

## Prayer Guide

The world has been brought to its knees, humbled by a teeny virus. The sense of security we have had in assuming we live in a healthy, safe, environment, as well as the security many have found in their steady jobs and investment portfolios has been shattered. That sense of security will not be regained in short order, if ever. The world has changed.

With this in mind, how do we pray?

The first thing I'd like to suggest is that we turn to the scriptures. Nothing has deepened my prayer life more than praying from the scriptures. I'm reminded of a quote from Eugene Peterson, "Prayer is not something we think up to get God's attention or enlist his favor. Prayer is answering speech. The first word is God's word. Prayer is a human word and is never the first word, never the primary word, never the initiating and shaping word simply because we are never first; never primary...the first word everywhere and always is God's word to us, not ours to him" (*Working the Angles*, Eerdman Press).

*Prayer is answering speech.* That's why praying from scripture is so valuable and powerful. God has spoken and continues to speak to us through his Word. When we form our prayers in response to what He has spoken to us in his Word our prayers begin to feel like there's life in them. We have this sense that our prayers are "hitting the mark"; touching the heart of heaven. This is because we're aligning our hearts to heaven as we align our hearts to his Word.

You can pray from almost any passage of scripture but a wonderful place to begin is the Psalms. Here are a few of my favourite: Psalm 91, 46, 23, 139, 103, 42, 5. I have spent time in each of these Psalms over the past few weeks. I find myself returning again and again to certain passages that continue to give fresh fuel for my prayers. You may find that you can spend a whole week praying the same Psalm over and over. In fact I encourage it, letting the words soak into your heart and saturate your being. Many of the Psalms are written as prayers so praying them is quite natural. But again you can pray from almost any passage of scripture, if you have a daily reading plan, take a small section of that passage and try praying it. Here's a bit of a rhythm to help get you started.

1. Get alone. Get quiet. Take a few deep breaths. Try to be fully present.
2. Thank God for his Word and for speaking to your heart today.
3. Read a short passage of scripture or Psalm. Read it 2 or 3 times to let the words soak in.
4. Now read it a verse or a phrase at a time, pausing and praying in between.
5. When you pause, pay attention to what is standing out to you. Use it as inspiration for your prayer.
6. Go slow. Don't be in a hurry to speak or to move on to the next verse. Listen intently. And don't worry if it feels awkward at first. Keep going. Keep pressing in.

Optional Resource to include instead of the above rhythm.

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=1eLXDNTTRBBC-6QSqowLM\\_oJv0r-\\_m7sw3](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1eLXDNTTRBBC-6QSqowLM_oJv0r-_m7sw3)

More important than what we pray is where we pray from. Praying from the scriptures helps us pray from a place of peace and confidence in God. Praying through a list is valuable but more important is praying through to the heart of God. With this in mind here are a few prayer points to consider.

### **Prayer Points:**

- Pray that fear doesn't take root in our hearts but rather, that we grow in a deep abiding trust in Jesus, a trust that will serve us so well even beyond this crisis.
- Pray for a great awakening! Pray that the fresh awareness of mortality and the feeling that so much is beyond our control right now would draw hearts back to faith who have fallen away. Pray that this crisis massively softens and humbles hearts across our region and nation. Pray it creates a wide-spread hunger for God and the peace He alone brings.
- Pray that we shift away from our focus on temporal, earthly values and reorient to value what really matters. The Lord is seeking to use this situation to set many of us free from idols. Pray as well that the revelation of the resurrection becomes prominent and dynamic as it was in the early Church, breaking our fear of death.
- Pray for those who personally or as businesses, are suffering significant financial losses, or layoffs. Pray that the Lord would provide for them and we would all continue to choose generosity.
- Pray for those serving on the front-lines, in health care and housing and other essential services.
- Pray for compassionate and creative ways to be given to the Church. Pray for the vulnerable - those at higher risk of infection and those already prone to both isolation and fear.
- Pray for our church and the Church to be more united than ever as we find ways to connect and share resources and encouragement with one another and with our neighbours.