



John Phillips

PRAYERS from Inside



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John Phillips

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PO Box 91
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Surrey SM7 9BA
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Acknowledgements

Like my New Year resolutions, many of my dreams just wither. I am delighted that the publication of *Prayers from Inside* is one exception.

However, it would not have happened without the encouragement from several friends, principally from within Prison Fellowship and prison chaplaincies. I am extremely grateful to everyone who gently encouraged me - and to those whose encouragement was not so gentle!

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John Phillips

February 2012

Contents

	Page
Introduction	7
Prayers	
What is prayer?	14
Who can pray?	14
How should we pray?	15
How does God answer our prayers?	15
Warnings about praying	16
Prayers	18
Bible Verses	
About the Bible	68
Where should I start reading?	70
Bible verses	71
Becoming a Christian	
What it means to be a Christian	94
A prayer of repentance	100

Foreword

Prayers From Inside

Prison is hardly ever a place we choose to be.

We are forced to do just about everything differently and, not surprisingly, that comes with lots of negative emotions. And at the same time, the breaking up of how things were opens up new possibilities, new ways of looking at things, thinking about them, sometimes searching for meaning to where we are.

Our second choices can be the start of things we never thought possible and, amidst the messiness, change can break and spill into those parts of ourselves we lock away.

Let these prayers speak to you in those closed places, let them wash through you and whisper of God's deep love for you, His unshakeable belief in you, that He sees you and chooses to be with you just where you are. Be open to that and God will do the rest.

Natalie Cronin

Chief Executive

Prison Fellowship England and Wales

February 2012

Introduction

Not religious?

If you are not religious, then this book of prayers has been written for you. You may have surprised yourself by taking a copy. Perhaps it was God who prompted you to do so! After all, we know that God longs for us to pray to Him.

If you have never prayed before in your life, now is a very good time to start. It can also be the start of a journey which will lead you to truly experience God's love.

God loves you

You can be certain that God loves you. You are very precious to Him, despite what has happened that has brought you to prison. It is true whether it is your first time in prison or whether you have committed crimes over several years. It is true whatever the nature of your offence or offences.

God hates sin

Of course, crime really bothers God. He hates sin of every kind. However, He never turns His back on anyone. What makes God's love so amazing is that He loves each one of us, no matter what mess we might have made of our lives.

And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him.

1 John 4:9



Jesus died for us

Because God loves us He sent His Son Jesus to die for us. Before He was put to death on a cross, Jesus spent three years teaching and preaching, healing people and performing other miracles.

Jesus: a man of compassion

Who did Jesus prefer to spend His time with during those three years? Certainly not the religious leaders, 'hypocrites' as He called them. No, Jesus chose to get alongside ordinary people including the social outcasts of the day. Jesus wanted to be with people who were hurting or broken.

Today, God has that same love and compassion for all men and women. That includes you.

This book of prayers

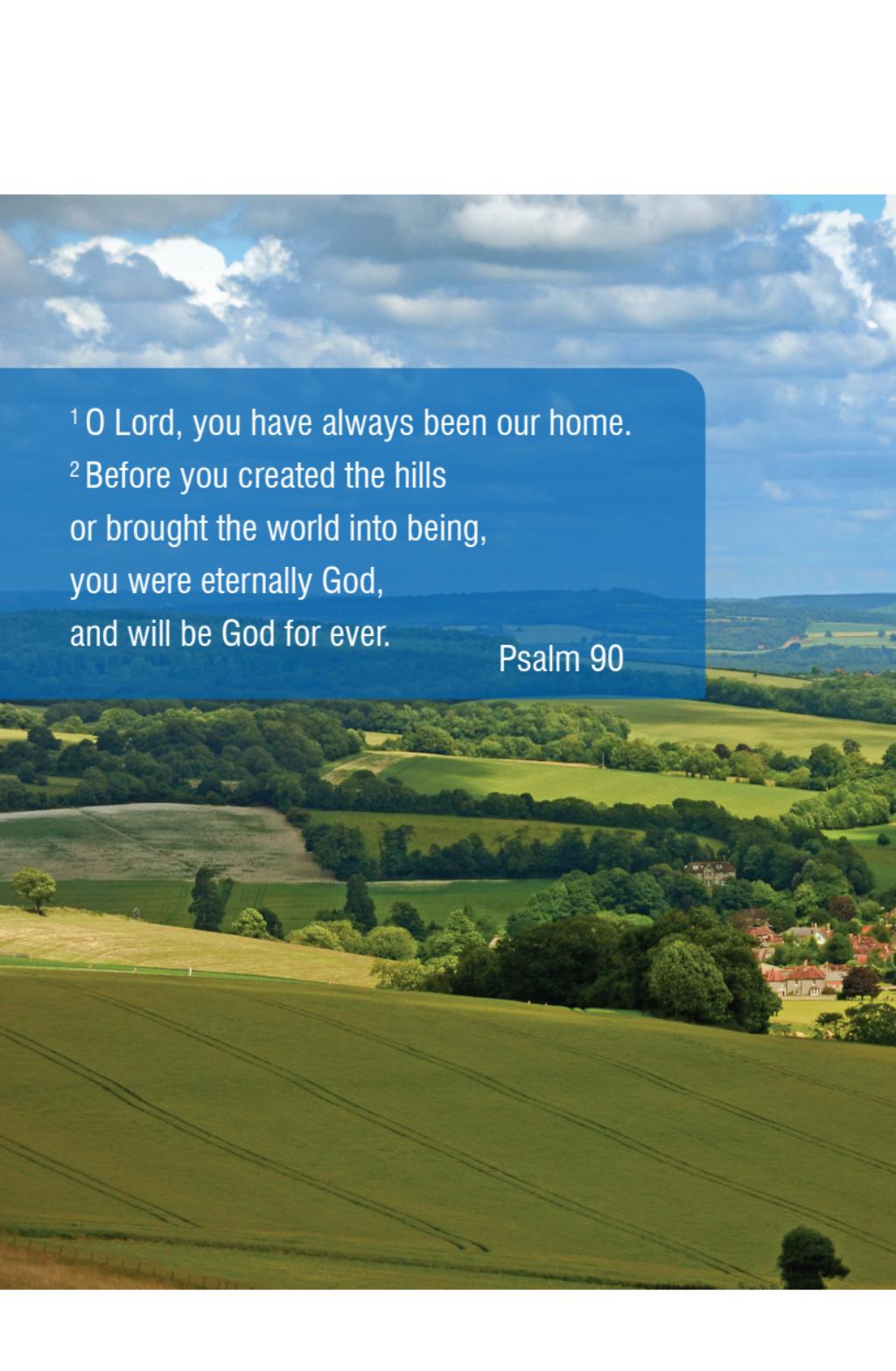
I pray that this book of prayers, and selected Bible verses, will be a real help to you as you serve your sentence. I pray, especially, that you will see answers to your prayers and will begin to realise how much God really does love you.

Most importantly, I pray that you will take steps to become a true child of God. What that means is explained on page 94.

Already a child of God?

You may have picked up this book because you are a Christian - a true child of God. You may already pray.

I trust that you may still find some of the prayers helpful. They may encourage you to pray more regularly. However, the Bible verses may be the more helpful section for you. There is something for everyone!

The background of the image is a wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. It features rolling green hills covered in fields and clusters of trees. In the distance, a small town with several houses and buildings is visible. The sky above is a clear blue with scattered white clouds.

¹ O Lord, you have always been our home.

² Before you created the hills
or brought the world into being,
you were eternally God,
and will be God for ever.

Psalm 90



Prayers



What is prayer?

Many people think that prayer is only asking for God's help to change a difficult situation or for healing or to relieve an anxiety or fear. Most of the prayers in this book are requests like that. However, prayer is much more than that.

God certainly wants us to bring our requests to Him, both for ourselves and for others, but when we pray we should also:

- worship God, as we recognise who He is; the Almighty God, the creator of everything and everyone,
- thank God for everything that He gives us,
- confess to God our wrong actions, words and thoughts – and ask Him to forgive us.

Who can pray?

You may think that you are not 'good enough' to pray or 'religious' enough. You may think that a priest or chaplain has to pray for you. In a way no one is 'good enough' to speak with God because He is so perfectly holy. However, He is also full of love and mercy and He does not distance Himself from us. After all, Jesus taught His disciples to address God as Father.

So, the answer to this question is that we can all pray. God just longs for us to talk with Him, not only when we are in trouble but at all times. He never gets tired of hearing our prayers.

How should we pray?

Prayer is not difficult. No special language is needed. Prayer should simply be an honest conversation with God. He wants us to talk about how we really feel – all our joys and sorrows - but always with respect and reverence, of course.

Our requests will often form the larger part of our prayers. However, it is important also to remember to bring our worship, our thanks and our confessions to Him.

We also need to pray with faith, which means that we must believe that God will hear our prayers and answer them. The Bible also teaches us not to give up. That may mean continuing to pray for days or weeks or even months or longer. That can be difficult because most of us want our problems sorted immediately.

How does God answer our prayers?

God loves each of us and wants the very best for us. He is always concerned about the difficulties we face and sympathises with us.

But sometimes He will choose to help us *through* the difficult situation rather than immediately change it. In this way He is helping to change us instead of giving us a 'quick fix', which is not always the best solution.

More than anything else, God wants us to be a true child of His. It is only then that we find real fulfilment in this life and can be certain that we will go to be with Him when we die. (See pages 94-100).

God will always answer our prayers in the way that is best for us and when it is best for us. We can never see beyond the present circumstances but God knows the future and knows what is best for us in the future. We do have to trust Him, which can often be hard.

Warnings about praying

There are three things which we need to think about when we are asking God for something:

- are we living in a way that is pleasing to God?
- are we asking for something that will please God?
- are we doing what we can ourselves to bring about the change we want?

For example, if we ask God to help overcome an alcohol addiction, there must be a willingness to accept help from a rehab programme.

The prayers in this book

I hope that you will find a number of the prayers on the following pages relevant to your situation. Some may fit exactly your circumstances or feelings; others you may wish to change.

I hope also that you will have the confidence to use prayers of your own. And I trust that prayer will not become just a habit or spiritual exercise for you but will lead you into a wonderful relationship with God.

Dear God,

Prison! Yes, I know that I have had warnings but I never thought it would actually happen.

God, I am scared. I really am going to need help. Please help me to find one person I will be able to trust: someone I will be able to talk to and who will listen.

And please help me to avoid everyone who will make life even more difficult for me. I have had enough so-called friends outside. I must not get caught up with any more like that in here.

And God, I will need Your help too. I am sorry that I have never bothered with You in the past but please do help me now. Thank You.

“

Help me to find one person I will be able to trust.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

It really is tough being in prison

Dear God,

It really is tough being in prison. I am scared that one day I will 'lose it', kick off and end up in the 'seg'.

Please God, do not let that happen. I am terrified at the thought of it. When people wind me up, help me to control my temper. I do not want to respond in the way they hope I will.

My temper has got me into enough trouble already. I just want to get through my sentence without any 'knockbacks'. Please help me.

When I get frustrated because things take so long to get done, help me to accept that is the way it is. I need to learn to be patient, something I have never been. Please help me, God. Thank You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



Please help me
to control my temper.

Dear God,

I never leave my cell without my mask. No one needs to ask me how I am. They can see from my smile (my mask), “I am fine. I have got no worries. I am coping just fine.”

But God, You know everything. You see beneath the mask. You know my pain and my sense of helplessness, which I hide from everyone else.

God, can you lift me from my pit of despair?
Can you enable me to really smile – without a mask?
God, please give me some relief from this despair
and a reason to believe that I do have a future.

I want to get rid of my mask but, please God, give me a reason to smile.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen



God, can you lift me
from my pit of despair?

Dear God,

Of course what I did was wrong. I meant it when I said in court that I was sorry. I understand the suffering I must have caused.



I am also a victim... I need to be helped, as well as punished.

However, people need to know that I was abused as a child and all through my early teens. I never experienced love – whatever that is. My mother was an alcoholic and my father was never at home. What chance did I have of a decent life?

God, I am not making excuses but I do need more than just 'offending behaviour' programmes. Yes, I am an offender but I am also a victim – like many of the other guys. God, please help people understand that. I need to be helped, as well as punished.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

I know it is in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." It sounds so easy but it is not, certainly not when you have been hurt like I have. Anyway, why should I forgive him?

“

Please,
help me
to forgive
him.

But the fact is I know I have to forgive him. Until I do, I will be full of hatred and anger. And who am I hurting? Whose life am I destroying? Not him, not his life but me, my life. So I must forgive him – because I need to move on from the past.

God, I cannot do it without Your help. Please, please help me to forgive him. Help me to let go of this bitterness. I have a life to live.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

I get so angry that I get so angry!

Dear God,

I get so angry that I get so angry! It sounds crazy but it is true.

My temper is always getting me into trouble: it is the reason I am in here. I desperately need help with it. I do not need to tell You because You know everything.

So God, please help me with the anger management course I am starting. If that does not sort the problem for me, I cannot think what I will do. Please help me to take on board everything that I learn.

I know for sure that I must get this problem sorted before I finish my sentence. Otherwise I will continue to get into trouble. I do not want that. Help me, God, please.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

“God, please help me with the anger management course...

Dear God,

Life in prison is hard enough without the bullying and intimidation that goes on. Please God, protect me from the bullying and protect the other guys too, especially those who are most vulnerable. It is sad seeing men so scared.

“

Please God,
protect me
from the
bullying...

Please God, help the officers to see what is happening and take action to make prison a safer place for prisoners.

So God, please protect me from those intent on bullying and please help me not to get caught up with anyone looking to cause trouble. I have made enough mistakes with ‘acquaintances’ in the past. I cannot afford more mistakes in here.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

I cannot help worrying

Dear God,

I am a worrier. I have always worried and I suppose I always will. I would be worried if I had nothing to worry about!

But in prison I have so many extra things I worry about. They fill my mind every minute of the day – and, sometimes, much of the night too. God, I find it impossible to get any peace of mind.



Help me
to pray...
and stop
worrying.

I feel helpless and, of course, I am. It is just really hard being away from the people I am concerned about. I cannot help them with their problems. Anyway, I have enough of my own.

Please, God, help me to believe that praying really does work. That is all I can do. Help me to pray, to trust You and stop worrying.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

I am “doing time” as they say but I must make the best use of my time here. Strangely, I have now got the best possible chance to use my time wisely – to catch up on my education.

God, I definitely want to go to education. It will be so hard to start studying again after dropping out of school but I have got to do it. Otherwise, I will have no chance of getting a decent job, or going to college, once I get out.

So, please God, help me to stay motivated. I cannot afford to miss this opportunity. I have wasted so many opportunities and I do not want my future to be like my past. I really must change.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen



So, please God, help
me to stay motivated.

Dear God,

I am beginning to doubt
whether You are there.
Why have You allowed
everything to happen to me?
It has been one thing after
another.

“
I need to
know You are
there and
You do care.

Since I have been in here, my grandad has died and my uncle has been diagnosed with cancer. Now, just when I was expecting to get out, my HDC has been refused. Why? All the officers are just as puzzled as I am. I am devastated.

So God, if You are there, You must understand how I am feeling. My faith has really been shaken.

You may be surprised that I am still praying to You. The fact is that there is nothing else I can do. I need to know You are there and that You do care.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Will the court show mercy?

Dear God,

In a few days I should know my fate: I will know whether my appeal is successful. God, I am really nervous. In fact, I am quite scared. Please help me to stay calm and give me peace.

“

... I pray that the court will show me mercy.

Please help my lawyer to be well prepared. I pray that he will have all the right paperwork. Help him to present the case well. For him, it will just be another case: he will just be doing his job. But it is not just another case for me: I am a person, not just a number, and I have a life to live.

So God, I have to put my trust in my lawyer but, mostly, I put my trust in You. And God I pray that the court will show me mercy.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

I am desperate to get clean – and stay clean. I can then start to turn my life around. God, You know how desperate I am. I only pray when I am desperate. I am sorry about that.

Getting clean – can it only be a dream? There is absolutely no way I can do this on my own. It will need a miracle. After all, I am an addict. But God I believe that You really care about people like me: that is what the chaplain tells me.



I'm desperate
to get clean
... God, You
are my only
hope.

So God, I am pleading with You. Please help me to get on to a rehab programme – and stick with it. I am sure You can and I am praying that You will. God, You are my only hope.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

I desperately want to be back with my kids but am I really ready for that? People are telling me that I should do a rehab programme. They are probably right but it will be hard to be away from my kids for even longer.

“

God, should I go back home or to rehab?

God, should I go back home or to rehab? What will be best for my partner and the kids? I miss them so much but what good will I be to them until I am really clean? I cannot afford to let them down again. I have just one more chance.

God, please help me to know what to do. If rehab is the right option, please help me to complete the programme.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

Violence has always been a part of my life. As a child, I was a *victim* of violence. Is it any surprise that I became violent myself?

My prison record says it all.

I am not proud of it.

But God, I have had enough. I want to find peace. Where do I look for it? What is peace? Am I mad to expect to find peace in here?

But God I
have had
enough ...
I want to
find peace.

I am really sorry for all the damage I have done. Now I just want to put the past behind me and live a peaceful life. I need an inner peace as well. Please help me to find it. I am sure it will need a miracle.

God, please have mercy on me.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

I have never ever given You a thought and so it does not seem right to start praying now.

However there is one guy here who prays a lot and he does not get wound up like the rest of us. He may be a bit odd but there is something about him that I like. I am not really sure what it is.

God, what I do know is that my life has got out of control. I am now willing to admit it. So God, how can I get my life back on track? Perhaps I should start reading the Bible but where do I begin?

God, I believe You will hear this prayer. Please show me what I need to do.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



...how can
I get my
life back
on track?

My aunt's prayers have kept me alive

Dear God,

My aunt tells me she prays for me every day. I used to think it was so pointless. Now, I am not so sure.

When I think what I have been through over the last ten years, it is a miracle that I am not dead. I really believe that her prayers have kept me alive.

So God, thank You for my aunt. Thank You for helping her to keep praying when she must have felt like giving up. And thank You for answering her prayers.

God, now I am starting to pray for myself. Please God, help me to break free from the lifestyle that brought me in here. I want to get my life back. I am too young to die. Help me, please.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



Please God, help me...
to get my life back.

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

The Bible has a story of two men who went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee (a religious leader) and the other a tax collector. Tax collectors were hated by the Jews because they charged extra taxes for their own personal gain.

A tale of two men who went to pray: one full of pride, the other full of shame.

The Pharisee took great pride in thanking God that he was not a criminal or an adulterer or even a tax collector.

In contrast, the tax collector was full of shame and would not even look up to heaven. His prayer was simple, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

It was the tax collector, pleading for mercy, who pleased God.

This story can be found in Luke 18:9-14

Dear God,

Yes, I made one stupid mistake and I admit it. I was stupid to get involved with those guys. But I do not think of myself as a criminal.

I am only 21. There is no way I want to end up like many of the men in here. Prison seems to be like a second home for them – or even their main home! That is not what I want.

God, please protect me from all the negative talk and attitudes I come up against in here. Help me to be focussed on my one goal: to put this whole experience behind me. I know it will be tough but I am determined to do it.

Please help me, God.



Help me...
to put this
whole
experience
behind me.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

This is my sixth sentence.
I want it to be the last. Next month I am 50 and it will be the 14th birthday 'celebrated' in prison. There are another two to come before I am released. How many more will I spend in prison?

“

God, I am becoming weary ...
I really do want to change.

God, I am becoming weary and even ashamed. For the first time ever, I am beginning to feel the pain of having hurt so many people. I must have a conscience after all.

God, I really do want to change, for the sake of my family – my kids especially – as well as for myself. Is there any hope for me? God, please will You help me to turn my back on this life of crime – once and for all?

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Is there really any purpose to life?

Dear God,

Is there really any purpose to life? I have been asking the question for years.

Surely God, life is meant to bring more happiness than I have ever known. Are we not meant to be loved and accepted? Is that really too much to expect? At one time I thought that people did care about me but then I discovered the truth.

I still hope and dream. I dream that life might be different when I get out. But I know that there is very little chance of that.

So, God, what am I supposed to make of life? If You are there, then tell me, "Is there *really* any purpose to life? Can I hope for a better future – one with purpose and meaning?"

In Jesus' Name, Amen



So, God, what am I
supposed to make of life?

My life has always been so empty

Dear God,

I find it strange that being in prison has started me thinking about You. It has even got me reading the Bible.

On the outside I never had any time, or any reason, to think about You. Now, I have got all the time in the world to think and that is not a bad thing.

I am just beginning to realise how empty my life has always been. Yes, I have had plenty of friends and I have never been short of money but I was never truly satisfied, not deep down.

God, please help me to understand more about You and what life is meant to be about. I do not want to go back to that same empty life. Thank You, God.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



God, please help me to understand more about You.

Dear God,

The hardest thing about being in prison is knowing that I should be with my kids. But then I was hardly the best father before I got jailed.



The one thing I can do is pray for them.

I am beginning to realise how much I have let them down. But me feeling guilty is not going to help them.

The one thing I can do is pray for them. So, God, please keep them safe. Please help them to do well at school and not to get involved with the wrong friends. Please do not let them mess up their lives like I have mine. And please help their mum to cope, especially when they are difficult.

I love my children a lot even though I have not always shown it. Thank You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Another birthday I am missing

Dear God,

I have lost count of the number of birthdays I have not been able to share with my daughter. I dread to think how many.

God, You know how much time I spend thinking and worrying about her. I often wonder whether she ever thinks about me. But why should she? She will have no happy memories of me.

God, is there any way I can be a good father to her again? I am so desperate to get back into her life. I must explain why things went so wrong.

Please God, help me to get my life sorted while I am in here. And please, God, help my daughter to give me just one more chance to be the father she needs.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



Help my daughter to give
me just one more chance.

Dear God,

What do people think of me?
How could I get myself into
this situation, leaving the kids
without their mum?

How will I ever be able to
explain to the kids what
happened? Will they ever
understand? Will I ever be able to make it up to
them? How will it affect their school work?

God, these are just a few of the questions in my head.
Please give me peace of mind: otherwise I will really
go to pieces.

Please God, help my mum as she looks after my
children. Please help her to cope and keep her in
good health. I thank You for her and also for my
sister who is helping her. Please protect them and
the kids. Thank You, God.



Please God,
help my
mum as she
looks after
my children.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

I was really angry when my partner told me that the kids are better off without me. It made me so mad.

But of course she is right.
I have made a real mess
of being a dad to my boys.
When I was at home I was
always shouting at them
and criticising them. What
kind of a father is that?

“

God... I really
want to
become a
good father.

God, You know how much I love my boys even though I have never shown it and I have never told them. I have been so selfish. My life has been all about me. God, please help me to change. I really want to become a good father to my boys. I hope it is not too late.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Those I love most I have hurt most

Dear God,

Some of the men in here hate their parents. When I hear their stories I can understand why and I can understand why they blame their parents for what has happened to them.

But God, I could not have had better parents. That makes it so much harder to deal with all the hurt that I have caused them. I want to thank You for them. Thank You for helping them to stand by me through all the difficult times.

God, please help my mum and dad to know how much I love them and please help me to show it when I get out. Please, please help them to forgive me. Thank You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



God, please help my parents to forgive me.

Dear God,

My young brother has always looked up to me.
I guess he is now looking down on me.

I have hurt lots of people by what I have done but
it is my brother I have hurt most. I was his hero. It
made me so proud. Now, I feel nothing but shame.
I have really let him down.

God, please be with him and please protect him.
He needs a good role model, someone he can trust.
Please do not let him make the same mistakes that I
have made.

When I get out, I want to make it up to him in some
way. More than anything else, I want him to be
proud of me once again.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



... I want him to be proud
of me once again.

Dear God,

I am so full of remorse, shame and disgust for the offences I have committed.

I will never stop thinking of my victims. They will be carrying deep emotional scars. God, please help them, somehow, to find healing.

And God, for me it is an awful thought that I will never be able to put my crimes behind me. I will always be labelled for my offences. I have to expect everyone to be full of hatred towards me.

God, please keep me strong. I face a very dark future. And please help my family. They are finding it hard and it may never get any easier. I am so sorry that I have also ruined their lives.



God, please
keep me
strong. I
face a very
dark future.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

I have failed my children

Dear God,

I am overwhelmed with guilt. My life has always been about me, me, me. I have failed many people but most of all, my children. I cannot deny what Social Services say: I am not a fit parent.

It is very hard to accept that I will have no further input to their lives as children. I just hope that they will recover from the harm I caused them through my selfishness. Please God, keep them safe with a family where they will be protected and loved.

I pray that one day they will be able to forgive me. I want them to know how sorry I am. I need You to forgive me too God. You know how much I am burdened by my guilt.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

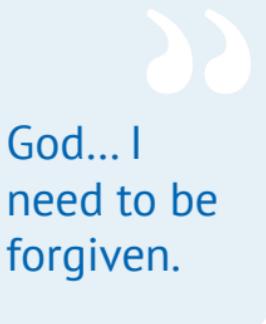


I pray that... they will
be able to forgive me.

How can I deal with my guilt?

Dear God,

How can I deal with my guilt? I have hurt so many people. I will probably never fully understand how much pain I have caused my family. My promises that I was going to change have never counted for anything.



And then of course there are my victims and those who are hooked on drugs because of me, not to mention *their* victims. And so it goes on.

God, I am ashamed more than I can say. I have never achieved anything of any worth. Everything I have done has been destructive.

God, at least You know that I am truly remorseful – at long last. Please forgive me. I need to be at peace with myself. I need to be forgiven. Thank You, God.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

I will be released shortly and I am so scared about how people might treat me. Will my friends and neighbours turn their backs on me?

“
God... help
my friends
to accept
me back.

Somehow, people do not expect women to make mistakes and get sent to prison. Will everyone look down on me, even my friends?

God, You have helped me to survive the twelve months I have been in prison and I know You will not desert me when I leave.

But God, please also help my friends to accept me back. It will be hard enough living with the shame I feel. If my friends are not there for me, it will be harder to cope outside than it has been in here.

Thank You, God.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Losing my nan has been very painful

Dear God,

The pain is almost unbearable. Losing my nan has been very painful: it still is after three months. I had not seen her for nearly two years. I always expected to see her again.

Please God, comfort my mum and all the family and me too. I just wish I could be with my family right now.

Thank You for my nan. She was a very special lady. She would do anything for her grandchildren. She never gave up on me despite all the shame that I brought to the family. I am really sorry.

I just wish that my nan was still with us. I wanted her to be able to see that I really am turning my life around. God, I am so sad.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



...God, comfort all
the family and me too.

Dear God,

This is a painful day. It is two years ago that my dad died. I am really sad when I think about him, which I do almost every day. Every anniversary is very painful.

I have many happy memories of my dad. I am very thankful for all the love and kindness which he showed me and for the sacrifices he made. We enjoyed lots of good times together.

Of course there were also sad times. I regret that I did not always respect him as I should have done. I am really sorry that I let him down by getting caught up with that gang.

God, I will need You to help me through today. Please be with my family as well.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



God, I will need You to help me through today.

Dear God,

The pain is too much.
I cannot face up to the
fact that my mum could
be dead within a month.
I had no idea she was so ill.

“

Please God,
comfort
my mum
and dad.

God, once again I am
thinking about the mess that I have made of my life.
Most of all I regret the pain that I have caused my
mum and dad. They have been good parents. They
have done nothing to deserve all the worry and fear
that they have gone through because of me.

Please God, comfort my mum and dad. Please do
not allow my mum to suffer and please God, may I
get my ROTL so that I can see her? I must see her.
I need to tell her how much I love her. Thank You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

You know how worried I am about my sister. We have been so close and it is very hard not being able to be with her. Please help her to know that You are with her and help her to trust You.

God, please help the doctors to make the right diagnosis and please help them to provide the right treatment. I pray that she will soon be completely well again and able to get back home to her family.

And God, please be with her husband and the children as they will be worried. Please help her husband to cope with looking after the children and still having to go to work.

Thank You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



God, help the doctors to make the right diagnosis.

I will be released in ten weeks. I am scared.

Dear God,

I will be released in ten weeks. I am scared. I should be excited but I am not.

At least I am safe in here. I do not know how I will be able to handle my freedom. Where will I live? I need to be safe. Will I ever get a job? Can I avoid my old 'friends'? Will I end up back in here?

“

God, I will need Your help more than ever when I get out.

God, I will need Your help more than ever when I get out. Please help me to get the right accommodation and the right support. I really do want to make a fresh start.

Please, God, help me to trust You. I want to be able to look forward to the future, not be afraid of it.
Thank You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

You know how I am feeling about being released on licence. Yes of course I will be pleased to get out of here, but I am also scared. The last thing I want is to get locked up again.



...help me to stick to all the conditions.

God, I have seen so many guys come back because they have breached their licence. With some it was no surprise. But other guys have been 'nicked' for stupid little things.

So what are my chances of surviving? Of course I do not plan to do anything stupid. But God, I know that I am going to need Your help. Please be with me while I am on licence and help me to stick to all the conditions.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

Dear God,

It is what I have always feared – being homeless. It is not surprising that some people commit crimes simply so they can be in here, safe and warm and reasonably well fed. How sad!

God, I really do not know what I am going to do. Please God, help Housing to find somewhere for me to go. It needs to be a place where I will be safe. I cannot be around the sort of people who got me into this mess in the first place.

I am frightened. As well as the accommodation, there is so much help I will need. I will never make it on my own. Please God, help me as I try to get my life sorted again.

Thank You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



God... I will never
make it on my own.

Dear God,

I could not believe it when I heard that Immigration were blocking my release. My sentence ends in three days. Why did they not tell me before? It is disgraceful that they can treat us like this.

My parents and my kids are devastated. They broke down in tears. It is just as hard for them as it is for me.

Please God, give me and my family the strength to survive this further ordeal, just when we thought our three-year nightmare was over.

God, You know how crucial it is for our family to be back together again. There is nothing that is too difficult for You. I am trusting You to make it possible for me to stay in the UK.

In Jesus' Name, Amen



I am trusting You to make it possible for me to stay.

Dear God,

Five years! Will my wife stand by me for five years? And how are my kids going to react? They will all be in their teens when I get out.

“

God, please help my wife to stick with me.

God, my family means everything to me. I will need them to keep me going and motivated. I will not make it without them.

God, please help my wife to stick with me. Help her to remember the good times we have been through together, as well as the hard times. Help her to realise how much I love her and the kids.

And God, please help her to cope with the children. I am just disgusted with myself that I have let everyone down so badly. Thank You.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

A prayer of thanks

Dear God,

I realise that I usually pray to ask You for something. Usually I pray when I have a problem or a need, which is quite often.

God, I am sorry that I forget to say 'thank You'. But that is why I am praying now. I want You to know how very grateful I am.

Examples of what you might want to thank God for:

- that I am healthy and safe even though I do not have my freedom,
- for answering my prayer for
- for my friends who write and visit,
- for keeping my partner/wife/children/parents safe.

Please God, help me to realise how good You are to me and help me always to give You thanks.

In Jesus' Name, Amen

A prayer of praise and worship

¹Come, let us praise the LORD!

Let us sing for joy to God, who protects us!

²Let us come before him with thanksgiving and
sing joyful songs of praise.

³For the LORD is a mighty God, a mighty king over
all the gods.

⁴He rules over the whole earth, from the deepest
caves to the highest hills.

⁵He rules over the sea, which he made; the land
also, which he himself formed.

⁶Come, let us bow down and worship him; let us
kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

⁷He is our God;
we are the people he cares for, the flock for
which he provides.

Amen

From Psalm 95

A prayer of praise and worship

- ¹ Praise the LORD, my soul!
 All my being, praise his holy name!
- ² Praise the LORD, my soul,
 and do not forget how kind he is.
- ³ He forgives all my sins
 and heals all my diseases.
- ⁴ He keeps me from the grave
 and blesses me with love and mercy.
- ⁵ He fills my life with good things, so that I stay
 young and strong like an eagle.
- ⁶ The LORD judges in favour of the oppressed
 and gives them their rights.
- ⁷ He revealed his plans to Moses and let the
 people of Israel see his mighty deeds.
- ⁸ The LORD is merciful and loving, slow to
 become angry and full of constant love.
- ⁹ He does not keep on rebuking;
 he is not angry for ever.
- ¹⁰He does not punish us as we deserve or repay us
 according to our sins and wrongs.

Amen

From Psalm 103

A prayer of praise and worship

- ¹¹ As high as the sky is above the earth,
so great is his love for those who honour him.
- ¹² As far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our sins from us.
- ¹³ As a father is kind to his children,
so the LORD is kind to those who honour him.
- ¹⁴ He knows what we are made of;
he remembers that we are dust.
- ¹⁵ As for us, our life is like grass.
We grow and flourish like a wild flower;
- ¹⁶ then the wind blows on it, and it is gone –
no one sees it again.
- ¹⁷ But for those who honour the LORD, his
love lasts for ever,
and his goodness endures for all
generations
- ¹⁸ of those who are true to his covenant
and who faithfully obey his commands.
- ¹⁹ The LORD placed his throne in heaven;
he is king over all.
- Amen

From Psalm 103

A prayer of confession

¹ Be merciful to me, O God,
because of your constant love.

Because of your great mercy
wipe away my sins!

² Wash away all my evil
and make me clean from my sin!

³ I recognize my faults;
I am always conscious of my sins.

⁴ I have sinned against you – only against you – and
done what you consider evil.
So you are right in judging me;
you are justified in condemning me.

⁵ I have been evil from the day I was born;
from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful.

⁶ Sincerity and truth are what you require;
fill my mind with your wisdom.

⁷ Remove my sin, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Amen

From Psalm 51

The Lord's Prayer

The prayer which we know as The Lord's Prayer was given by Jesus to His followers, to be used as a pattern for prayer.

⁷ “When you pray, do not use a lot of meaningless words, as the pagans do, who think that their gods will hear them because their prayers are long.⁸ Do not be like them. Your Father already knows what you need before you ask him.⁹ This, then, is how you should pray:

‘Our Father in heaven:

 May your holy name be honoured;

¹⁰ may your Kingdom come;

 may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us today the food we need.

¹² Forgive us the wrongs we have done,

 as we forgive the wrongs that others have done

to us.

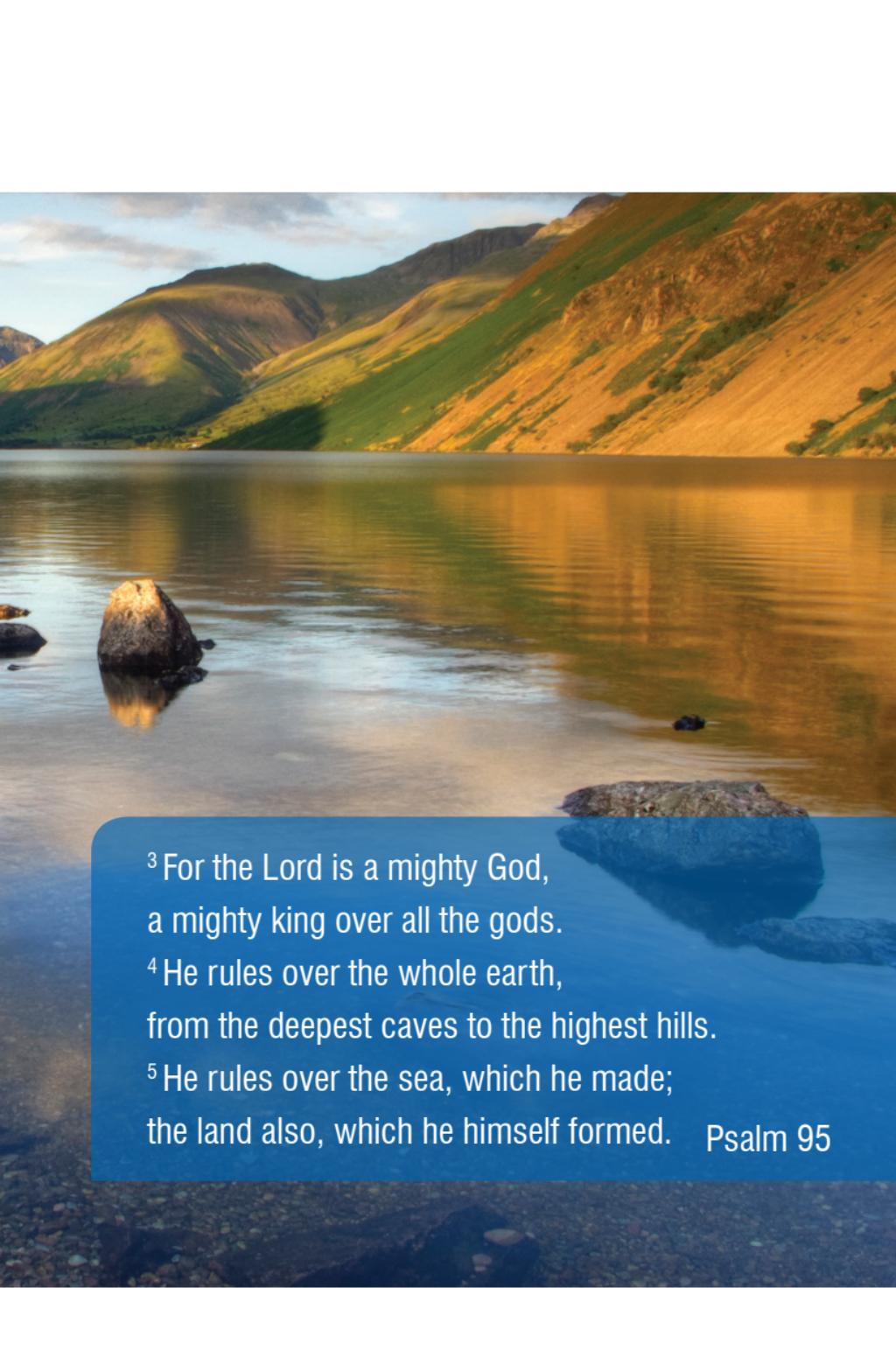
¹³ Do not bring us to hard testing,

 but keep us safe from the Evil One.’

From Matthew 6



Photo courtesy of Krzysztof Nowakowski; www.novakovsky.com



³ For the Lord is a mighty God,
a mighty king over all the gods.
⁴ He rules over the whole earth,
from the deepest caves to the highest hills.
⁵ He rules over the sea, which he made;
the land also, which he himself formed. Psalm 95

Bible Verses



About the Bible

The Bible is like a small library. It is a collection of sixty six books, written by about forty different men over a period of approximately 1600 years.

Christians accept that it is God's Word. This means that God chose the writers and then directed them to write precisely what He wanted to be written.

The Bible is in two parts: the Old Testament (thirty nine books) and the New Testament (twenty seven).

Old Testament

The Old Testament covers the period of history from creation to about 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. It tells us about:

- the creation of the world,
- sin coming into the world, through Adam, in the Garden of Eden,
- the great flood in the days of Noah,
- the beginning and the history of the nation of Israel,
- the Ten Commandments which God gave to Moses.

In the Old Testament we read about the lives of men like Abraham, Joseph, King David, King Solomon, Daniel and Jonah.

Most importantly, it includes many prophecies about the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is the central

person of the whole Bible. All these prophecies were fulfilled later and so proved to be accurate.

The Old Testament also includes books of poetry and songs, notably the Psalms which is a favourite book for many people. Many of the Psalms can be a great help to us in difficult times; others tell us what God is like and make us want to worship Him.

New Testament

In the New Testament we find

- the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
- the book of Acts,
- twenty one letters,
- the book of Revelation.

The four Gospels focus firmly on Jesus: His birth; His life and teaching; His death and resurrection.

The book of Acts is about the beginnings of Christianity. After Jesus returned to heaven to be with God the Father, God sent the Holy Spirit to be with the followers of Jesus. The book is mainly an account of how those followers - Peter, Paul and others - took the good news of Jesus to many cities across the region. They started many churches.

The letters were written by Paul, Peter, John and others. Most of them were addressed to churches in the different cities. The main purpose of the letters was to teach important truths of Christianity and to explain how Christians should live. These letters are just as relevant for Christians today.

The final book of the New Testament (and of the Bible) is Revelation, which is a book of prophecy about the final events before the end of the world.

Where should I start reading?

Not at the beginning! If you are new to the Bible, it is best to start in the New Testament with one of the Gospels: we suggest Mark's Gospel. That will introduce you immediately to the person of Jesus, His life and His teaching.

At the same time, speak to a chaplain who may be able to give you some 'Bible Reading Notes'. These set a short reading for each day and help to explain the meaning of the passage.

Bible verses in this book

On the following pages you will find verses taken from the Bible. They may help you in some of the difficult situations you may face in life, whether in prison or outside.

Understanding God's love

The Lord is able to keep us safe

⁸ When I lie down, I go to sleep in peace;
you alone, O LORD, keep me perfectly safe.

Psalm 4

The Lord is totally dependable

⁹ The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,
a place of safety in times of trouble.

¹⁰ Those who know you, LORD, will trust you;
you do not abandon anyone who comes to you.

Psalm 9

God hears when we cry out

⁶ In my trouble I called to the LORD;
I called to my God for help.
In his temple he heard my voice;
he listened to my cry for help.

¹⁶ The LORD reached down from above and took hold
of me;
he pulled me out of the deep waters.

Psalm 18

Understanding God's love

The LORD is like a shepherd

¹ The LORD is my shepherd;

I have everything I need.

² He lets me rest in fields of green grass

and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

³ He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths,

as he has promised.

⁴ Even if I go through the deepest darkness,

I will not be afraid, LORD,

for you are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

⁵ You prepare a banquet for me,

where all my enemies can see me;

you welcome me as an honoured guest

and fill my cup to the brim.

⁶ I know that your goodness and love will be

with me all my life;

and your house will be my home as long as I live.

Psalm 23

God's love is constant

- ²⁰ We put our hope in the LORD;
he is our protector and our help.
²¹ We are glad because of him;
we trust in his holy name.
²² May your constant love be with us, LORD,
as we put our hope in you.

Psalm 33

God cares for those in trouble

- ¹⁷ The righteous call to the LORD, and he listens;
he rescues them from all their troubles.
¹⁸ The LORD is near to those who are discouraged;
he saves those who have lost all hope.

Psalm 34

God is always ready to help us

- ¹ God is our shelter and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.
² So we will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken
and mountains fall into the ocean depths;
³ even if the seas roar and rage,
and the hills are shaken by the violence.

Psalm 46

Understanding God's love

God can rescue us

¹ I waited patiently for the LORD's help;
then he listened to me and heard my cry.
² He pulled me out of a dangerous pit,
out of the deadly quicksand.

He set me safely on a rock
and made me secure.

³ He taught me to sing a new song,
a song of praise to our God.
Many who see this will take warning
and will put their trust in the LORD.

Psalm 40

God can protect us

⁵ I depend on God alone;
I put my hope in him.
⁶ He alone protects and saves me;
he is my defender,
and I shall never be defeated.

⁸ Trust in God at all times, my people.
Tell him all your troubles,
for he is our refuge.

Psalm 62

God hears our prayers

¹⁶ Come and listen, all who honour God,
and I will tell you what he has done for me.
¹⁷ I cried to him for help;
I praised him with songs.

¹⁸ If I had ignored my sins,
the Lord would not have listened to me.
¹⁹ But God has indeed heard me;
he has listened to my prayer.

²⁰ I praise God,
because he did not reject my prayer
or keep back his constant love from me.

Psalm 66

God hears our cries and forgives us

¹ From the depths of my despair I call to you, LORD.
² Hear my cry, O LORD;
listen to my call for help!
³ If you kept a record of our sins,
who could escape being condemned?
⁴ But you forgive us,
so that we should stand in awe of you.

Psalm 130

Understanding God's love

God knows all about us...

¹ LORD, you have examined me and you know me.
² You know everything I do;
from far away you understand all my thoughts.
³ You see me, whether I am working or resting;
you know all my actions.
⁴ Even before I speak,
you already know what I will say.
⁵ You are all round me on every side;
you protect me with your power.
⁶ Your knowledge of me is too deep;
it is beyond my understanding.

...and He is always with us

⁷ Where could I go to escape from you?
Where could I get away from your presence?
⁸ If I went up to heaven, you would be there;
if I lay down in the world of the dead, you would
be there.
⁹ If I flew away beyond the east
or lived in the farthest place in the west,
¹⁰ you would be there to lead me,
you would be there to help me.

Psalm 139

God can protect us and defend us

¹ Whoever goes to the LORD for safety,
whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty,
² can say to him,
“You are my defender and protector.
You are my God; in you I trust.”
³ He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers
and from all deadly diseases.
⁴ He will cover you with his wings;
you will be safe in his care;
his faithfulness will protect and defend you.

Psalm 91

God protects all who love Him

¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all he does,
merciful in all his acts.
¹⁸ He is near to those who call to him,
who call to him with sincerity.
¹⁹ He supplies the needs of those who honour him;
he hears their cries and saves them.
²⁰ He protects everyone who loves him,
but he will destroy the wicked.

Psalm 145

Understanding God's rescue plan

... we need to be rescued

We have turned away from God

⁶ All of us were like sheep that were lost,
each of us going his own way.
But the LORD made the punishment fall on him,
the punishment all of us deserved.

Isaiah 53

We all fall short of God's glory

²³ everyone has sinned and is far away from
God's saving presence.

Romans 3

... and God has made it possible

Those who believe have eternal life

¹⁶ For God loved the world so much that he
gave his only Son, so that everyone who
believes in him may not die but have eternal life.

John 3

... but we have to accept Jesus

Those who do *not* believe stand condemned

¹⁸ Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God's only Son.

John 3

Christ died for us whilst we were still sinners

⁸ But God has shown us how much he loves us - it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us!

Romans 5

For a fuller explanation on what it means to be 'rescued' see page 94

Understanding who Jesus is

Jesus is the Son of God

God Himself said so

¹⁷ ...“This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased.” Matthew 3

demons acknowledged it

⁴¹ Demons also went out from many people screaming, “You are the Son of God!”... Luke 4

the disciple, Peter, knew it

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Matthew 16

Jesus' disciples realised it

After seeing Jesus walk on the lake, they exclaimed
³³ ...“Truly you are the Son of God!” Matthew 14

the army officer recognised it

After witnessing Jesus' crucifixion, he said ³⁹... “This man was really the Son of God!” Mark 15

Jesus Himself said so

⁶¹ ... Again the High Priest questioned him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?”

⁶² “I am,” answered Jesus ... Mark 14

Things Jesus said about Himself

I am the bread of life

³⁵ ... “Those who come to me will never be hungry; those who believe in me will never be thirsty...”

John 6

I am the light of the world

¹² ...“Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness.” John 8

I am the good shepherd

¹¹ “... who is willing to die for the sheep.”

John 10

I am the resurrection and the life

²⁵ “... Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and all those who live and believe in me will never die. ...” John 11

I am the way, the truth and the life

⁶ “... no one goes to the Father except by me. ...”

John 14

Understanding what Jesus taught

Jesus came for the outcasts

“...³² I have not come to call respectable people to repent, but outcasts.” Luke 5

Come to God like a little child

“...¹⁵ I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”
Mark 10

Love God with all your heart

³⁷ Jesus answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’³⁸ This is the greatest and the most important commandment.” Matthew 22

Store up riches in heaven

¹⁹ “Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal.

²⁰ Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and robbers cannot break in and steal. ²¹ For your heart will always be where your riches are...” Matthew 6

Pleasing God is what really matters

³¹ “So do not start worrying: ‘Where will my food come from? or my drink? or my clothes?’ ³² (These are the things the pagans are always concerned about.) Your Father in heaven knows that you need all these things. ³³ Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things. ³⁴ So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings....” Matthew 6

Jesus gives rest to the weary

²⁸ “Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. ³⁰ For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light.” Matthew 11

Living as a follower of Jesus

God will forgive your sins if you confess them

⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. ⁹But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise and do what is right: he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all our wrongdoing. 1 John 1

Set your hearts on things in heaven

¹You have been raised to life with Christ, so set your hearts on the things that are in heaven, where Christ sits on his throne at the right-hand side of God.

²Keep your minds fixed on things there, not on things here on earth. Colossians 3

God will never leave you: He is your helper

⁵Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, “I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.”

⁶Let us be bold, then, and say:

“The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.
What can anyone do to me?” Hebrews 13

God works for good with those who love Him

²⁸ We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him, those whom he has called according to his purpose. Romans 8

Nothing can separate us from God's love

³⁸ For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, ³⁹ neither the world above nor the world below – there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8

Rejoice and do not worry

⁴ May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!

⁵ Show a gentle attitude towards everyone. The Lord is coming soon. ⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. ⁷ And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4

Beware of people trying to deceive you

⁵Jesus said to them, “Be on guard, and don’t let anyone deceive you. ⁶Many men, claiming to speak for me, will come and say, ‘I am he!’ and they will deceive many people.

²²For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear. They will perform miracles and wonders in order to deceive even God’s chosen people, if possible. ²³Be on your guard! I have told you everything before the time comes. Mark 13

Do not love the world

¹⁵Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. ¹⁶Everything that belongs to the world – what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of – none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. ¹⁷The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but those who do the will of God live for ever. 1 John 2

Submit to God and resist the devil

⁷So then, submit to God. Resist the Devil, and he will run away from you. ⁸Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners! Purify your hearts, you hypocrites! James 4

Love your enemies

²⁷“But I tell you who hear me: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, and pray for those who ill-treat you....” Luke 6

Be kind and loving

¹²You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³Be tolerant with one another and forgive one another whenever any of you has a complaint against someone else. You must forgive one another just as the Lord has forgiven you.

¹⁴And to all these qualities add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity. ¹⁵The peace that Christ gives is to guide you in the decisions you make; for it is to this peace that God has called you together in the one body. And be thankful. Colossians 3

Living as a follower of Jesus

Try to live in peace with everybody

¹⁷ If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good. ¹⁸ Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody.

Romans 12

Live by the Spirit, bear the fruit of the Spirit

¹⁶ What I say is this: let the Spirit direct your lives, and you will not satisfy the desires of the human nature.

²² But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ humility, and self-control. There is no law against such things as these.

Galatians 5

God's grace is all you need

⁸ Three times I prayed to the Lord about this and asked him to take it away. ⁹ But his answer was: "My grace is all you need, for my power is greatest when you are weak." I am most happy, then, to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me. ¹⁰ I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12

Remain faithful when you face trials

¹² Happy are those who remain faithful under trials, because when they succeed in passing such a test, they will receive as their reward the life which God has promised to those who love him. James 1

Press on towards the goal

¹³ ... the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead.

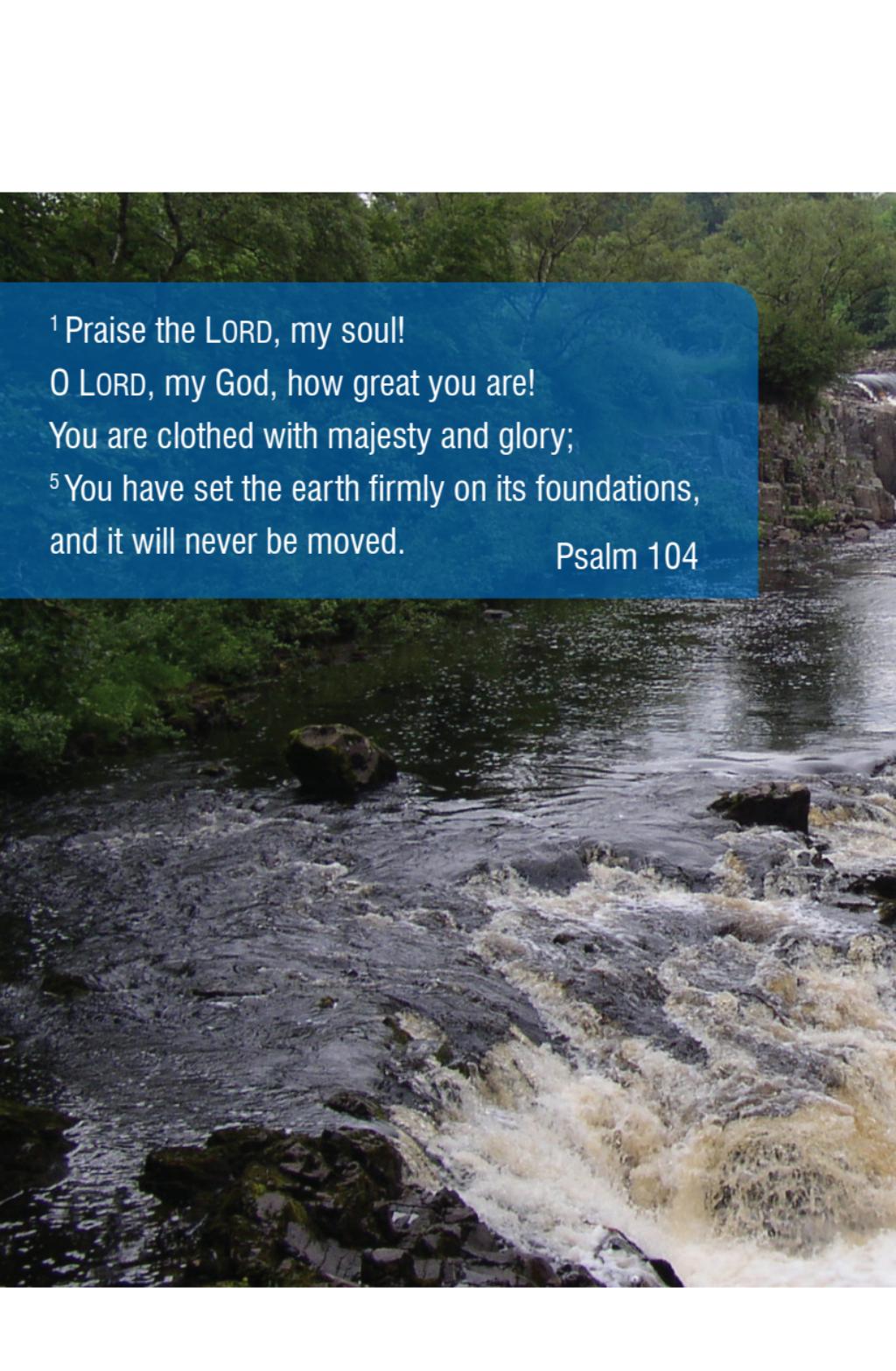
¹⁴ So I run straight towards the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above. Philippians 3

Run the race, with your eyes fixed on Jesus

¹ As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses round us. So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the sin which holds on to us so tightly, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us.

² Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from beginning to end. He did not give up because of the cross! On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying on the cross, and he is now seated at the right-hand side of God's throne.

Hebrews 12



¹ Praise the LORD, my soul!
O LORD, my God, how great you are!
You are clothed with majesty and glory;
⁵ You have set the earth firmly on its foundations,
and it will never be moved.

Psalm 104



Photo courtesy of earlier': www.flickr.com/earlier

Becoming a Christian



Become a Christian? I was born a Christian!

No, sorry! When you came to prison you may have registered as a Christian because of the beliefs of your parents or your grandparents. You may even have been baptised or confirmed.

“

... have you decided to follow Jesus?

However, the important question – the only one that matters – is, “Have you decided to follow Jesus?” It is the question which everyone has to face.

But *why* do we have to follow Jesus?

First of all, we need to understand that God created the whole world and He has created us in His likeness. He has created us to be in relationship with Him.

“

God has created us to be in relationship with Him.

However, God is absolutely holy and pure and we are sinful. That is our nature. We inherited it from Adam when he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden.

We have all broken God's laws. God hates our disobedience and cannot simply ignore it. There has to be a punishment. In our justice system, once an offender is found guilty, the punishment – the sentence – is decided and there is no escaping it.

Thankfully, that is not the way God deals with us. He is full of love, compassion and mercy. He has to punish sin but He wants to restore us, not to punish us.

That is where Jesus, the Son of God, comes into the picture. We have a choice: to face God's punishment or to allow Jesus to take it on our behalf.

**But how does that work;
Jesus accepting our punishment?**

God sent His Son Jesus to rescue us. Quite simply, Jesus (who has always existed) came down to earth as a man. He never once disobeyed Father God. He remained absolutely holy.

“
**We have
all broken
God's laws...
He wants to
restore us...**

“
**God sent
His Son
Jesus to
rescue us.**

⁶ Jesus answered (his disciples),
“I am the way, the truth, and the life;
no-one goes to the Father except by me.”
John 14

And yet, He allowed Himself to be crucified. It was God's plan that Jesus should die instead of us. Jesus was taking the punishment which everyone of us deserves: murderers, rapists, burglars, even good law-abiding citizens who are occasionally prone to anger, envy or telling lies.

So, what do we need to do?

We all have a choice to make. We can accept the offer of a free pardon, by becoming a follower of Jesus. If we choose not to, we will face God's punishment ourselves. There is no other option.

What difference will being a follower of Jesus make to my life?

It will not just change your life. You will get a new life – for eternity.

¹⁷ Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come.
2 Corinthians 5

Firstly, as a child of God, you will have the relationship with Him which He longs for: the relationship for which He created you. Your life will have a whole new purpose - a purpose that will truly satisfy you. You will not become perfect but you will have God's Spirit living in you, giving you the power to change.

Secondly, you will be safe from God's punishment forever. After Jesus was crucified, He rose from the dead. Forty days later, He went back to heaven to be with His Father.

One day – we do not know when – Jesus will come to earth again, not to rescue us but to be our judge.

Followers of Jesus will be safe from that judgement. Those who have decided not to accept God's offer of a free pardon will be separated from God for eternity. The sentence never ends: it is for life and death. It will be an awful punishment, beyond what we can possibly imagine.

So, if you are not yet a child of God, you face a crucial decision, the most important decision you will ever have to make.

“

...Jesus will come to earth again, not to rescue us but to be our judge.

A Christian? Are you ticking the right boxes?

I was brought up as a Christian



I have grandparents who are Christians



I have been baptised and confirmed



I have done an Alpha course



I never miss Mass



I have done far more good than bad



I am a sinner and I need God's mercy



I accept that Jesus died for my sins



I have repented of my sins



I have asked God to forgive me



I truly want Jesus at the centre of my life



³¹ For he (God) has fixed a day in which he will judge the whole world with justice by means of a man he has chosen. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising that man from death!

Acts 17

So, what must I do to get right with God?

It is not about what you can do to earn God's favour. It is about saying 'yes' to what God has already done for you; sending Jesus to die in your place for your sins.

Therefore, you can get right with God, and enjoy a new life in relationship with Him by:

- admitting that you are a sinner,
- accepting that Jesus died on the cross in your place and for your sins,
- repenting of your sins, that is choosing not to continue to live as you have been,
- asking God to forgive you for your wrong living,
- choosing to follow Jesus and making Him King of your life.

Prayer of Repentance

If you truly desire to become a child of God, you can pray the following simple prayer right now.

Father God, I need your mercy

I know that I am a sinner and I know that You hate sin.

But I also know that You love me and that You sent Jesus to die, in my place, for my sins. Thank You for sending Jesus.

I am very sorry for everything in my life, past and present, which is not right.

I repent of my sin and I ask You to forgive me. I now accept Jesus to save me from the punishment which I deserve.

I want to live to please Jesus and to make Him the centre of my life - to be my King.

Please accept me as Your child. Thank You.

Amen

If you have prayed this prayer, tell the chaplain and make contact with other Christians in the prison. You will need help and support as you begin your new life as a follower of Jesus - a child of God.

Not convinced? Please do not dismiss what you have read. Talk through your doubts, and questions, with a chaplain. Also, talk to God! Ask Him to show you that He is real. The issue is too important to be dismissed lightly.



Prison Fellowship England and Wales is a Christian organisation that aims to support prisoners by coming alongside them, praying and giving them the chance to change. We offer our services to all who request them, regardless of their beliefs. We do this through our network of over 1,500 volunteers.

We support chaplains in a variety of ways; for example, helping with chapel services and Bible Study groups.

We also run three main programmes:

- **Sycamore Tree**, a Victim Awareness programme teaching the principles of Restorative Justice,
- **Angel Tree**, a scheme which enables prisoners to send gifts to their children at Christmas,
- **Letter Writing**, offering prisoners the opportunity to correspond with one of our volunteers.

If you would like further information, speak to a member of your chaplaincy team. Not all of these programmes run in every prison.

BeaconLight is a small charity providing resources to help Christians grow in their faith and to help them share their faith with others.

Two other resources from BeaconLight may be of interest.

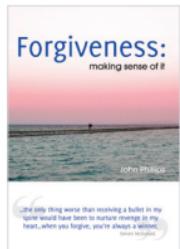
CrossCheck

This small booklet sets out the steps to finding real friendship with God. The presentation is also available on DVD.



Forgiveness: making sense of it

This is a 40-page booklet exploring the freedom which we experience when we forgive - and the even greater freedom and joy when we know God's forgiveness.



Please ask the chaplaincy for copies of these booklets.

BeaconLight Trust
PO Box 91
Banstead
Surrey SM7 9BA

BeaconLight



PRAYERS

from Inside

During a prison sentence, many men and women take time to reflect on a whole range of life issues. “Is there a God?” and “How can I pray to God?” are questions which will often be thought about, if not openly asked.

Prayers from Inside has been written for all who believe that God does exist and want to pray but who need some help.

Following an insurance career in the City of London, John Phillips is now actively engaged in Christian ministry in Banstead, Surrey. He is a Director of BeaconLight Trust and a volunteer with Prison Fellowship.

BeaconLight

in association with

