

## First Week of Lent

### Spiritual Practice: Breath Prayer

A breath prayer is a short prayer you can offer as you breathe in and breathe out. For example:

- Father in heaven ... be with me this day.
- Thank You Jesus ... for loving me so.
- God be merciful ... to me, a sinner.
- Holy Spirit ... guide my steps.

### Monday, February 23, 2026

*“When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Matthew 6:6*

#### No Secrets

Sometimes it is fun to have a secret, to know something no one else knows. Sometimes it is hard to keep a secret, especially when there is good news to share. Sometimes a secret is painful, something we keep locked away because it hurts too much to talk about it or even bring it to mind.

In Matthew 6, Jesus lets us know that there are no secrets from God. Three times He says, “*your Father sees in secret.*” This shouldn’t come as a surprise, since we understand that God is all-seeing and all-knowing. Jesus explains more about this. He tells us that the Father knows our needs, knows our anxieties, knows the intentions of our hearts.

That means that when we come to Him in prayer, He understands. He knows our deepest hopes and longings. He knows our hidden sorrows and regrets. He knows even what we try to keep secret. He knows ... and He cares.

Jesus goes on to remind His followers that our heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air and clothes the grass of the field. And will He not much more care for you, His blood-bought child? Indeed, He will! “*Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7 NKJV).

**Dear Father, You know all that is in my heart today. Keep me in Your loving care.  
Amen.**

## Tuesday, February 24, 2026

*“When you pray ... pray like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”*  
Matthew 6:9

### **Hallowed**

Hallowed is not a word we use in daily life. We might say, “He’s so awesome!” or “She is totally amazing!” But we wouldn’t say they should be “hallowed.” And rightly so, because only God is to be hallowed, for only God is holy. His name alone is to be honored, exalted, and worshiped.

In Scripture, a person’s name is often connected to who that person is, to something about their character, purpose, or destiny. When we hallow God’s name, we are proclaiming what is true about His very nature. This is a great starting point for prayer. When we pray, we can begin by declaring some of God’s names and praising Him for His character.  
*God, You are holy and glorious. You are powerful and majestic. You are my Savior and Redeemer and Good Shepherd. I praise You for Your lovingkindness and Your great mercy to me!*

When we start our prayers in this way, we are not only giving God the honor He is due, but we are boosting our own faith as we recount His greatness and His goodness. If you find yourself at a loss for words to hallow God’s name, consider these praises from the book of Revelation:

*“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”* (Revelation 5:11)

*“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”* (Revelation 5:13)

*“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy ....”* (Revelation 15:3-4)

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name! Amen.**

## Wednesday, February 25

*“Give us this day our daily bread.” Matthew 6:11*

### **God Dependent**

Did you ever stand in a grocery store aisle and feel overwhelmed because there were too many choices? Or do you sometimes open the refrigerator and must sort through dozens of containers to find what you are looking for? Many of us have our daily bread in abundance.

Around the world, there are people for whom daily bread is exactly that. When they pray, “give us this day our daily bread,” they mean it quite literally. They are dependent upon God for enough rice from their field or for the sale of enough tortillas so they can afford to feed their family.

When I talk with believers who have far fewer resources than I do, I am always humbled by the way they put their faith on the line day by day. Rather than fretting, they seem to simply trust that God will provide for them. And many of them have stories of God doing just that—sometimes in miraculous ways.

It is a good reminder for me that I, too, am God-dependent. I could not wake in the morning or enter the new day if He did not give me life and breath. I could not handle the challenges each day brings without His help. Most importantly, I would not have peace, forgiveness, and the assurance of eternal life if He had not reached down in love through Jesus our Savior.

Even Christ was God-dependent while He walked this earth. He relied on the Father’s wisdom, guidance, and power. He was strengthened as He spent time alone with the Father in prayer. What a good example for us to follow! How will you depend on God today?

**Dear Father, When I pray for daily bread, help me remember the many ways You provide for me and the grace You have poured out in Jesus. Amen.**

## Thursday, February 26

*“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Matthew 6:12*

### **Forgiven Hearts**

We are always amazed when forgiveness is offered after a tragic wrong has been committed. You probably remember the Amish community that forgave the man who shot ten young girls in their one-room schoolhouse, six of whom ultimately died. The forgiveness was so unusual, so noteworthy, that it received a lot of press coverage. *How could they do it?* The people wondered. *Would I be able to forgive like that?*

Most of us will not be challenged to forgive in such a dramatic manner. Still, we may be mistreated, lied about, deeply hurt, or wronged in various ways. Can we forgive? Should we? The Lord’s prayer reminds us that forgiveness flows in multiple directions. First of all, it flows from Christ to us. Then it flows through us to others, because forgiven hearts forgive.

Forgiving is not easy. If you have been harmed by someone’s words or actions, forgiving doesn’t mean that person no longer bears responsibility or that you should allow the wrong to be repeated. Forgiveness, though, will free your heart from bitterness and help you on the path of healing.

Our Savior modeled that kind forgiveness. As He hung dying, He said, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:24).

**Jesus, Thank You for the full and free forgiveness You give to me. Help me to extend forgiveness to others because You died for them, too. Amen.**

## **Friday, February 27**

*“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Matthew 6:13*

### **Catch Me Daddy**

When the Bible gives the Lord’s Prayer, most translations include a footnote that this petition is for deliverance from evil or *the evil one*, meaning Satan. He is indeed our enemy, as Peter points out: *“Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”* (1 Peter 5:8b-9a). Satan isn’t playing a game with believers; he is deadly serious about wanting to take us out. No wonder Peter warns us to be on our guard! “*Resist him*,” Peter says, “*firm in your faith ...*” (1 Peter 5:9b).

In his book, *Our Way Home: A Journey through the Lord’s Prayer*, author Daniel Paavola gives a word picture related to deliverance from evil. Imagine children at the beach, floating on brightly colored inflatable rafts, laughing with delight as they ride the waves. Their parents are on hand, taking joy in seeing their children having so much fun. But suddenly, one of the rafts starts to float into deeper water. At first, the child is unaware of the danger. Then fear begins to show on her face as she realizes she’s getting farther and farther from shore. She tries to paddle to safety, but the undertow is too strong for her. “*Catch me*,” she cries out. “*Catch me, Daddy!*”

And her father does just that. He wades quickly through the waves, takes hold of the raft, and pulls his daughter to shore. She wasn’t so far out after all, and her father was watchful and ready to help.

When we are feeling temptation’s undertow and know it will take us to a place we don’t want to go, we can cry out, “*Catch me, Daddy*,” and God’s strong hands will pull us to safety. That is what the Father did for Jesus. From the cross, our Savior cried out, feeling forsaken by God yet ultimately committing His spirit to the Father, whose strong hands kept Him safe until Easter morning.

**Daddy, Catch me when I am tempted and keep me safe from the evil one. Amen.**

## Lessons on the Path of Prayer from LuAnn Hilliard

Throughout my journey as a Christian, I have experienced profound sadness and loss, which has significantly affected my emotional well-being. During this time, I have experienced a whirlwind of feelings—loss, confusion, and, at times, a sense of being forgotten and completely alone.

A question I asked myself frequently was, “Is God really listening?” I questioned the effectiveness of my prayers and whether I was praying correctly. This led me to realize that, unlike many aspects of life, prayer is not governed by strict rules; rather, it is a sincere conversation with my Heavenly Father.

A key insight that helped me learn about the conversation with my Heavenly Father was recognizing that, even when I lack the words, the Holy Spirit intercedes on my behalf (Romans 8:26-27). During many conversations, tears have fallen, and God knew the reason for each one, even if I didn’t know myself.

God heard not only my prayers but also those offered by others who care for me. Even simple prayers from friends, such as “Be with her, Lord” or “Walk beside her,” had a profound impact on not only my emotional well-being but also my spiritual well-being.

I also learned that with prayer, what I say may not be as important as opening my heart and mind to listen to my Heavenly Father speak back to me words of comfort and guidance. Because that is how I learn to grow and become the person that God wants me to be. Ultimately, I realized I am never truly alone.