

October 2021 Prayer News

PRAYER TOPICS FOR THE MONTH

Week start	Prayer topic
3 Oct	Pray for our brothers and sisters joining us to be part of presbytery from the west of Moray. Pray for Fiona King, set apart as a Reader of the presbytery on Friday 8 th at Boleskine Church.
10 Oct	Pray that we take seriously that God is our heavenly Father and wants us to talk with him more. Share with him the fears, joys, concerns of your heart. Speak freely with him.
17 Oct	Pray that God would help you to seek him and to pray on your own. Seek to pray with your family. Pray with your congregation—we need to pray for and with others and need them to pray for and with us.
24 Oct	When you are finding it hard to pray, and you doubt whether God is hearing you or answering, then recall how he has answered your prayers in the past. Remember his promise that he will never leave you or forsake you. Thank him for that.
31 Oct	Not only pray to God, but listen to what he has to say to you. Be quiet and know that he is God. Think about who he is and what he has done for you.

Contact
inverness@churchofscotland.org.uk
with your prayer news for next month

God is our Father—why don't we talk?

Nowhere in the Old Testament or even elsewhere in extra-biblical Jewish writings does anyone addressing God directly as Father. Yet the Lord's Prayer begins with the words: "Our Father who is in heaven."

Almost every single Christian begins their prayer by addressing or thinking of God as Father. So much so that there is a very real danger that we miss one of the most radical teachings of Jesus.

Jewish people in the Old Testament as children, were trained to address God in proper phrases of respect. All these titles were memorised, but the term Father was not among them. Jesus was the first rabbi to address God as "Father" directly.

This was a radical departure from tradition. In every recorded prayer we have from his lips, Jesus calls God "Father", except once. Many of Jesus' enemies sought to destroy him because of his intimate, personal relationship with the sovereign God of heaven and the creator of all things, and that he dared to speak in such terms. What is even more radical is that Jesus tells his people, "When you pray, say, 'Our Father.'" He has given us the right and privilege to come into the presence of the

majesty of God and address him as Father because indeed he is our Father. He has adopted us and made us coheirs with his Son (Romans 8:17).

Yet why is it so difficult for us to pray—to talk to our Father? Prayer is arguably the most powerful force in the world; it is literally life-changing communion with God our Father. Yet prayer is significantly under-utilised. Why? Is it not because prayer still requires energy, focus, discipline, and time. If it were easy, more people would pray, and Christians would pray more consistently.

Prayer should be a blessing, not a burden; it's a privilege, not a pressure. None of God's children are excluded from this conversation. Yet it is not uncommon for our work, even of Christian service, to steal us away from the power of all our service: prayer. We can become so busy in doing good that we have limited our time for communion with God. This is not a new issue. There is a depth of power in prayer that we miss when we do not pray. Prayer is work, but it also brings joy, power and strength to do the Lord's will and service.

Close communion with God through prayer is extraordinary. To be able to talk with the Creator of

the heavens and the earth and know he listens, cares, and responds is an extraordinary gift. We cannot go and talk with the Queen, but we can with the Sovereign of sovereigns. God wants us to know him, invites us to talk with him, and from there, he empowers us for the sake of his Church.

External pressures outweigh internal values

Our heart is drawn toward time with God, but our mind is pulled toward stuff we need to do. That's the dilemma for most of us. Our work steals our time with God because external pressures scream loud and drown out the quiet but true voice of being with the Father.

Our best road to beat the external noise of pressure is to establish a disciplined routine of prayer, which, once established, always becomes a joy that you can't wait to get to.

The Bible speaks of having a little prayer room as somewhere to truly love to be with God. A place where we can meet with the Lord and be alone with him. There the inner peace of the voice of God wins over the pressures of other things to do!

The supernatural realm includes a battle

Prayer is joyful, but it's not a party. Prayer draws you close to God's peace and presence, but you also enter a spiritual battle simply by aligning with God. Ephesians 6:10-18 reminds us that the whole of our Christian life here is connected to a battle in the "heavenly realms."

Battles are work. It's not always intuitive to sense the battle because when we soak in the Psalms or meditate through the New Testament letters, it

doesn't feel like a battle. In fact, God's presence is a delight. However, through the tough times, big problems, discouraging days, setbacks, and suffering, none of which can be avoided, we are reminded of the reality of the battle.

It can be tough to hang on when your soul is tired, but that's just the time for us to get to prayer. It's also the time to ask our Christian prayer-partners to pray all the more for us! This is true in our personal situation as in our congregations, as well as being part of the Church in Scotland.

Our faith is tested at some level

What we pray reveals what we believe. We know God answers prayer, but because it's not always what we hoped for or when we wanted it we wonder if God is with us. Doubt can hit us. The doubts are not so much to wonder if God loves us or if we are his, but to doubt if he is with us in that really difficult moment?

Ultimately these moments come down to faith and trust. That's why the body of Christ is so important. You should never attempt to navigate the tough times alone. We need our brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for us and with us, as we also pray for and with them.

Forgetting past answers

The unknowns of the future can cause stress, anxiety, and worry. We care about the church, organisationally, and even more about its people.

Remembering God's promises and the prayers he's answered in the past is a huge remedy to the difficult moments you face today.

From Philippians 4:6-7 we know God answers prayer, but just at the moment you may need to lean into this. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

This helps us conquer the worries of the unknown and to remember God's faithfulness in our lives. So pray from the knowledge of God's faithfulness. Remember what he's done for you in the past!

Technology makes it difficult to be quiet and still.

It's best to not bring your phone into your place of prayer, but sometimes if you have your Bible on it then it may be necessary. When you do then set it to not disturb you.

On a deeper level, technology has made it difficult for many of us to be still or be quiet and to wait upon God. Technology has helped us become accustomed to an incredibly fast-paced life, but God is not in a hurry. Prayer takes time; we need to learn to be still. We are trained toward technology, and technology is good, but not always helpful for every situation.

Here are three practical questions:

- ◇ *What helps you slow down and be more reflective?*
- ◇ *What helps you be still and wait upon God?*
- ◇ *What helps you be quiet and listen for his voice?*