



St Helen's
Bishopsgate

PRAYER RESOURCES

Lasting legacy: praying the Lord's prayer in this season of social distancing



Walking with the Lord...one day at a time.

‘...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.’

Matthew 6:33

Produced in April 2020 for the St Helen's International Growth Groups

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Purpose

Exchange a sense of disappointment with daily prayer. Ask the Lord to work in and through this pandemic to bring about a lasting legacy—one that proves far more significant than what might have been accomplished if life had carried on as before; far more pleasing to the Lord than if our plans hadn't ended up getting cancelled.

There are many important concerns for us to bring before the Lord. It's right that we earnestly pray for those in government as well as the heroes of this crisis—those on the front-line caring for the sick. We should pray for those suffering, both the sick, and those grieving dear loved ones defeated by the virus. The purpose of this little booklet however is to encourage us to pray for ourselves.

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, he gifted the church with these wonderful headings under which we can pray with confidence knowing that our Father in heaven loves to hear such prayer. Wonderfully our Lord delights for us to bring before him our needs, but first he would have us prioritise care for his concerns.

How extraordinary that God chooses to bring about his purposes through the prayers of his people. This time of social distancing brings many challenges. But it also brings an opportunity for a lasting legacy. Let's pray!

Sunday

Our Father in heaven

Triune God, in this time of social distancing, when many are feeling so isolated, thank you that your people can always come before you in prayer. Grant that I'd treasure more the work of your Spirit uniting me to your Son, enabling me to call out "Abba Father". How extraordinary that I can approach you with the same confidence that the Lord Jesus did; and to know that you love it when your children come to you in prayer.

Father, may this strange season of not being able to meet physically as a church, prove positive in my relationship with you. You know the depths of my heart. Sometimes consciously, often unconsciously, my participation with church ends up being driven by a concern for how others think about me. Thank you that this time of isolation gives me the chance to 'shut the door and pray to you in secret', not because I'm seen by others, but as an outflow of who I am in Christ, in the knowledge that you see everything.

Thank you for teaching us to pray 'Our' Father. At a time when it's easy to feel alone, and to become rather self-focused, thank you that praying the Lord's prayer keeps me remembering that my identity as your child means I'm part of a large family of believers, both within my local church and your one universal church. Help us all, throughout this time, to keep remembering one another in our prayers.

In our frustration of not being able to meet, grow our love for one another and desire to be together with you in the new creation.

Our Father 'in heaven'. Whilst we rightly grieve not being able to gather as church in the same place, thank you that our relationship with you is not dependent on certain buildings or rituals. Thank you that not only is Christ's atoning work complete, but that I have your Spirit dwelling within me. May his work enable me to increasingly set my heart on things above, knowing that united to Christ, I too am seated in the heavenly realms.

Meeting remotely as church is far from ideal, but thank you that in this age, it's possible for us to still 'gather' at the usual time, to praise you, and above all to listen to your word read and preached; and then to continue having your word dwell amongst us, as we discuss and pray afterwards. Speak to us and equip us to build each other up with your truth; grow us in maturity, and strengthen us to keep living for you in this week ahead.

In all these things, I pray there would be a lasting legacy, to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen

Matthew 6:5–8, Romans 8:15–17, Colossians 3:1–4

Monday

Hallowed be your name

Holy God, at the beginning of this new week, stir my heart to care more about your honour and renown in this world. So often I'm preoccupied with myself, and worry too little about your fame and reputation—forgive me Lord, and open the eyes of my heart to increasingly grasp that you alone are worthy of all praise and glory.

Lord, you alone are holy, set apart in a league of your own, without beginning or end, and morally without blemish. Help me today remember that our world deserves far worse than this current pandemic; help me to increasingly see the righteousness of your cursing this world with the bondage of decay and death.

Yahweh, thank you for the way you have disclosed your name to your people, and revealed yourself as the one true God—that both through your words and your works, we see your glorious character: mighty yet merciful, righteous yet gracious. Thank you especially for sending your Son into our world to fully manifest your glory; for giving him the name that is above every name. Grow in me today a longing for that future day, when at the name of Jesus every knee in heaven and on earth will one day bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

As with so many in this generation, Lord often I care too much about building a secure and satisfying life in this world, even aspiring to make a name for myself. Father, in these unusual times, re-orientate my thinking to see the world from your perspective. Grant that I would feel more keenly the scandalous nature of sin—that I would be shocked at the way the world has rejected your rule and usurped your authority.

We long for a vaccine to be found, and for the spread of the virus to be stopped; we yearn for a return to normality and the blessing of being able to live and work without so many restrictions in place—Lord I know you are more than able to bring this about. Whilst I wait for your timing, may this season of social distancing be an opportunity for me to make progress in caring about the honour of Christ—that my longing to see people acknowledge his lordship would far surpass any yearning for an end to this crisis.

In future, may we look back on this time and see how more people began to hallow your name; may that be true of my own worship—that my thoughts and words, my conduct and emotions, would become ever more single-minded, bringing honour to your great name.

In all these things, I pray there would be a lasting legacy, to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen

Exodus 34:5–8, Ezekiel 36:16–28, Philippians 2:5–11

Tuesday

Your kingdom come

Eternal God, thank you for your commitment to re-establish your kingdom. Like everyone else, I deserve to be cut off from your presence forever. How amazing that from the beginning, you promised to send one born of woman to defeat evil—to make it possible for humans to be back in your presence, living under your rule, enjoying your blessing. Thank you that King Jesus' arrival fulfilled the Scriptures and ushered in your eternal kingdom; help me now wait with confidence for the final consummation. *Your kingdom come.*

Lord, I'm so grateful for the way your word prepares us for times such as this; to know that all tribulations and even plagues are the birth pains of that great day to come—help me remember throughout this time that I'm living in the 'last days'; that King Jesus' return truly is the next big thing to happen in your eternal plan.

Lord, in all honesty, I quickly lose sight of what you're doing in the world. It's so easy to allow the media and constant news feeds to shape my view of what's going on. Help me at this time to increasingly view the world through the lens of your word; to live by faith not sight. Fill me with all spiritual wisdom, such that I'd increasingly make the most of every opportunity to line up my life and thinking behind your agenda.

Thank you so much for your enduring patience—that you are not slow in keeping your promise, but instead long for all to repent. In your mercy, please use this time of great uncertainty to wake up more people to the reality of your future judgment. By your Spirit, convict people today of the seriousness of suppressing your truth. May this coronavirus season be a bumper time of harvesting many from all nations, to submit their lives to King Jesus.

‘To live is Christ, to die is gain’. Enable me to live each day seeking first your kingdom—caring more about gospel advance than the things that so quickly occupy my heart. Despite being unable to meet with others in person, may I still have meaningful interaction with those who don't know you. Open a door for your message, and embolden me to make the most of the openings when they come. Whether friends or relatives, neighbours or colleagues, may those who know I'm a follower of King Jesus want to ask me concerning the reason for the hope that I have.

Spare me from being inward-looking during this time. Keep me remembering that each new day is a chance for more people to hear the momentous news that Jesus is the promised King. *‘Come Lord Jesus’.*

In all these things, I pray there would be a lasting legacy, to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen

Matthew 24:3–14, Philippians 1:12–26, 2 Peter 3:1–10

Wednesday

Your will be done, on earth as in heaven

Creator God, so often I take it for granted that you have revealed your will to me. Given the size of this world, let alone the universe, how amazing that you should care about a creature like me; not least one that has defied your authority and chosen to ignore your rightful place in life. Thank you that in your promised new creation we will no longer be foolish, opting to live without reference to you; instead we will reverently, joyfully submit to your rule and serve your good purposes, conformed to your image, ruling over your creation in a way that brings you honour.

Gracious God, thank you that this is already under way—that your Son entered our world and perfectly lived out your will; that now he is reigning in heaven; and that you are continuing to complete your plan to have a people from all nations united to him, living out this new humanity in the world, displaying your glory in Christ.

At times like this, I am more conscious than ever of the fragility of life and the fact that we humans are not in control. Lord, thank you for the way this current crisis humbles humanity in our ignorance and inability to eradicate your curse on this world. What a blessing, Father, that you've made known to me your eternal will—that you are committed to bringing about your purposes in Christ, in and through the coronavirus. *Your will be done.*

Lord, you alone know the consequences of this pandemic. As I consider the potential impact on the months and years ahead, help me be more concerned with your will, not my own. Father, I recognise my problem is more often with obedience than ignorance—I know how you'd have me live, but so often I refuse to submit. By your Spirit, help me live out your righteous ways. May my conduct increasingly reflect your will as it is in heaven—joyful, reverent worship of you. I've already died to my old self. Help me today to throw off the old nature, and to live out who I am in Christ, a new creation, a child of light.

Father, you know how I shy away from going the way of the cross; how instinctively I look to avoid your call to daily deny self and live sacrificially for your sake and the gospel. *Yet not what I will, but what you will.* Use these weeks of social distancing to grow in me a deeper passion to follow Christ; that I'd be quick to spot when my instincts reflect more the rebellion of Eden than the beautiful submission of Gethsemane.

In my longing to see an end to the suffering and turmoil inflicted by this pandemic, may my greatest concern be that *your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

In all these things, I pray there would be a lasting legacy, to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen

Matthew 26:36–46, Romans 8:28–30, Ephesians 1:9–10

Thursday

Give us today our daily bread

Faithful God, thank you that you are unchanging in your steadfast love and provision for your children; that nothing can ever separate me from your love; that I can be confident you will always provide everything that I'm going to need to live a life that is honouring to you. Lord, teach me to look to you to supply my every need *according to your riches in glory in Christ Jesus*. Help me become increasingly clear that *every good gift is from above*, flowing out of your grace, and not because I'm entitled or have earned any such provision.

Thank you Lord for the way this current crisis has woken me up to my dependence on you. So often I take it for granted that I can access supplies of what I want, when I want. Protect me from responding like the world, with panic and self-centred hoarding. May my daily sense of security come from knowing you and your promises, rather than the amount of goods that I've been able to stock pile!

Thank you so much that you know what I need before I ask; and that the very act of asking you in prayer helps me remember my utter dependence on your provision. What a blessing Lord to know your righteous character—for if sinful fathers love to give good things to their children, how much more can I be confident that you delight to give what is good for me.

Forgive me for the way material things have become so important to me. Thank you for the way you've used delays in online orders, and a lack of certain goods, to expose my greed and insatiable appetite for more. Father, please use this time to wean me off the things of this world, and to grow in me a sincere gratitude for your provision of my deepest needs in the Lord Jesus Christ. Keep showing me how my constant thirst is already quenched through relationship with you; that the true bread which has come down from heaven provides ultimate security and satisfaction.

Teach me daily dependence Lord. And help me enjoy the material things you have so generously provided as gifts from you—that I'd be neither greedy, nor ascetic, but instead cherish your kind generosity in providing all I need and so much more. Whenever I pause in the day to thank you, not least before eating a meal, may my gratitude be ever more deeply-felt.

In all these things, I pray there would be a lasting legacy, to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen

Matthew 6:8, 25–34, Matthew 7:7–11, Philippians 4:19–20

Friday

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us

Merciful God, how I wonder at your willingness to blot out my transgressions; to not count my iniquity against me. May I never stop acknowledging my sin before you. Thank you that in the Lord Jesus we have a great high priest, who was without sin, and so can perfectly intercede in my place. Thank you that his atoning work is finished—that at the cross of Jesus pardon is complete. How wonderful to consider that he's already sat down at your right hand; that there really is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Thank you for teaching me in this season how dependent I am on you for all things. During this time of social-distancing, may I never lose sight of my greatest need: your pardon. As I spend time meditating on your word, please keep convicting me of my sin, and convincing me of your mercy. Thank you that the Scriptures repeatedly display the wonder of your willingness to welcome back sinners like me.

By your Spirit, increasingly enable me to possess a contrite and lowly spirit - clear that you oppose the proud, but give grace to the humble. Knowing that blessed are the poor in spirit, Father, grant that I'd make progress this season in being quick to respond to your word in repentance and faith.

Lord, I pray too that I'd increasingly value Christ's pardon—that amongst other things, this would transform the way I think of others. May a deep appreciation of my total spiritual bankruptcy cause me to wonder at your willingness to cancel the eternal debt of my sin. May I be quick to forgive others knowing how much I've been forgiven. Thank you for the many times Jesus exhorts us to treat others how we long for you to treat us—slow to anger, long-suffering in showing mercy, always abounding in love. Show me Father where I'm in danger of holding grudges or lacking mercy on others—not least when it's easy to be frustrated by all kinds of self-centred behaviour around me. Protect me from becoming hard-hearted like the Pharisee. Spare me from a judgmental spirit that disqualifies others and puffs myself up with a complacent superficial self-righteousness.

Help us be a church that is kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as you have forgiven us. Whilst we might not be meeting together physically at the moment, we still end up hurting one another. Keep us therefore constantly coming back to your grace, and willing to extend it to one another. May our virtual meetings keep us coming back to the cross of Christ.

In all these things, I pray there would be a lasting legacy, to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen

Psalm 32, Matthew 18:21–35, Ephesians 4:30–5:2

Saturday

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

Almighty God, you alone are God, there is no other—you alone are uncreated. There is no rival power that threatens your sovereign rule or jeopardises your eternal purposes. All the same, thank you for alerting us to the reality of Satan and his evil intentions. Protect me from either underestimating his work or from becoming overly focused on it. Keep me remembering at this time that my most pressing need for protection is from the devil's ploys, more than any risk related to the coronavirus.

Thank you so much for showing us the nature of the devil's tactics—unchanged from the beginning. How much I see in my own life the same folly of Adam and Eve; how easily I end up believing his lies about you. Father, during this time of isolation from others, protect me from falling asleep to his cunning. Wake me up when I'm tempted to doubt your character, or deny your word; stop me from thinking you're out to ruin my life, or assuming you won't do what you say.

How I praise you Lord for sending King Jesus to defeat our greatest enemy. Thank you that he perfectly stood up to temptation, refuting the lies of the devil with your word; for the way he refused to be diverted from the way of the cross.

Enable me Lord to appreciate more the victory he secured on the cross, triumphing over Satan through satisfying your justice and destroying the sting of death.

In the quiet of lockdown, protect me from being distracted and forgetting that the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion. Conscious how angry he is at being defeated, I know he's out to attack your people, seeking to cause us to fall. How busy he must be during this time, enticing us to doubt you, to be sidetracked by false teaching or simply to be unsettled by the troubles of this world. Protect me both from being choked by the world, seduced by the cravings of the flesh, or simply growing cold-hearted during these lonely times whilst not able to gather physically as your people.

Mighty God, enable us all to stay alert throughout each day, to stand firm against any assault. Thank you that one day the conquering King Jesus will have all enemies made a footstool under his feet. Meanwhile, during these unusual times, please Lord strengthen us to resist temptation, knowing that brothers and sisters all over the world are also going through difficult times.

In all these things, I pray there would be a lasting legacy, to the praise of your glorious grace. Amen

Matthew 4:1–11, Ephesians 6:10–13, 1 Peter 5:8–9

‘If you abide in me, and my words abide in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much
fruit and so prove to be my disciples.’

John 15:7–8