

Students
pray **first** 
Resource Guide

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Letter from the Student Team

Hi,

Every year our church chooses a word or phrase for the year to be our spiritual focus and this year's phrase is "PRAY FIRST ". The heart behind this phrase is that we would become people who seek God in every aspect of our lives. Are you stressed about a big test coming up? Pray first. Do you know a friend that's struggling? Pray first. Need wisdom? Pray first.

Our hope is that this year would be a year where prayer becomes a bigger and bigger part of your daily life. A practice that is not just something you do at church every week or at summer camp, but something you use throughout your day, every day. This resource book is going to give you a crash course of what prayer is, teach you several different ways to pray, and give you space to actually try it yourself.

As you work through this book, our prayer for you is that you not only begin to grasp God's design for prayer, but also our need for it and the power that comes through it.

And as always, we are here to help you. Prayer is like building muscle in that it takes work and often help from others to grow. So if you have questions or want to learn even more, please don't hesitate to ask.

We're praying for you this year!

Your Students United Team

Introduction: What is Prayer?

Prayer is simply a conversation with God. It is a way for us to thank and praise God for his goodness, as well as a way to bring our concerns to him. Because of this, when we pray we speak to God and God speaks to us. And as we pray, remember that it is not about saying the right words or impressing those around you; rather, he wants us to pray personally, regularly, and genuinely.

Looking to Jesus, we witness him praying before making big decisions ([Luke 6:12-13](#)), when grieving the death of his cousin John the Baptist ([Matthew 14:23](#)), and when he was in deep agony over his coming death ([Luke 22:41-44](#)). We also learn from Jesus' prayer life that we're instructed to pray always ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#)), to pray about anything because he cares about everything ([1 Peter 5:7](#)), and that he always hears our prayers — no matter how big or small they may seem ([Psalm 4:3](#)).

And while prayer deepens our personal relationship with God, scripture shows it is also something we do together as a community. Praying together shapes the church into a unified, caring, mission-focused community where the Holy Spirit changes us to be more like Jesus — more loving and compassionate.

Our hope is that as you regularly engage in this Pray First Resource and Journal you will deepen both your relationship with God and grow your heart for the mission of our church — ***people helping people find and follow Jesus.***

How to Use this Resource

This Pray First Resource and Journal is designed to help you cultivate a deeper and more intentional prayer life — one that will help you know God, encounter God, and be changed by God. It contains helpful information on different ways to connect with God through prayer. There is no right or wrong way to pray, so start with one method and see if it works for you.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you begin developing a daily habit of prayer.

- ♦ **Find Time.** Set aside time each day to talk with God — whether in the morning or on your way to class — and make daily prayer a habit.
- ♦ **Pick a Place.** Create a space where you won't be distracted or interrupted. Keep it simple and somewhere you can easily get to.
- ♦ **Select a Plan.** Pick a plan from the various methods offered in this resource. You can try multiple or stick to one, the important thing is that you are intentional about your time with God.
- ♦ **Pray Always.** The posture of your heart matters as much as the words you speak. So when you go to God in prayer, be intentional to slow down, be authentic, and open to what God wants to do in your prayer time.

As you journey through this resource, remember that prayer is not a task to accomplish but a relationship to enjoy. May these practices help you become more aware of God's presence in every moment — forming you into the likeness of Jesus.

Ways to Pray

Prayer does not have to be complicated, but it can feel intimidating — especially when we're unsure how to begin or what to say. The good news is that followers of Jesus have been learning and practicing prayer for thousands of years, leaving us simple, meaningful patterns that can guide us into conversation with God.

In this section, you'll find a few prayer methods you can try to get you started:

- ◆ The Lord's Prayer
- ◆ Praying Scripture
- ◆ T-A-C-O-S
- ◆ Praying Out Loud
- ◆ "Choose Your Own Adventure" Prayers

These practices aren't formulas for "right" prayer, but tools to help build confidence and keep us grounded in biblical truth. Whether praying alone or with others, they offer structure, focus our attention on God, and lead us toward deeper trust and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Try one for a week or rotate between them—there's no single right way to pray, so keep exploring until one resonates.

The Lord's Prayer: A Guided Practice

When Jesus' disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray," he didn't give them a ritual, he gave them a pattern for connection, trust, surrender, forgiveness, and protection — emphasizing that prayer is about a relationship with God. Let's read it together:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

[Matthew 6:9-13 \(NKJV\)](#)

Now, below is a guided prayer that invites you to slow down, enter God's presence with honesty and hope, and allow the Spirit to shape you through prayer. Go through the guided prayer below. Take your time. Breathe. Listen. Pray with expectation.

1. ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S HOLINESS

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Jesus teaches us to begin prayer with relationship and worship — coming to God with awe and honoring his holy name.

Try It and Reflect:

- ◆ Journal a few names or characteristics of God. *Ex: Provider, healer, promise keeper, etc.*
- ◆ Thank him for his character. *Ex: God, thank you that you are _____.*

2. SURRENDER TO GOD

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Surrender isn't giving up — it's trusting God to guide your life. We let go of trying to control everything and invite God to shape our choices and desires.

Try It and Reflect:

- ◆ Think about an area in your life where you are struggling to surrender to God, and pray this prayer with your hands turned upward as a posture of surrender. *Ex: God, your kingdom come, your will be done in _____.*
- ◆ Release areas of control, fear, or anxiety into God's care. *Ex: God, I surrender _____.*

3. BE PRESENT WITH GOD

Give us today our daily bread.

Daily bread reminds us we are dependent, not self-sufficient. Jesus meets us with the grace we need right now - strength for today, hope for today, provision for today.

Try It and Reflect:

- ◆ As you inhale, say: *You are my provider.*
As you exhale, say: *Give me what I need today.*
- ◆ Present your needs and the needs of others one by one. *Ex: God, give me guidance to know the right thing to do. God, help my friend who is battling anxiety and depression.*

4. SEEK CONFESSION & PROTECTION

*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

Confession isn't about shame — it's about letting go and being forgiven. As he frees us, we can forgive others and break cycles of hurt. God also gives us the strength to resist temptation, and the Holy Spirit helps us stay close to him and live in his love.

Try It and Reflect:

- ◆ Hold your hands closed as you silently name what you need to confess. Then open your hands as a sign of releasing guilt and receiving God's mercy.
Ex: God, forgive me for _____ . Help me to receive your grace and mercy.
- ◆ Pray for protection over your mind, body, and relationships.
Ex: God, protect my mind and body from areas of temptation.

5. PRAISE GOD

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

We end where we began: with worship. Praise anchors our prayers in who God is and reminds us that all power, goodness, and victory are his.

Try It and Reflect:

- ◆ Speak one sentence of praise aloud. *Ex: All glory to you, God!*
- ◆ Thank God for hearing and responding to your prayers. *Ex: Thank you, Father, for hearing my prayers. Amen.*

Praying Scripture

Praying through the scriptures allows you to use the words and emotions of the bible to gain more confidence in your own prayers. Through praying scripture you begin to focus more on God's will instead of your own and gain a deeper understanding of him and his word.

What do we mean when we say "pray scripture"? It is simply focusing a time of prayer around a particular text in the bible. This can mean either praying the prayers of the bible word-for-word as your own prayers, or personalizing portions of the scriptures in prayer to your own needs or situation.

PRACTICING PRAYING SCRIPTURE

- ◆ **First Reading:** Say the scripture out loud. Don't just read it; pray it from your heart, agreeing with what you're saying.
- ◆ **Second Reading:** What sticks out to you? Pick one word or phrase that God might be emphasizing for you. Ask God why he wants you to focus on

these words and then pause to listen to him.

- ♦ **Third Reading:** Make it personal. Make the scripture your own personal prayer by focusing on what God was highlighting for you in the previous readings. You can even put “I” and “me” or the name of someone you love into the text. *Ex: In [Psalm 91](#), instead of “He who takes refuge in the shelter of the Most High will be safe in the shadow of the Almighty,” you could say, “When I take refuge in the shelter of the Most High, I will be safe in the shadow of the Almighty.”*

Try It and Reflect:

Pray scripture with one of these passages: [Psalm 23](#), [Psalm 46](#), [Psalm 51](#), and [Psalm 91](#). Also try [Isaiah 40:28-41](#), [Romans 12](#) or [Philippians 4](#).

T-A-C-O-S Method of Prayer

This simple prayer method helps us approach God with an open heart — expressing gratitude, praising him, confessing our shortcomings, and lifting our needs and the needs of others to him. You can pray through these steps in just a few minutes or linger with God as long as you need.

T - THANKSGIVING

Start by reflecting and verbalizing your gratitude for all that God has done for you today or this week. Thank him for the big things and the little things.

Try It and Reflect:

Take a moment to share with God something in your life or your day you are thankful for. *Ex: God, I thank you for all you have blessed me with. Thank you for meeting my needs everyday. Thank you for my parents and family. And thank you for showing up for me earlier today when I was stressed and comforting me.*

A - ADORATION

Continue your prayer by reflecting on God’s goodness and character. Give God praise and honor for who he is and how he’s affected your life.

Try it and Reflect:

Spend some time praising God for who he is and the characteristics you appreciate about him. *Ex: God, I praise you for your forgiveness. Even when I mess up you are quick to forgive every time. I praise you for your justice.*

C - CONFESSION

Invite the Holy Spirit to bring to mind any attitudes, actions, or patterns that aren't aligned with Jesus' way. God welcomes our vulnerability and responds with mercy, so confess and receive his grace.

Try It and Reflect:

What do you need to own and confess? Take a moment to reflect, then share them with God asking for his forgiveness (knowing he forgives freely).

Ex: God, I want to own the mistakes I have made. I am sorry for lashing out at my mom earlier. I apologize for spreading that rumor about someone from my school. God, please forgive me for thinking impure thoughts.

O - OTHERS

Spend some time praying for those you care about (friends, family, classmates, etc) as well as people you don't know personally (our country). Ask God to help meet their needs in tangible and real ways.

Try It and Reflect:

Pray for others. Reflect on what they would need to make their situation better and ask God to provide for those needs. *Ex: God, I pray that you would bring some friends into my sister's life to help her with her loneliness. God, please bring healing to my grandpa. I pray for peace in the world.*

S - SELF

Scripture tells us that Jesus is our mediator (our go-between) and that anything we ask in the power of his name God will hear. Bring your requests to God, however big or small.

Try It and Reflect:

What do you need from God today? Spend a few minutes asking God for it.

Ex: Lord, help me to make the right decision that honors you. God, bring peace to my heart because I feel really stressed right now.

Praying Out Loud

Because we can't see God, praying out loud may feel vulnerable for some of us. But speaking your prayers aloud can bring a new sense of connection and energy to your time with God, and you may find that he feels more real and close. Why? Because when you speak your prayers, your brain engages like it does in normal conversation, making it feel more personal — like sharing your heart with someone who truly loves you.

PRACTICING PRAYING OUT LOUD

- ◆ Make it conversational. Speak to God the way you talk to a friend — authenticity matters more than perfection.
- ◆ Listen to what you are saying. Are you only focusing on yourself? Are you lifting others? Are you praising God for who he is?
- ◆ Keep it simple. Short, sincere prayers can be deeply powerful ([Matthew 6:7–8](#)). Let your heart lead. God loves honesty more than polish.

Try It and Reflect:

- ◆ Speak aloud one simple prayer each morning. *Ex: God, thank you for being with me today.*
- ◆ Choose a moment throughout your day to whisper a sentence prayer of gratitude. *Ex: God, today I am grateful for my friends.*
- ◆ Ask a trusted friend or family member to pray aloud with you for 30 seconds--each one taking one turn. *Ex: Your growth group leader, a friend, a parent/family member, or one of your student pastors.*

Celebrate even the smallest step. Every word spoken in faith is heard with love.

“Choose Your Own Adventure” Prayers

Sometimes the best prayers come when you make them your own! For this one, you get to decide how to pray. You can talk out loud, whisper, write, dance, sing, workout — anything that helps you connect with God. Think about what you want to say, how you want to express it, and even where you want to pray. There are a thousand ways to pray, so create a way that resonates most with you — God just wants to hear from you.

This week, create your own prayer. Pick a style, place, or activity, and spend 5–10 minutes praying in a way that feels unique to you. Here are a few ideas to get you started. Try them out or create your own!

PRAYER WALK

If praying while sitting still is challenging for you, try a prayer walk. A prayer walk is when you talk to God while you move. Pick a place — your neighborhood, school campus, or even just around the church — and walk slowly. As you pass people, houses, classrooms, or scenery, let each thing you see remind you of something to pray about. Pray for your friends, your family, your teachers, or people you don't even know. Don't rush — let the walk set your pace.

Try It and Reflect:

Take a 5-10 minute walk around your neighborhood, school, or park and pray for whatever or whoever God brings to mind as you go.

MUSIC PRAYER

Choose a worship song that helps you focus on God. Sit somewhere comfortable, close your eyes if you want, and listen closely to the words. Let the lyrics shape your prayer. If a line stands out, pause the song and talk to God about it. You can even pray by singing along — God doesn't care if you're pitch-perfect!

Try It and Reflect:

Pick one worship song and listen to it from start to finish. As you listen, turn each lyric into a simple prayer in your own words.

ARTISTIC PRAYER

If you're a visual person, this is a great way to pray. Grab paper and something to draw or paint with. Instead of using words, express your prayers through pictures, shapes, or colors. You can draw/paint something you're thankful for, something you're worried about, or even a symbol that represents what you're asking God to do. Your art doesn't have to be "good" — it just has to be honest.

Try It and Reflect:

Spend 5 minutes drawing/painting a prayer — anything that reflects what's happening in your heart right now. When you're done, show it to God and talk to him about what it means.

POEM PRAYER

Writing a poem can help you slow down and express your heart to God in a creative way. It doesn't have to rhyme. Just write a few short lines that tell God what you're feeling, needing, or thanking him for. Think of it like a letter that uses creative language — pictures, comparisons, or simple honest words.

Try It and Reflect:

Write a short 4–6 line poem to God. Keep it simple — focus on gratitude, a struggle you're facing, or something you want God to grow in you.

28 Days of Prayer and Fasting

A companion resource to the Pray First Resource and Journal

Introduction

The Pray First: Pray and Fast Devotional Guide is an invitation to step deeper into the heart of God through prayer and the intentional practice of fasting. This 28-day journey is designed to bring unity and focus to our prayers as we seek God together. Over four weeks, we'll center our prayers around four essential spheres—**our heart**, **our home**, **our church**, and **our city**—learning to pray not just individually, but as a church family united in purpose.

Each week includes fasting suggestions and a daily rhythm of Scripture, reflection, prayer, rest, and a spiritual practice, with the week ending in an Examen prayer to help us notice God's presence in everyday life. Our hope is that through this season of prayer and fasting, our hearts are renewed, our homes strengthened, our church empowered, and our city blessed—because God hears and responds when His people pray ([2 Chronicles 7:14](#)).

A Brief Guide to Fasting

Fasting heightens our hunger for the Spirit and deepens our awareness of God's presence. We fast from food so we can feast on God; starve the flesh to feed our spirit; deny our flesh to awaken our spirit; and as we recognize our physical hunger, we are reminded of our need for spiritual hunger.

Throughout scripture, God's people fasted for wisdom, breakthrough, and renewal ([Matthew 6:16–18](#); [Acts 13:2–3](#)).

There are many meaningful ways to fast:

- ◆ **Food Fast:** Limit meals, choose simpler foods, or drink liquids only.
- ◆ **Daniel Fast:** Plant-based eating; avoiding meat, sweets, and processed foods.
- ◆ **Digital Fast:** Reducing screen time, social media scrolling, or mindless entertainment.
- ◆ **Lifestyle Fast:** Limiting excess, negativity, or unhealthy habits.

Choose a fast appropriate for your health and season of life. The length of your fast is also up to you. However, we recommend you select a length that would allow you to sufficiently feel a strong hunger for the thing you are fasting from to be reminded of your need for spiritual hunger. Examples: fast a meal a week and spend that time in prayer, fast from a form of entertainment and use that extra time in prayer, etc... Above all, let fasting be a way of saying, *"Lord, I want you more. More than food, more than pleasures, more than anything I want you Jesus."*

How to Use This Resource

You can journey through this devotional individually, together with family, or as part of a growth group. Set aside 15–30 minutes each day. Create a quiet space, free from distraction. Ease into your time with God, quiet your mind and heart and expect him to speak to you. Slow down. Do not rush through the movements. Look forward to connecting with God.

Each day includes the following six movements:

- ◆ **Read:** Follow along with the daily readings. You can use whatever version of the Bible you enjoy most. We have chosen various translations throughout this Devotional. Read slowly and attentively, expecting God to speak through his Word. Make note of the word or phrase that draws your attention.
- ◆ **Reflect:** Ask yourself, *"What might God be saying to me through the passage?"*
- ◆ **Pray:** Pray honestly, offering gratitude, questions, or desires to God. We have provided short prompts to help you create your own heartfelt prayers.
- ◆ **Rest:** Sit quietly in God's presence, simply being with God.
- ◆ **Spiritual Practice:** Each day you are invited to reflect on and act upon how you might live out the passage for the day.
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** To end your prayer time, we offer a written prayer you may pray aloud or you may choose to pray as the Spirit leads.

On the seventh day, we offer an Examen, which is a prayerful practice of reflection that helps us become more aware of God's presence in our everyday lives. Rooted in Ignatian spirituality, it invites us to pause, look back over our day or week, and notice where God has been at work — through joy, struggle, silence, or surprise.

Rather than judging ourselves, we practice gratitude, honesty, and openness before God. As we reflect, we learn to discern how the Spirit is leading us forward in hope, peace, joy, love, and faithfulness.

The practice involves six moments, an adaptation of which is offered below.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** Recall moments — even small ones — when you sensed grace, goodness, beauty, or connection. Thank God for the gifts that came through people, tasks, rest, surprise, or delight.
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit's Awareness:** Pray for the Holy Spirit to illuminate your reflections. Ask for clarity and gentleness without self-condemnation. You are looking with God's loving eyes.
- ◆ **Reflect on Your Day:** Review the events of your day or week. Notice your reactions, desires, emotions, thoughts, and choices. Where did you feel most fully alive, at peace, and near to God? Where did you feel anxious, disconnected, resistant, or closed off? These experiences are often called consolation (movements toward God) and desolation (movements away from God). Remember that even when God feels far, God is still near — notice and name those feelings in prayer.
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Were there moments in your day or week when you neglected love, resisted God's leading, or acted from fear or pride? Receive God's mercy, which meets us even in our shortcomings.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** Pray for the grace you need for tomorrow — new eyes to see God's presence and new courage to participate in what God is doing. Entrust yourself to God with hope.
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Close your time with God in however way the Spirit leads you — in praise and thanksgiving, in confession of sin or burden, or in praying for others.

As you go through your daily readings and weekly Examen, may you encounter Jesus in ways both familiar and unfamiliar, in the mundane or extraordinary. But most of all, in life-giving ways. May you be blessed through this fasting and praying journey.

DAY 7 | *Weekly Examen* — *Heart Reflection*

Today is an invitation for you to become more aware of God's presence in your everyday life. Take a moment to prayerfully read through any of the following passages that resonated with you this week: [Ezekiel 36:26-27 \(NIV\)](#), [Psalm 139:23-24 \(NLT\)](#), [Proverbs 4:23 \(NIV\)](#), [Psalm 51:10-12 \(NLT\)](#), [Colossians 3:1-2 \(NIV\)](#), and [Hebrews 13:9 \(NIV\)](#). Reflect on the passages using the following five movements. Pause for a few moments in between movements and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be saying. You may want to journal your sense of God's presence, any questions you might have of God, or thoughts you want to share with him. End your time with the suggested prayer, or pray as the Spirit leads you.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** Where did God renew or soften your heart?
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit's Awareness:** How did God speak or nudge you this week?
- ◆ **Reflect on Your Week:** When did your heart feel most alive?
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Offer God any burdens from the week.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** What will you carry into tomorrow?
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Jesus, shape my heart to love like Yours.

A Word of Encouragement: God is already transforming you from the inside out. Trust His ongoing work.

WEEK 1 | *Recap*

Celebrate every way — big or subtle — that God has renewed your heart. As we move into Week 2, expect that God's work in you will overflow into the place closest to you: your home. God delights in the transformation that begins small and grows steadily. Continue leaning into his love.

DAY 14 | *Weekly Examen—Home Reflection*

Today is an invitation for you to become more aware of God’s presence in your everyday life. Take a moment to prayerfully read through any of the following passages that resonated with you this week: [Psalm 127:1 \(CEB\)](#), [Colossians 3:14 \(NIV\)](#), [John 14:27 \(NIV\)](#), [Galatians 5:13-14 \(MEV\)](#), [Deuteronomy 6:6-9 \(NLT\)](#), and [Proverbs 18:21 \(NIV\)](#). Reflect on the passages using the following six movements. Pause for a few moments in between movements and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be saying. You may want to journal your sense of God’s presence, any questions you might have of God, or thoughts you want to share with him. End your time with the suggested prayer, or pray as the Spirit leads you.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** What brought peace or joy to your home?
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit’s Awareness:** How did God show up in ordinary moments this past week?
- ◆ **Reflect on Relationships:** Reflect back on the couple of days or this past week. When did love or unity deepen? When did thoughts, words, or actions cause harm or widen divisions?
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Surrender tensions or hurts to God.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** How can you contribute to a healthier home this coming week?
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Lord, let our home be a sanctuary of your presence.

A Word of Encouragement: God is forming new rhythms of grace in your home. Keep going faithfully.

WEEK 2 | *Recap*

Small daily shifts create a powerful ripple of transformation. As you continue practicing love and peace, your home becomes a living testimony of God’s presence. As we move into Week 3, we expand our circle of prayer to include our spiritual family — the Church.

DAY 21 | *Weekly Examen* — *Church Reflection*

Today is an invitation for you to become more aware of God's presence in your everyday life. Take a moment to prayerfully read through any of the following passages that resonated with you this week: [1 Corinthians 12:27 \(NLT\)](#), [Acts 2:42-47 \(NIV\)](#), [Acts 4:32 \(NIV\)](#), [Ephesians 3:16-18 \(CEV\)](#), [1 Peter 4:10-11 \(NLT\)](#), and [Matthew 5:14-16 \(ESV\)](#). Reflect on the passages using the following six movements. Pause for a few moments in between movements and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be saying. You may want to journal your sense of God's presence, any questions you might have of God, or thoughts you want to share with him. End your time with the suggested prayer, or pray as the Spirit leads you.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** Where did you see God working through our church this week?
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit's Awareness:** How is God shaping unity and mission within our church?
- ◆ **Reflect on Engagement:** Where did you feel most connected to our church this week?
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Release any frustrations or divisions.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** What is one way you can strengthen community this week?
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Lord, build your church through us.

A Word of Encouragement: Your prayers bless our whole church family. God is using your faithfulness in meaningful ways.

WEEK 3 | *Recap*

Thank you for lifting our church in prayer this week. God is strengthening us and shaping us into a community that shines his love. As we step into Week 4, we turn our prayers outward — seeking God's heart for our neighborhoods and city.

DAY 22 | *Pray for Peace*

We are called not just to live in our city — but to bless it. When we pray for peace, healing, and flourishing, we align ourselves with God’s desire to restore what is broken and uplift every person.

Read:

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

[Jeremiah 29:7 \(NIV\)](#)

Reflect: What do you appreciate about your city or neighborhood? Where do you long to see God’s peace take root? How might God want to use you as a peacemaker?

Pray: Ask God to bring his peace where there is conflict; to heal neighborhoods impacted by harm or injustice; and to strengthen families and community leaders.

Rest: Breathe peace in and imagine peace radiating outward into your community.

Spiritual Practice: Take a slow prayer walk in your neighborhood. Pray for each home asking God to bless each family with healing, prosperity, and joy. Most of all, pray that they would come to know and follow Jesus.

Closing Prayer: Lord, bless our city with your peace.

DAY 27 | *City on a Hill*

Beauty and blessing reveal Jesus to our world. When we love generously and serve joyfully, our city gets a glimpse of God's goodness.

Read:

And you, beloved, are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. Similarly it would be silly to light a lamp and then hide it under a bowl. When someone lights a lamp, she puts it on a table or a desk or a chair, and the light illumines the entire house. You are like that illuminating light. Let your light shine everywhere you go, that you may illumine creation, so men and women everywhere may see your good actions, may see creation at its fullest, may see your devotion to Me, and may turn and praise your Father in heaven because of it.

[Matthew 5:14-16 \(VOICE\)](#)

Reflect: Where have you seen God's goodness in your city? What small act could make a big impact? How can your life reveal Jesus to others?

Pray: Ask God to shine his hope through your life and the life of the church today; to help you notice needs around you; and to let your actions reflect his love.

Rest: Imagine God's light shining through you into the streets and homes of your city.

Spiritual Practice: Do an act of kindness for someone today.

Closing Prayer: Lord, brighten our city with Your love.

DAY 28 | *Weekly Examen—City Reflection*

Today is an invitation for you to become more aware of God’s presence in your everyday life. Take a moment to prayerfully read through any of the following passages that resonated with you this week: Jeremiah 29:7 (HCSB), Luke 19:9-10 (NLT), Micah 6:8 (CEV), Matthew 9:35-37 (NET), and Matthew 5:14-16 (VOICE). Reflect on the passages using the following six movements. Pause for a few moments in between movements and listen for what the Holy Spirit may be saying. You may want to journal your sense of God’s presence, any questions you might have of God, or thoughts you want to share with him. End your time with the suggested prayer, or pray as the Spirit leads you.

- ◆ **Express Gratitude:** What in your city are you thankful for?
- ◆ **Invite the Spirit’s Awareness:** Where is God already at work around you?
- ◆ **Reflect on Compassion:** What stirred your heart this week — and why?
- ◆ **Confess and Release:** Release fear, apathy, or judgment to God.
- ◆ **Renew Your Commitment:** How can you join God’s work in your city this week?
- ◆ **Closing Prayer:** Lord, give me your heart for this city.

A Word of Encouragement: You are a light where God has placed you — and the city is better because you are here.

WEEK 4 | *Recap*

Thank you for praying for where we live, work, learn, and gather. God has heard every word. As we continue forward, ask God to use the transformation in your heart, home, and church to bring hope and blessing to the world around you.

A Final Word

We pray that this Pray First Resource & Journal and accompanying 28-Day Fast & Pray Devotional Guide has enriched you and deepened your relationship with Jesus. Thank you for inviting God into your heart, your home, our church, and our city.

May prayer remain your first response and not your last resort. May Jesus be your source of peace and strength in every season. May the Spirit continue to form you into the likeness of Christ. And may the love of God flow through you: into your home, into our community, and into our world.

Whatever the circumstance you find yourself in, keep praying first. Keep trusting Jesus. Keep joining God's mission of renewal.

To him alone be the glory, praise, and honor, forever. Amen

Recommended Resources

DIGITAL RESOURCES

- ◆ Bible in One Year APP: bible.alpha.org/en/#start
- ◆ Lectio 365: lectio365.com
- ◆ Pray as You Go - Lectio Divina: prayasyougo.org
- ◆ EastLake Church - Prayer and Fasting: eastlake.church/prayer-and-fasting
- ◆ The Bible Project on Youtube: www.youtube.com/@bibleproject

BOOKS

- ◆ [How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People](#), by Pete Greig
- ◆ [Pray First: The Transformative Power of a Life Built on Prayer](#), by Chris Hodges
- ◆ [Praying Like Monks, Living like Fools: An Invitation to to the Wonder and Mystery of Prayer](#), by Tyler Staton
- ◆ [Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life](#), by Tish Harrison Warren
- ◆ [The Power of a Praying Teen](#)
- ◆ [Uncomplicate It: Permission to Enjoy God in Your Unique Way](#), by Hosanna Wong
- ◆ [You Are More Than You've Been Told Unlock a Fresh Way to Live Through the Rhythms of Jesus](#) by Hosanna Wong

