

Prayer Guide

21 DAYS OF PRAYER

Whether you're a new follower of Jesus or years into your faith, sometimes prayer can be difficult. How do you do it? Why does it matter?

We wanted to put together a practical guide for prayer. Our hope is that by gaining a deeper understanding of the importance of prayer in your life, you begin to look forward to a daily habit of prayer the way you look forward to a conversation with a friend.

In this guide you'll find:

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Some things to know before you begin

1. THERE'S NO "RIGHT WAY" TO PRAY

Prayer is a conversation, not a performance. Being honest with God is more important than trying to mimic someone else.

2. SHORT PRAYERS ARE ENOUGH

Even one sentence is a prayer. If all you can say is "God, help," that's enough. Silence can be prayer, too.

3. USE EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

Pray the way you talk. You don't need to try to impress God with a special vocabulary :)

4. IT'S OKAY TO REPEAT YOURSELF

If something keeps coming up, it probably matters. God doesn't get tired of hearing you say the same thing over and over.

5. YOU CAN PRAY WRITTEN PRAYERS

Reading or using a prayer guide isn't cheating- sometimes it's helpful when you don't know where to begin.

Prayer

WHAT IT IS

Work	Prayer is a duty & a discipline you learn to develop over time
Words	Prayer is a conversation with God (but silence can be part of the convo, too)
Balance	Prayer is a mix of adoration, confession, thanks, and petitions (requests)

WHAT IT REQUIRES

Grace	Prayer is "In Jesus' name," - it's because of Jesus that you can talk to God
Fear	Prayer is an awareness of God that humbles and amazes you
Helplessness	Prayer is accepting your weakness and need for God

WHAT IT GIVES

Perspective	Prayer reorients your view toward God
Strength	Prayer is aligning and uniting yourself with God's power
Spiritual Reality	Prayer opens your mind to the presence of God

WHERE IT TAKES US

Self-Knowledge	Prayer requires honesty with yourself and God
Trust	Prayer requires and creates both restful trust and confident hope
Surrender	Prayer is essential to giving all of your life to God

Prayer Prompts

PRAY FOR:

DAY 1. your immediate and extended family

DAY 2. people who are grieving, lonely, or struggling mentally

DAY 3. your close friends and friendships

DAY 4. your workplace, coworkers, neighbors, or school community

DAY 5. your leaders (local, national, church, community)

DAY 6. people who are sick, disabled, or dealing with chronic pain

DAY 7. your own heart—peace, wisdom, and spiritual growth

DAY 8. marriages and families in crisis

DAY 9. kids, teens, and young adults (safety, guidance, and faith)

DAY 10. those struggling financially or without housing

DAY 11. people battling destructive habits and addictions

DAY 12. people you find difficult to love

DAY 13. forgiveness- giving and receiving

DAY 14. rest and renewal for yourself and others

DAY 15. those serving others (teachers, pastors, missionaries, caregivers, etc)

DAY 16. peace in places of conflict and war

DAY 17. justice, the oppressed, and the voiceless

DAY 18. guidance and clarity in upcoming decisions for yourself and others

DAY 19. courage to obey and trust God

DAY 20. people who don't yet have a relationship with Jesus

DAY 21. our church (wisdom about what's ahead and staying focused on helping people find & follow Jesus for years to come)

Creating a Lifestyle of Prayer

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. **MARK 1:35 NIV***

Prayer is most effective when it isn't something we just do every now and then, but when it's a lifestyle we cultivate. To understand how to have a lifestyle of prayer, we can look at the example Jesus gave during His life on earth.

HAVE A CERTAIN TIME

Jesus got up early in the morning to spend time with His Heavenly Father. Make a daily appointment with God—whether it's first thing in the morning, at lunch, or in the evening—and faithfully keep it.

HAVE A CERTAIN PLACE

Jesus had a specific place He went to pray. Having a designated place to pray helps us remove distractions and frees us to worship and pray out loud.

HAVE A CERTAIN PLAN

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He gave them a prayer outline often referred to as "The Lord's Prayer" (Matthew 6:9-13).

As we pray every day, our plan for our prayer time can vary. Whether it includes worship music, Bible-reading, or time to listen to God, it doesn't always have to look the same. It just helps when we have a plan for connecting with Him regularly.

Creating a Lifestyle of Prayer

Praying and reading/studying the Bible go hand in hand. The more we come to know God, the richer our prayer life becomes.

If you don't already have a habit of reading or studying the Bible, here's a model many have found helpful over the years:

In 1945, George Mueller wrote a booklet called "Quiet Time: A Practical Guide for Daily Devotions."

In it, he suggested beginning a daily time with God by reading and meditating on scripture to ready his heart for prayer.

This is a set of questions he recommended when reading scripture:

- Is there an example for me to follow?
- Is there any command for me to obey?
- Is there any error for me to avoid?
- Is there any sin for me to forsake (give up)?
- Is there any promise for me to claim?
- Is there any new thought about God Himself?

If your time with God doesn't look like this, no sweat. Any time spent reading/listening to the Bible is well-spent.

3 basic categories of prayer

UPWARD

Upward prayers are focused on God. We think about God's character, what he's done for us, all he's created, and thank him for all of it.

These prayers help center us- because we acknowledge that God is above all things.

INWARD

Inward prayers give us an opportunity to examine our thoughts, actions, and character.

We ask, "God, what needs to change in my life so that I can live the way you intend for me to live?"

OUTWARD

Outward prayers are requests focused on our needs and the needs of others in the world.

This includes prayers of **petition/supplication** (*the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly*), **intercession** (*intervening on behalf of someone else*).

In the following pages, we'll explore these 3 categories of prayer in more detail.

UPWARD PRAYER

God speaks to us through the Bible, and prayer is our response back to him. We begin our prayers by considering who God is and what he has revealed to us about himself through the Bible.

If we miss incorporating "upward prayers" into our lives, we can easily get stuck because our own emotions become the fuel and focus of our prayers.

When we consider all he has created, all he has given us through Jesus—we are reminded of all we have to be grateful for. We are humbled that he cares enough to listen to our prayers.

Here's an example of an upward prayer/song written by David (a King in ancient Israel known for his close relationship to God).

Psalm 145:8-13 (New International Reader's Version)

The Lord is gracious, kind and tender.

He is slow to get angry and full of love.

The Lord is good to all.

He shows deep concern for everything he has made.

Lord, all your works praise you.

Your faithful people praise you.

They tell about your glorious kingdom.

They speak about your power.

Then all people will know about the mighty things you have done.

They will know about the glorious majesty of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is a kingdom that will last forever.

Your rule will continue for all time to come.

The Lord will keep all his promises.

He is faithful in everything he does.

When we pray upward prayers, we're reminded of how good he is and we thank him for everything he's done.

INWARD PRAYER

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) was an influential philosopher and theologian. One of the ideas that St. Augustine wrote about in his autobiography entitled *Confessions* is that all people seek happiness and attach themselves to things they believe will make them happy. Because of sin, we confuse what will make us happy. This causes our loves to be out of order - we do not love God more than the gifts he's given us. One of Augustine's most famous quotes/prayers is this one: "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you."

Building on this same idea, Tim Keller (pastor and theologian) wrote, "If you love anything in this world more than God, you will crush that object under the weight of your expectations, and it will eventually break your heart."

In Tim Keller's book *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*, he writes, "Confession should not be done simply as a response to a sin about which you are already aware and convicted. Our prayer life is the place where we should examine our lives and find the sins that otherwise we would be too insensitive or busy to acknowledge."

Keller suggests using a model like the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-24 to consider the areas in your life where love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are present. Where in your life is there an absence of the fruit of the Spirit?

It's through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives that we are convicted and have a desire to give ourselves back to God. This isn't work done in our own strength. Because of what Jesus has already done for us on the cross, we can simultaneously be deeply grieved by the way our sin has wrecked our lives and also overwhelmed with thanks that we don't have to stay stuck in this mess forever.

Inward prayer is time that we give to God to call out the things in our lives that don't belong. When we pray like this, it's an opportunity to consider what it looks like to become more like Jesus in our everyday life.

OUTWARD PRAYER

When we petition God through prayer, we ask, even complain, and wait.

ASK:

- When Jesus taught his followers to pray, he asked God for "daily bread." This "daily bread" includes the things we need to sustain life: addressing our spiritual, emotional, and material needs, both for ourselves and for others.

In Luke 11, Jesus follows up "The Lord's Prayer" with this story:

⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' ⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' ⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your **shameless audacity** he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

⁹ "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

When Jesus says we should pray with "**shameless audacity**" the Greek word Jesus uses here ordinarily means "**rudeness or impertinence**." Jesus wants us to pray assertive prayers because we have a God who runs the universe and is also our Heavenly Father.

COMPLAIN:

-We also see prayers of **lament** or **complaining** in the Bible. Whining and complaining isn't something that's commonly encouraged in our culture, but J.I. Packer writes, "bad things happen to good people... they complain with great freedom and considerable length to their God. And Scripture does not seem to regard these complaining prayers as anything other than wisdom."

-We see examples of complaining prayers in Lamentations, Job, and throughout the Psalms

-The wisdom in offering your complaints to God is that, unlike when we complain to others in our lives, God can actually do something about our struggles.

WAIT:

-Many of the requests we make to God involve waiting. We should be confident that God will hear us, but also remain patient with his timing.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promises, as some understand slowness.

-In other words, our preferred timeline often doesn't line up with God's, but that doesn't mean that he isn't hearing our requests and working even when we don't see evidence or understand

Why Prayer Matters

So, what's the purpose of asking God for something through prayer? What do our prayers actually do?

2 REASONS: 1. Our prayers put the world right.

2. Our prayers align our hearts with God.

REASON #1

OUR PRAYERS PUT THE WORLD RIGHT

The world around us is different because of prayers that we pray. When Jesus prayed, "thy kingdom come" he meant, "God, make this earth look the way you intended from the start."

- God uses our prayers to effect the circumstances of history
- He works justice in the world through our prayers
- There are many things he will not give or change until we ask
- When we ask, he will give us above and beyond what we ask for
- God will not get mad or annoyed with you for asking for good things

Here's the scriptures to back up these truths:

1. God uses our prayers to effect the circumstances of history

James 5:16b-18

¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

2. He works justice in the world through our prayers

Luke 18:7-8

⁷ "And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" -Jesus

3. There are many things he will not give or change until we ask

James 4:2b

You do not have because you do not ask God.

4. When we ask, he will give us above and beyond what we have asked for

Ephesians 3:20-21

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

5. God will not get mad or annoyed with you for asking for good things

James 1:5b

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Why Prayer Matters

REASON #2

OUR PRAYERS ALIGN OUR HEARTS WITH GOD

God uses our prayers to help change our perspective- to help us zoom out on the big picture. Through our prayers, we learn how to trust him more.

1. Through prayerful petitions, we receive peace and rest

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

2. We don't have to worry about asking God for too much- we can trust God is wiser than us and knows what's best for us

Psalm 4:8

In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, Lord,
make me dwell in safety.

3. Our bad things will turn out for good

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

4. The best things are yet to come

1 Corinthians 2:9 (New International Reader's Version)

It is written that "no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has known." (Isaiah 64:4)
the things God has prepared for those who love him.

Praying Scripture

The Bible is one of the most valuable tools we have to build a dynamic prayer life.

When we pray the promises of God we find in scripture, we're focusing on God's power and unlimited resources rather than the problems we face and our limited ability to fix them. Our Heavenly Father is bigger than any situation we'll encounter- regardless of how scary or uncertain we may feel.

Pray these promises both for yourself and for the people you love, trusting that God hears your prayers.

ASSURANCE:

The LORD is my Shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely Your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

PSALM 23 NIV

ANXIETY:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace

of God, which transcends all understanding, will
guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 NIV

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,

for tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own.

MATTHEW 6:34 NIV

COMFORT:

And we know that in all things God works
for the good of those who love Him, who
have been called according to His purpose.

ROMANS 8:28 NIV

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of
all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles,
so that we can comfort those in any trouble
with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 NIV

FAITH:

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

HEBREWS 11:1 NIV

"Everything is possible for one who believes."

MARK 9:23 NIV

FEAR:

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

2 TIMOTHY 1:7 NIV

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

ISAIAH 41:10 NIV

FORGIVENESS:

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

EPHESIANS 4:32 NIV

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

COLOSSIANS 3:13 NIV

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 JOHN 1:9 NIV

He has saved us from the kingdom of darkness.

He has brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. Because of what the Son has done, we have been set free.

Because of him, our sins have been forgiven.

COLOSSIANS 1:13-14 NIRV

FREEDOM:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:17 NIV

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.

*Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves
be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

GALATIANS 5:1 NIV

GUIDANCE:

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean
not on your own understanding; in all your ways
submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

PROVERBS 3:5-6 NIV

*Whether you turn to the right or to the
left, your ears will hear a voice behind
you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."*

ISAIAH 30:21 NIV

GUILT/SHAME:

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus...*

ROMANS 8:1 NIV

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

ISAIAH 1:18 NIV

HEALING:

*Praise the LORD, my soul, and forget not all His benefits—
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases...*

PSALM 103:2-3 NIV

But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

ISAIAH 53:5 NIV

LONELINESS:

"No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."

JOSHUA 1:5 NIV

God sets the lonely in families, He leads
out the prisoners with singing; but the
rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

PSALM 68:6 NIV

PRIDE:

"God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

JAMES 4:6 NIV

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...

PHILIPPIANS 2:3 NIV

PROTECTION:

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are
steadfast, because they trust in You. Trust in the LORD
forever, for the LORD, the LORD Himself, is the Rock eternal.

ISAIAH 26:3-4 NIV

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and
peace as you trust in Him, so that you may
overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS 15:13 NIV

PROVISION:

And my God will meet all your needs according
to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:19 NIV

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so
that in all things at all times, having all that
you need, you will abound in every good work.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:8 NIV

PURITY:

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and
renew a steadfast spirit within me.

PSALM 51:10 NIV

...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and
with the full assurance that faith brings, having our
hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience
and having our bodies washed with pure water.

HEBREWS 10:22 NIV

PURPOSE:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

JEREMIAH 29:11 NIV

Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6 NIV

STRENGTH:

But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 NIV

...but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

ISAIAH 40:31 NIV

THOUGHTS:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9 NIV

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

ROMANS 12:2 NIV

VICTORY:

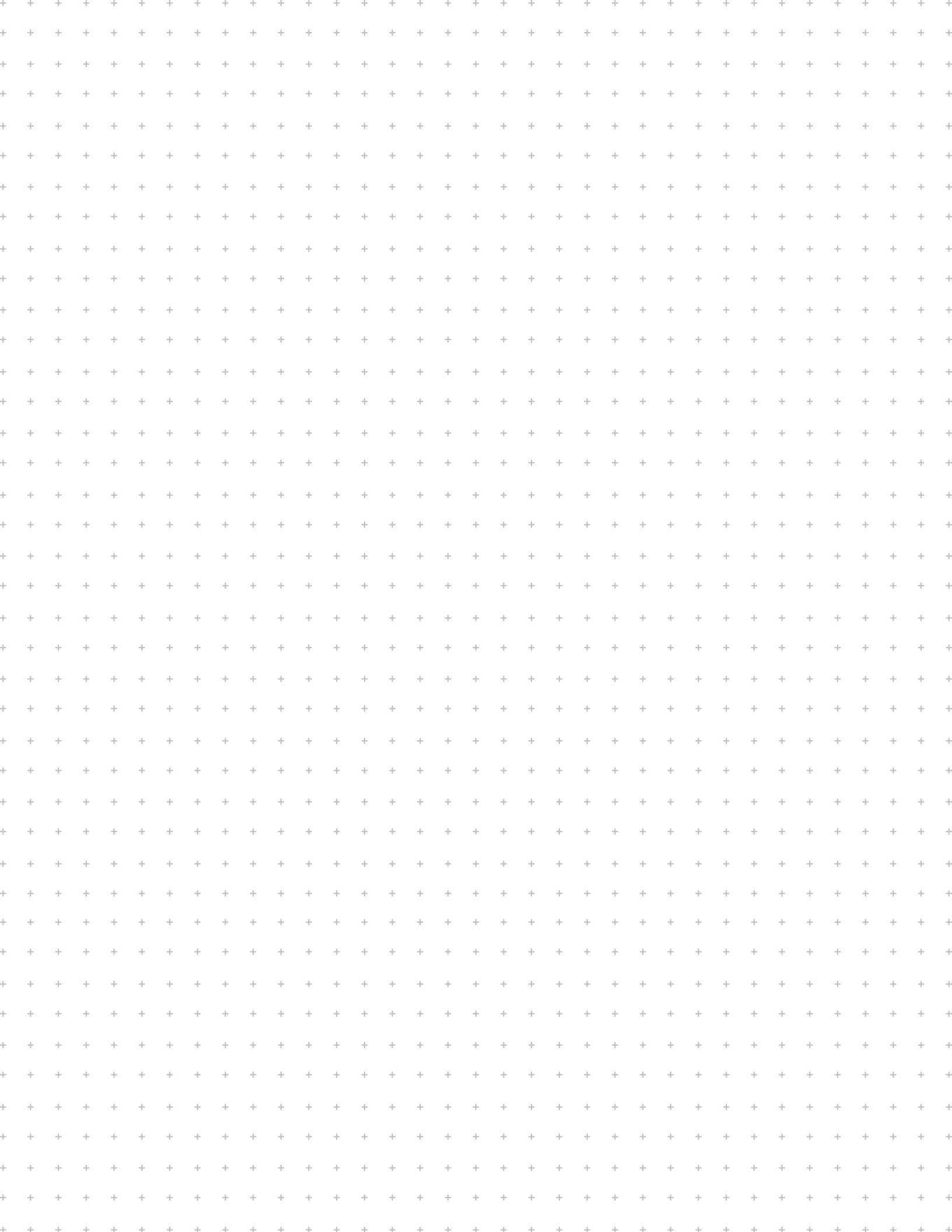
"The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

EXODUS 14:14 NIV

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

ROMANS 8:37 NIV

notes



When you struggle in prayer, you can come before God with the confidence that he is going to give you what you would have asked for if you knew everything he knows.

-Tim Keller