilling to wait on the Lord? When have you chosen the wrong path because you wanted immediate results, but now know that God had something better for you? Write out those moments and confess them to God.

T Spend some time thanking God that He is always near, regardless of our circumstances. Think about a time where you cried “out of the depths” to Him and you saw Him answer (recent or distant). Thank Him for His steadfast love!

S List three to five areas or specific things that you need to patiently wait on God for because you are both desperately dependent on God and because you know *He* knows what’s best. Ask God to help you be watchful so that you don’t miss what God is trying to do in your life.

“O Lord, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me.

O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore.”

PSALM 131:1-3

God is our source of hope. We can trust Him. Like a baby who is at rest after being fed by his mother, our spirits can rest and be continually at peace, even in the midst of all that’s happening around us in this chaotic and broken world.

David, the writer of this psalm, calls the people of God in this passage to a humble trust in the Lord. I love the picture one author, Eugene Peterson, gives of this God who is so worthy of our hope. He is the God who:

- STANDS—He is foundational and dependable. Our God never ever changes.
- STOOPS—He kneels to our level and meets us where we are. He relates to us.
- STAYS—He sticks with us through hard times and good, sharing His life with us in grace and peace. He never leaves. He is consistent and faithful. There’s nothing that can make God love you any more or any less.

Honestly, there have been times when I’ve allowed anxiety and the “cares of this world” to creep in and impact my spirit in a way that causes me to doubt God’s goodness and presence in my life. It is in those times that the Lord uses passages like this one in Psalm 131 to calm my heart and quiet my spirit.

Here’s today’s challenge and call: prayerfully go to God with an open hand and heart today; one that says, “God, help me to always put my hope in you—the God who stands as my rock, who stoops to my level, and who stays with me through all the ups and downs this life brings me.”

A Praise God that He is all the things we just read about—that He is a God who stands with us, stoops to identify with us, and who stays with us always. Write down below a prayer of worship to God for who He is!

C Confess the occasions in which you've chosen to trust in yourself and not in the Lord. Bring to God three to five specific ways your spirit, your words, or your heart has allowed the cares of this world to overshadow your trust in the Lord.

T Thank God that in His presence our souls can find calm and quiet rest. Write down a few thoughts that come to your mind as you thank God for His peace.

S Lay down before God the things that have troubled you or brought anxiety to your soul lately. Give them to God and rest in Him “like a weaned child with its mother.” Hope in God today!

“Remember, O Lord, in David’s favor, all the hardships he endured, how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, “I will not enter my house or get into my bed, I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah; we found it in the fields of Jaar. “Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!”

Arise, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your saints shout for joy. For the sake of your servant David, do not turn away the face of your anointed one.

The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: “One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne.”

For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: “This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy. There I will make a horn to sprout for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but on him his crown will shine.”

PSALM 132:1-18

Christmas has been over for 35 days. This morning you may be sitting in a house that still has Christmas decorations up. Maybe you left them up on purpose, or maybe you just haven’t been able to get to that task yet. Either way, today it’s a good thing! Psalm 132 is filled with Christmas references! Did you see them? Do you have time for a short, amazing Bible study?

- Read Psalm 132:6, Micah 5:2, and Matthew 2:5-6
- Good news is heard in Bethlehem (Ephrathah)!

Did you see this one?

- Read Psalm 132:11, 2 Samuel 7:16, and Luke 1:30-33
- God has kept His promise to King David!

And what about this one?

- Read Psalm 132:17 and Zechariah’s prophecy in Luke 1:69-70

This Psalm (possibly written during the reign of King Solomon) places a lot of hope in God's promise to David: If the kings will live righteously, someone from David's family will be on the throne forever. There's just one catch—the kings didn't live righteously. Far from it! Not even for one generation could they hold it together.

And yet, God kept His end of the deal anyway. There is a king from the line of David on the throne forever, and He is King Jesus.

It's only January 30th, but that's not too little time to already be failing: failing to get Christmas decorations down; failing to start a Bible reading plan; failure to start showing up to a group regularly. But David's hope is our hope. We don't have to get it right for God to save us. Jesus is King forever and no matter what day of the year it is, tomorrow is a new day, a clean slate bought with His blood! We get to try again!

A Write three words about God that mean roughly the same as “Generous, faithful, promise keeper”. Let God know how much you adore these things about Him.

C Confess three times when you made a deal with God or a commitment to God which you didn't keep.

T List three to five ways God has been faithful to you anyway. Give Him thanks for holding up His end, even when you didn't hold up yours.

S Without shame—because He is God of another chance—ask God for three things you'd like Him to do for you and your family in the new year.

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.”

PSALM 133:1-3

As a parent, nothing was more frustrating than when my young kids were fighting. Usually, a disagreement would ultimately lead to both parties being sent to their rooms until they were ready to apologize. On the flip side, there was nothing sweeter than when they played nicely and were kind to one another. It warmed my heart because there’s something beautiful about people living together in unity.

Jesus had the same desire for His spiritual children, and it was important enough that He spent time praying for us in the Garden before He went to the cross. In John 17:20-21 He said, “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” Jesus knew the world would recognize His work in hearts through His followers living in unity. Their harmony and love would be a testimony to the world that they had been with Him.

Similarly, in Psalm 133, David points out two powerful illustrations of unity. He compares it to the oil that was used to anoint the High Priest for ministry. It was precious, costly oil that was intended to flow down and illustrated ministry impact through them to others. He also compares it to the dew of Mount Hermon, which is a snow-covered peak in Israel. It’s a porous limestone that quickly absorbs moisture, which re-emerges as springs at the base of the mountain to feed the region. Both pictures teach us that unity is intended to flow through us to others. When we bring reconciliation and unity into the family of God, we are most like Jesus.

A Praise God that you can experience unity and reconciliation with the Father because of Jesus and that you are now able to participate in the ministry of reconciliation to the world around you. (2 Cor. 5:18-20) Write three words to describe how this makes you feel and use them in your praise to God.

C If it applies, confess a time when you've been an agent of disunity or failed to be a catalyst of reconciliation. If you've carried offense, participated in gossip, lived in unforgiveness, or caused division in any way, confess it. If needed, seek forgiveness from those you've hurt or failed to protect.

T Thank God for those who've modeled unity and been agents of reconciliation in your life. Who has shared Jesus with you or modeled His characteristics? List their names here and thank God for them.

S Ask God to use you as an agent of unity in relationships and situations around you that need healing. What does God want to do through you? Write down the people or situations in need of unity and pray that God would help you make a difference.

“Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord! Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord! May the Lord bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!”

PSALM 134:1-3

As we close our 21 Days of Prayer, we do it in the spirit of remembering that “Looking Up” is not just something we do when we pray—it should become a posture that we have in all of life. In Psalm 134:1, my mind sees a weary traveler, not just after a long day, but potentially after a long season of travel consisting of many days. He arrives in Jerusalem at night (v. 1) and isn’t able to wait until the morning to go to the Temple he’s been longing for his entire journey—the place that represents the presence of God. As he arrives, he doesn’t just witness a physical building; he witnesses a “place of worshipers,” complete with a singing choir (yes, a choir singing through the night shift!). His response is to “lift up his hands” and worship alongside them, and in so doing to “bless God” by acknowledging His presence.

My prayer for you after these 21 days of prayer is to live with a posture of looking up. Even in the dark days of difficulty and the dark nights of fear, the heavenly choir of angels serving the Lord are worshipping. Join them! Keep lifting up your eyes, keep lifting up your prayers, keep “looking up!” As you do, “May the Lord bless you from Zion, the Lord who made the heaven and the earth.”

I challenge you now: let 21 days of prayer become 21 weeks of prayer this year. Let 21 days of prayer become 21 months of prayer over the next two years. Let 21 days of prayer change you into somebody who 21 years from now has a spiritual response of looking up to pray as their first reaction to everything in life. It’s been my honor to walk through these three weeks with you. Thanks for committing your time and energy. Let’s keep “Looking Up” as we keep “Marching to Zion.”

A Praise God for the fact that “He works the night shift.” List three to five specific times where you needed your faith to get through a dark night or season of life. Praise God that He was there for you.

C Confess to God the times in your day when your faith walk is “off” or “muted.” (i.e. at work, with friends, early mornings, stressful meetings or moments, weekends, etc.). List three to five specific moments and ask God to forgive you.

T Thank God specifically for the things in your life that cause you to lift your hands in worship (if you do that kind of thing!). List three to five blessings that you’re grateful for today.

S Ask God to help you commit to another 21 days of faithful prayer. List the things that will make that difficult or obstacles you’ll have to overcome, and pray for strength to stay faithful in prayer.



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