

Guideposts Ministries Presents

## Visions of Hope

*In this booklet we hope to provide prayers and Bible helps to see you through the day.*

*If the day is cloudy with fear or despair . . . we offer courage.*

*If the day is filled with sorrow, we offer you comfort.*

*But most of all we strive to offer a most precious gift<sup>¾</sup>the gift of hope.*

I asked God for strength, that  
I might achieve,

I was made weak, that I might  
learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health, that I might  
do greater things.

I was given infirmity, that I might  
do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might  
be happy,

I was given poverty, that I might  
be wise.

I asked for power, that I might  
have the praise of men,

I was given weakness, that  
I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things  
That I might enjoy life,

I was given life, that I might  
enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for—  
but everything I had hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my  
unspoken prayers were answered.

I am, along all men,  
most richly blessed.

<sup>¾</sup>*Anonymous Confederate Soldier*

## A Prayer For January

*God be in my head  
and in my understanding;*

*God be in my eyes  
and in my looking;*

*God be in my mouth  
and in my speaking;*

*God be in my heart  
and in my thinking;*

*God be at my end  
and at my departing.*

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This prayer was first published in an English primer in 1514. Later in 1558, it appeared in what is called the “Old Sarum Primer,” printed in the English cathedral town of Salisbury (“Sarum” in Latin). In those days religious services were usually conducted in Latin, and these early primers, used for both daily devotions and primary education, offered some of the first prayers written in English.

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## A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER

May the Lord make my New Year a happy one. . .

Not by shielding me from sorrow and pain, but by  
strengthening me to bear it if it comes.

Not by making my path easy, but by making me sturdy  
enough to tread any path.

Not by taking hardship from me, but by taking all  
cowardice and fear from my heart as I meet hardships.

Not by making my life always pleasant, but by showing  
me where men and His cause need me most and by  
making me zealous to be there and to help. . .

God, make my year a happy one.

## A Prayer For February

*Give me, O Lord,  
a steadfast heart,  
which no unworthy affection  
may drag downwards;  
give me an unconquered heart,  
which no tribulation  
can wear out;  
give me an upright heart,  
which no unworthy purpose  
may tempt aside.*

*¾Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)*

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A large, slow-speaking, thoughtful man, Aquinas, who was born near Naples, was known among his fellow students at the University of Cologne as “the dumb ox.” But one of his teachers prophesied, “This dumb ox will fill the world with his bellowing.” And Aquinas became one of the most influential and most quoted theologians of all time.

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## WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY

Dear Lord, I know that the ones we love can hurt us most. But I'm very angry now and cannot muster the slightest feeling of forgiveness. I'm burning with anger because I feel (name) misunderstands me and has purposefully hurt me.

Lord, give me a calm spirit, an unclouded mind and an open heart so I can first understand and then forgive.

Teach me, Lord, by Your example to take the first step to reconciliation and help me to say I'm sorry. Amen.

## A Prayer For March

*As we go into a new day,  
we thank Thee for all  
Thy mercies, and we beseech  
Thee that this day  
Thy strength would pilot us,  
Thy power preserve us,  
Thy wisdom instruct us,  
Thy eye watch over us,  
Thy ear hear us,  
Thy Word give us sweet talk,  
Thy hand defend us, and  
Thy ways guide us.*

*¾Saint Patrick*

## A Prayer For April

*Thanks be to Thee,  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits  
which Thou hast won for us,  
for all the pains and insults  
which Thou hast borne for us.  
O most merciful Redeemer,  
Friend and Brother,  
may we know Thee more clearly,  
love Thee more dearly,  
and follow Thee more nearly,  
day by day.*

*¾Richard of Chichester (1197-1253)*

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There are few figures in history who have more legends surrounding them than Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Born in England about A.D. 389, he was captured by pagan Irish raiders while in his teens and taken to Ireland as a slave, serving as a shepherd. Six years later he escaped to Continental Europe, where he became a priest and, in 432, missionary bishop to Ireland. Credited with converting most of Ireland to Christianity, he died in 461 on March 17, which was named his feast day.

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Before becoming Bishop of Chichester during the reign of England's Henry III, Richard de Wyche was a student of canon law at Oxford University. For a short time he was exiled because of his political views. As bishop he lived frugally, giving most of his money to the poor. His saintly character led to his canonization in 1262, and the shrine of St. Richard in Chichester Cathedral drew pilgrimages for more than 400 years. The last lines of this prayer were popularized by a song in the stage and movie musical *Godspell*.

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## OUR FATHER

You cannot say the Lord's Prayer  
And even once say "I"  
You cannot say the Lord's Prayer  
And even once say "My"  
Nor can you pray the Lord's Prayer  
And not pray for one another  
For when you ask for daily bread  
You must include your brother  
For others are included in each and every plea  
From beginning to the end of it  
It does not once say "Me."

*¾Anonymous*

As children bring their broken toys,  
with tears for us to mend,  
I brought my broken dreams to God,  
because He was my friend.  
But then, instead of leaving Him  
in peace to work alone,  
I hung around and tried to help,  
with ways that were my own.  
At last I snatched them back and cried,  
"How can you be so slow?"  
"My child," He said, "What should I do?  
You never did let go."

# A Prayer For May

*O heavenly Father,  
Protect and bless  
All things that have breath;  
Guard them from all evil  
And let them sleep in peace*  
*¾Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965)*

## PRAYER OF ONE IN PAIN

O God, I'm weak and weary  
I do not understand.  
There are some times when I can do  
All things—at Your command.  
And then there are these other times  
And why? I cannot see  
When anything that I would do  
Is much too much for me.  
You know the weariness that fills  
This pain-wracked frame of mine.  
Be merciful to me, O God,  
And grant the strength that's Thine.  
I know the privilege that's mine  
To care for those I love.  
Grant me, O God, for this one day  
Thine own strength from above.  
*¾Helen Miller*

## BIBLE VERSES FOR COURAGE

Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest.

JOSHUA 1:9

The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid.

PSALM 27:1

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

JOHN 14:27

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.

ISAIAH 41:10

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me.

PSALM 23:4

# A Prayer For June

*O Lord,  
You know what is best  
for me.  
Let this or that be done  
as You please.  
Give what You will,  
How much You will  
and when You will.*

*¾Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471)*

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Born in the Rhineland town of Kempen, Thomas Hemerken (Thomas à Kempis) spent seven years of his early life being educated by the Brethren of Common Life, a Dutch community dedicated to promoting a deeper commitment to Christ. In 1399, after his return to Germany, he entered an Augustinian monastery near Zwolle, where he took his vows in 1408. For 70 years Thomas spent his time copying manuscripts, preaching and writing. Obviously, the influence of those early years remained strong. Of all his works, he is best known for, *Imitation of Christ*, one of the most widely read Christian books ever written.

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## WHEN YOU'RE LONELY

Lord, I am lonely. There are people all around me today, but I don't believe I can call any of them my friends. At times I am angry and resentful of others. At other moments I feel unworthy and unlovable. Please help me to sort out my feelings.

I remember that You promised to send The Comforter, and I need His presence now. I need to feel that someone knows me and accepts me as I am. Lord, You knew great loneliness in the Garden of Gethsemane when Your closest friends deserted You. Please hear my prayer and watch with me one hour.

Lord, warm my heart with the power of Your promise: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." Amen.

O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, I offer myself to Thee this day, to be Thy servant forever, to obey Thee, and to be a sacrifice of perpetual praise.

*¾Thomas à Kempis, 1380-1471*

Let this day, O Lord, add some knowledge or good deed to yesterday.

*¾Lancelot Andrews, 1555-1626*

O Lord, I do not pray for tasks equal to my strength: I ask for strength equal to my tasks.

*¾Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893*

O God, give us serenity to accept what cannot be changed, courage to change what can be changed; and the wisdom to know one from the other.

*¾Reinhold Niebuhr, 1892-1971*

# A Prayer For July

*O Lord,  
help me not to despise  
or oppose  
what I do not understand.*

*¾William Penn (1644-1718)*

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A Quaker and outspoken defender of religious freedom, William Penn was repeatedly imprisoned in England for his beliefs. When he received a grant of land in America as payment for a debt King Charles II owed his father, Penn sailed to the New World, where he sought to start a refuge for the religiously persecuted. His plan was for settlers to be guided by the Sermon on the Mount. The colony, founded in 1681, was called Pennsylvania (“Penn’s Woods”) in honor of his father.

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## CROSSINGS

I came to a swift, raging river,  
And the roar held the echo of fear;  
“Oh, Lord, give me wings to fly over,  
If You are, as You promised, quite near.”

But, He said, “Trust the grace I am giving,  
All-pervasive, sufficient for you.  
Take My hand—we will face this together;  
But my plan is—not over, but through.”

*¾Lee Webber, Santa Rosa California*

# A Prayer For August

*Lord, do not let the world and its brief glory lead me astray;  
do not let the devil and his cunning overthrow me. Give me  
boldness in resisting, patience in enduring, firmness in perse-  
vering. In place of all the joys of the world grant me the sweet  
anointing of Your spirit, and instead of the loves of this life,  
pour in the love of Your name.*

*¾Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471)*

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Born in Germany, Thomas à Kempis came to be known by the name of his native village, Kempen. At age 13 he attended a school conducted by the Brethren of the Common Life, an order that emphasized the simplicity of the earliest Christians. Here Thomas’s deep commitment to Christ took root, and in 1399 he entered an Augustinian monastery where he spent the rest of his life. Much of the time he wrote sermons, hymns, religious biographies and one of the most widely read of all books, the classic *Imitation of Christ*.

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## WHEN HATE OVERCOMES YOU

Dear Jesus, You taught us to love our enemies and forgive them but I cannot seem to dismiss my hatred of (name). My mind and heart are so full of resentment that forgiveness seems like weakness to me. Show me, Lord, the power of reconciliation. Help me give up my indulgence in the bitter pleasure of vengeful thoughts—I know I am only creating my own misery.

Lord, I turn this problem over to You; I turn judgement over to You; I turn my bitterness over to You. Bring the joy of life and the fragrance of forgiveness to me again. Amen.

## WHEN YOU NEED FORGIVENESS

Dear Lord, I have committed wrongs against another person, and I’m in need of forgiveness—Yours and his. Give me the courage to admit my wrongs and to make amends. Grant me the ability to give up the self-wounding emotion of holding a grudge. Open my heart to words and thoughts of reconciliation.

You brought forgiveness of sins to all those who repent. My transgressions remind me of my wrongs against You and I beg Your forgiveness and the power of the Spirit to sin no more. Amen.

# A Prayer For September

*O gracious and holy Father,  
Give us wisdom to perceive Thee,  
intelligence to understand Thee,  
diligence to seek Thee,  
patience to wait for Thee,  
eyes to behold Thee,  
a heart to meditate upon Thee,  
and a life to proclaim Thee;  
through the power of the Spirit  
of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*¾Benedict of Nursia (480-547?)*

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In the midst of an increasingly chaotic Roman world, Benedict founded a monastery at Monte Cassino, Italy, in 529. Destroyed four times since then (most recently during World War II), it has been rebuilt and still stands. Best remembered for his monastic *Rule*, Benedict emphasized a life of prayer, study and work—setting a standard observed in monasteries to this day.

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## WHEN YOU'RE WORRIED

Heavenly Father, I'm so worried. Trouble seems like a storm raging all around me, and I feel isolated, alone and crushed by fear.

Lord, I know I seem to neglect You until problems are about to overwhelm me. But grant me the comfort of Your presence now, and I will treasure it in my heart. Help calm my disturbed mind and show me that in Christ I have nothing to fear. I pray in His name. Amen.

## THE ANSWER WILL COME

The time may be delayed, the manner unexpected, but the answer is sure to come. Not a tear of sacred sorrow, not a breath of holy desire, poured out to God, will ever be lost, but, in His own time and way, will be wafted back again in clouds of mercy and fall in showers of blessings on you and on those for whom you pray.

*¾Anonymous*

# A Prayer For October

*Now, Father, now,  
in Thy dear presence kneeling,  
our spirits yearn  
to feel Thy kindling love:  
Now make us strong,  
we need Thy deep revealing  
of trust and strength  
and calmness from above.*

*¾Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)*

## WHEN YOU'RE DEPRESSED

Dear Lord, it has taken courage just to pray to You, because I'm afraid no one will answer.

I know You are the God of Light and Truth; so please shine Your light into my soul which is dark, mistrustful and heavy as lead today.

Hoping against hope, I claim the promises of Holy Scripture: "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted, and rescues those whose spirit is crushed."

Come close, Lord, and lift from me my oppression. Give me the clarity of mind and sweetness of soul that in Christ I should enjoy. In His Name, Amen.

## WHEN A LOVED ONE IS ILL

Lord Jesus, You announced Your ministry with the miracle of healing. Come now to (name) and bring the restoring power of health to him. Grant him fullness of life in body and spirit.

We trust fully, Lord, in Your power over all things. Dismiss this spirit of weakness and disease from his body. Release Your power, and demonstrate Your love and authority over the life of him who loves You.

We believe in the Bible, which proclaims Your mighty works; manifest for us in this hour of illness Your miracle of renewing life. We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

# A Prayer For November

*Give me good digestion, Lord,  
and also something to digest;  
Give me a healthy body, Lord,  
With sense to keep it at its best.  
Give me a healthy mind, good Lord,  
To keep the pure and good in sight,  
Which seeing sin is not appalled  
But finds a way to set it right.  
Give me a mind that is not bored,  
That does not whimper, whine or sigh;  
Don't let me worry overmuch  
About the fussy thing called "I."*

*¾Thomas Henry Basil Webb*

## WHEN GRIEVING

Heavenly Father, we have lost one dear to us, and it is as if light has gone out of our lives.

We accept Your rule over life, realizing that all must die, but that the faithful shall rise again in Christ. As we know Our Redeemer lives, we know we shall see our loved ones again.

We pray for ourselves, asking for the Holy Spirit to fill the dark void in our hearts and for the Hand of Christ to wipe the tears from our eyes.

Thank you, Lord, for being our loving, caring Father. Comfort us in this world and grant us peace and joy together in the next. Amen.

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*When I need guidance*

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."  
(Proverbs 3:6)

*When I have sinned and need forgiveness*

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."  
(I John 1:9)

*When I'm lonely and long to feel Christ's presence*

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."  
(Revelation 3:20)

*When I know there is no death*

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."  
(John 10:28-29)

# A Prayer For December

*Good Shepherd,  
thank You for  
Your watchfulness  
through the night  
and your search for me  
through days  
when I'm so lost  
I forget it's You  
I've found.  
And when I've strayed  
from the fold,  
give me the grace  
to listen to Your voice,  
to hear Your cry,  
and to come running  
to the One  
Who calls me,  
among all His sheep,  
by name.*

## THE UPPERMOST BRANCHES

*by Randy Ryder, Hahnville, Louisiana*

Looking out from the third floor, through the chain link fence, above the ten-foot wall, I can just see the top of a pecan tree.

In the summer, its dark green leaves make me long for picnics in the shade, for tossing a Frisbee and playing baseball, and for lying in tall, cool grass, discovering a menagerie in the clouds.

The leaves of autumn swaying in the wind, clinging to life, make me remember the last desperate embraces of family and friends, of loves and dreams yet unfulfilled.

The bare limbs of winter, pointing forlornly, almost accusingly, at the sky, weaken my resolve and make me aware of my mortality as they threaten to snuff out the embers of hope in my soul. But even here, even in prison, with so little around me that's positive or hopeful, even here, when the uppermost branches of my tree are full of tender leaves again, I can feel hope strengthening. I can feel the warmth of my family and friends, and realize that for every winter in our lives, as long as we don't give up, as long as we truly believe in God and in ourselves, there will always be a spring.

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Loving Father, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world.

Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

*¾Robert Louis Stevenson*