

week of
prayer



**IRON CITY
CHURCH**

INTRODUCTION

It would be difficult to read the Bible and not notice repeated examples of God's people praying. Poetic prayers comprise the majority of the Psalter, and prayers are regularly embedded within the narratives. The Law, Prophets, Writings, Gospels, and Epistles all include calls to prayer and teaching on how to pray. In the hours preceding our Savior's arrest, the Incarnate Son prayed over his disciples (John 17:1-26) and confessed his burdens to the Father (Luke 22:39-46). Even dying, Jesus prayed forgiveness for his persecutors and surrendered his life to God's will (Luke 23:34,46). There was much he could do with that time. And yet the least needful person to walk the earth used that time to pray. This knowledge stirs our wills towards prayer. But ultimately, what is prayer?

Genesis 4:26 is the earliest explicit reference to prayer: "and at that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord." A closer look at this phrase helps us see the general idea behind all forms, examples, and types of prayer. "The name of the Lord," refers to more than the Hebrew name meaning, "He is!" In the Bible, someone's "name" refers to their reputation and all that comprises it - their character, status, ability, deeds, and commitments. When someone, in prayer, calls upon the name of God, they ask God to make all these aspects of himself

manifest in the present circumstances. That is why so many prayers in the Old Testament include some form of God's self-revelation in Exodus 34:6-7.

So, when we pray, we approach our Father, the all-powerful Creator, the sovereign Ruler of the cosmos, and ever Faithful One, and ask that he continue to make his goodness and power evident by fulfilling his life-giving purposes and promises. Prayer is our recognition that, when we encounter calamity, futility, and sin in our lives, in the fellowship and ministry of the Church, and in a broken world, God remains faithfully committed and lovingly interested in the particulars and struggles of this life.

With this knowledge, and the recorded prayers of God's people and his Son, let us turn to the Spirit-inspired words, see how we can join with our brothers and sisters in the faith, and call upon the name of the Lord together. Over the next six days, use the reflections and prayers that follow as thresholds to enter intentional prayer for your life, for our church, and for our world. Allow the Spirit to guide your meditation on these prayers. Then, with that insight and the assurance that God listens and cares, let us boldly approach the throne of grace, knowing we will find help and comfort in our present needs.

PSALM 51

¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your
words
and blameless in your judgment.

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive
me.

⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the
inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the
secret heart.

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be
clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than
snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have broken
rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right[b] spirit within me.

¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your
salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your
ways,
and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O
God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your
righteousness.

¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your
praise.

¹⁶ For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I
would give it;
you will not be pleased with a burnt
offering.

¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken
spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God,
you will not despise.

¹⁸ Do good to Zion in your good
pleasure;
build up the walls of Jerusalem;

¹⁹ then will you delight in right sacrifices,
in burnt offerings and whole burnt
offerings;
then bulls will be offered on your altar.

David has had his sin revealed to him (2 Sam 12:5-6). When portrayed as outside of himself, he is filled with anger at the injustice. But he is ashamed and grieved that this sin lives within himself (2 Samuel 12:13-23). When we read this psalm, we ought to recognize our sin—see who we are (vv. 3, 5) and contrast that to God (vv. 4, 6). We cannot work our way back to favor (vv. 16-17); we need redemption from God Himself (vv. 7-15). He makes the filthy clean.

Our Father, reveal my transgressions. Let me grieve my failings as I rage against the injustices of a fallen world. My sins remind me—I need Jesus. Though they reach to the heavens, your grace soars over them all. I see your hatred of sin at the cross, where your love towards me is displayed. I repent of iniquity that separates me from you. Have mercy on me—a sinner—by the blood of Jesus, my righteousness.
Amen.

JOHN 17:20-26

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

In the last few hours of his life, Jesus prayed for his church. With his closing words to the Father, he longed for unity. He prayed for his people to experience the same kind of trinitarian oneness he has with God. He wished for us to abide, to be with him always. Together. For in him, we are whole, a body that faces challenges in our cooperate humanity yet recognizes the gift we have been given in one another. Our communion, with God and each other, was Jesus's priority.

So, just as Jesus did, we pray.

Father, we pray for Iron City Church.

We pray for our people to be united with you and with one another. We yearn for the world to know your love through us. May we be a people that learns together, grows together, cares together, and glorifies you together. We are of many backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and stories, but in you, we are one. Therefore, together we pray for the strength and harmony to abide in your everlasting, peaceful unity.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man[a] Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Because of Jesus Christ, we live with a supernatural peace despite our circumstances. Because of Christ, we can understand the weight of our sin and innate depravity, but not be buried by it. Because of Christ, we have a direct line to God the Father to confess our sins, grasp onto the forgiveness he offers, and walk freely in celebration for that gift. Because of these things, we have a responsibility to love those around us by interceding on their behalf. For God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (v. 4). We must understand the gravity of the gift in order to grasp the urgency of the directive.

Lord, remove the blinders from my eyes. Place an undeniable awareness in my heart. I want to love my neighbors well, and I want to see them as you do. Help me overcome my tunnel vision, Father, that makes me only see what impacts my day. Show me the world as you see it — I want to be faithful with my freedom.

NEHEMIAH 1:4-11

⁴ As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said, "O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' ¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Nehemiah receives word that Jerusalem is disgraced and defenseless (1:3) and discerns a call to begin its reconstruction (1:11). But before he acts, recruits, plans, or brings his proposal to the king, he petitions the sovereign, covenant-keeping God of Israel (1:5). While his final request is success in his mission (1:11), his prayer doesn't begin there. Rather, Nehemiah first confesses how his own sinfulness reflects his people's need for spiritual renewal to respond in repentance, faithfulness, and obedience (1:6-9). As he knew, we need God's help to become and remain faithful people who do his work faithfully.

Lord, like our forebears, we have failed to reflect your love and righteousness inwardly and outwardly. Yet, you graciously call us to participate in your restorative and redemptive purposes. Help us to remember our need and be fervent in prayer. On account of your Son, forgive us our failings, restore us, and strengthen us to remain faithful to our Redeemer. By your Spirit, help us to obey and grant us fruitfulness in your endeavors. Amen.

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
¹⁵ from whom every family[a] in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

As Paul's shows, when we pray for the church, we can firstly appeal to God the Father. Father God has named every family in heaven and on earth and has abundant riches in glory, such that he can do far more than we can think. That knowledge reminds us to ask that the Holy Spirit inhabit our entire being to strengthen us with his power. We should also pray for Christ to dwell deeply in us. So as we are rooted and grounded in love for one another, we develop unity with fellow believers and grow to understand that love of Christ in new heights.

*Dear Father, embolden us with strength from your Holy Spirit. Give us faith to allow your Son to dwell within us, and may we be rooted in love. We want to understand the fullness of the love of Christ, and be filled with your power. We cannot know your power if you do not reveal yourself to us- so with humility we trust that your abundant abilities will draw us to you. Glorify yourself through us today.
Amen.*

JEREMIAH 29:4-7

⁴ "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶ Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷ But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

The Lord speaks these words to those whom he has sent into exile in Babylon. They may be in exile, but their lives are not over. The Lord gives them a word and a way of life. The mandate from Genesis 1:28 is not ruptured; “Multiply there, and do not decrease” (29:6). Yet the people are not simply to exist and reproduce. They are to build, plant, grow, and eat. In all these basic human activities they are to seek the welfare of the city and pray on its behalf. The Lord does not place his people haphazardly, so we must be people who pray for our place.

*Let us pray that God would renew our place and our world. Let us pray that he would equip us as his salt and his light to preserve, enlighten, and revive our community. Together we pray, “Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you, for the honor of your Name. Amen.”**

*From Morning Prayer II, The Book of Common Prayer, 101.

O God, the author of all Good,
I come to thee for the grace another day will require
for its duties and events.

I step out into a wicked world,
I carry about with me an evil heart,
I know that without thee I can do nothing,
that everything with which I shall be concerned,
however harmless in itself,
may prove an occasion of sin or folly,
unless I am kept by thy power.

Hold thou me up and I shall be safe.

Preserve my understanding from subtilty of error,
my affections from love of idols,
my character from stain of vice,
my profession from every form of evil.

May I engage in nothing in which I cannot implore thy
blessing,
and in which I cannot invite thy inspection.

Prosper me in all lawful undertakings,
or prepare me for disappointments;

Give me neither poverty nor riches;

Feed me with food convenient for me,
lest I be full and deny thee
and say, Who is the Lord?

or be poor, and steal, and take thy name in vain.

May every creature be made good to me by prayer and
they will;

*Teach me how to use the world, and not abuse it,
to improve my talents,
to redeem my time,
to walk in wisdom toward those without,
and in kindness to those within,
to do good to all men,
and especially to my fellow Christians.
And to thee be the glory.*

“Morning Needs,” The Valley of Vision, 118.



IRON CITY
CHURCH

