

The background is a high-angle photograph of a lush green mountain valley. A river winds through the center of the valley. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The entire image has a textured, torn-paper appearance with numerous small, yellow, circular spots scattered across it.

Souls in
PAKAPHYASE

5 WEEK PRAYER GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

■ SOULS IN PARAPHRASE

If there is one thing 2020 has taught us it is this: you can't control anything. If you strive for control, you strive for a myth. Even if you try to control the virus from infecting your family, the reality is that there is no such thing as 100% security. Striving for absolute security will gradually deplete your joy because you no longer feel the need to rest upon the Lord's protection. Thus, it is time for us to accept this reality, that we cannot control anything, and that we as a church must "call upon the name of the Lord" (Genesis 4:26). With 2020 behind us, and 2021 before us, the wisest thing for the people of God to do is open up our souls to him, relinquish control, call upon Jesus, and trust that he will act (Psalm 37:5). That is what we are doing for the entire month of January.

For the next five weeks we will preach on prayer and pray together as a church. We are calling the series, "Souls in Paraphrase." The idea comes from a poem written by George Herbert called, Prayer. George Herbert was a pastor and famous poet from the early 17th century. His poem on prayer is a sonnet, a short poem consisting of only 14 lines. This particular sonnet is unique for its imaginative power on the richness of prayer without using any verbs, only word pictures. In the third line of the sonnet, he uses a beautiful phrase to describe prayer: the soul in paraphrase. To paraphrase means to put something in your own words. It is taking something complex and deep and summarizing the gist of it using less and simpler words. Prayer is basically that: paraphrasing your soul to God. Our soul is deep, broken, beautiful, sinful, precious, strained, tired, weary, nervous, fearful, and much more. Our souls are complex, to say the least. Prayer opens up the brokenness and complexity within, and makes it vulnerable and accessible to God, our true Healer. Paul the apostle even describes prayer as the Spirit interceding for us "with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). There are things deep within our souls that are only made accessible through prayer, and the Spirit takes those things and paraphrases them to God. Prayer is not merely asking God for things; it is exposing our souls to God so that he might change us from the inside out. And this is essentially how the Apostle Paul prays.

There are four prayers in the New Testament spoken by Paul: two in Ephesians, one in Philippians, and one in Colossians. Each of the prayers primarily focus upon the inner life of the believer. The emphasis of the prayers is less on asking God to change our circumstances, and more on God changing us to respond well to what is happening around us. Thus, each week we will learn from the prayers of Paul how to "paraphrase our souls" to God for him to renew and revive us from within. In doing so, we will be opening up our very selves—our souls—to God who will reform us as a family of believers to move forward into 2021 with humble confidence in the gospel. We believe that God will do a mighty work in each of us if we bring our Souls in Paraphrase to Jesus, the one who "always lives to make intercession for us" (Hebrews 7:25).

PRACTICAL WAYS TO PRAY

If you do not plan, you will not pray. At best you will only pray when things go bad, but rarely more than that. This section is to provide you with some practical and simple ways to pray.

I. Pre-written prayers throughout the day (30 seconds-2 minutes)

There is nothing wrong with praying the same prayers every day at the same time. You can either write your own prayers to say every time. It is best to have a prayer when you wake up, before you work, at midday, and at the end of the day. Here are some sample prayers :

Prayer upon Rising from Sleep: My God, Father, and Savior , since you have been pleased to give me the grace to come through the night to the present day, now grant that I may employ it entirely in your service, so that all my works may be to the glory of your name and the edification of my neighbors. As you have been pleased to make your sun shine upon the earth to give us bodily light, grant the light of your Spirit to illumine my understanding and my heart. And because it means nothing to begin well if one does not persevere, I ask that you would continue to increase your grace in me until you have led me into full communion with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is the true Sun of our souls, shining day and night, eternally and without end. Hear me, merciful Father, by our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Prayer upon Beginning One's Work: My good God , Father, and Savior, grant me aid by your Holy Spirit to now work fruitfully in my vocation , which is from you, all in order to love you and the people around me rather than for my own gain and glory. Give me wisdom, judgment and prudence , and freedom from my besetting sins. Bring me under the rule of true humility. Let me accept with patience whatever amount of fruitfulness or difficulty in my work that you give me this day. And in all I do, help me to rest always in my Lord Jesus Christ and in his grace alone for my salvation and life. Hear me, merciful Father, by our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Prayer after the Midday Meal: O Lord God, I give you thanks for all the benefits and gifts you constantly shower on me. Thank you for sustaining my physical life through food and shelter; for giving me new life through the gospel; and for the certainty of the best and perfect life, which is yet to come. In light of all these blessings, I now ask that you would not allow my affections to be tangled in inordinate desires for the things of this world, but let me always set my heart on things above, where Christ, who is my life, is seated at your right hand. Hear me, merciful Father, by our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Prayer before Sleep: O Lord God, now grant me the grace not only to rest my body this night, but to have my spiritual repose, in soul and conscience, in your grace and love, that I may let go of all earthly cares so I might be comforted and eased in all ways. And because no day passes that I do not sin in so many ways, please bury all my offenses in your mercy, that I might not lose your presence. Forgive me, merciful Father, for Christ's sake. And as I lay down in sleep to safely awake again only by your grace, keep me in a joyful, lively remembrance that whatever happens, I will someday know my final rising— the resurrection—because Jesus Christ lay down in death for me, and rose for my justification. In his name I pray, Amen.

II. Journaling Your Prayers (5-15 minutes)

Many people need to write their prayers out to help them focus. I went through a season of spiritual dryness and had to force myself to type out my prayers in the morning for a few months. One of the most creative things that has come out recently is the "5-Year Prayer Journal." This journal is meant to be kept and prayed through for 5 years so you can see the things you prayed for and what was answered over the years. There are really nice ones you can order from hosannarevival.com but they are hard to get.

III. Praying the Psalms (5-10 minutes)

If there is one book of the Bible that is a true paraphrase of the soul, it is the Psalms. Here is a simple way to use the Psalms to pray:

1. Read one Psalm a day
2. After reading the Psalm, pick one verse that stands out to you.
3. Take some time to read it slowly and carefully, noticing each word.
4. Then do the following outline:
 - a. Give thanks and praise to God for something in that verse.
 - b. Confess to God any sins or idols that verse exposes in you.
 - c. Ask God for something specific based upon that verse.
5. If time permits, spend time freely praying to God.

IV. Praying the Lord's Prayer (5-15 minutes)

This is a very simple way to pray, and the best part of all is that it is a prayer Jesus actually tells us to pray! So, you know you can't go wrong with this one.

1. Say one phrase slowly and meaningfully at a time.
2. Take a few moments to think upon the meaning of that phrase
3. Speak freely and briefly to God about that phrase
4. For example:

Our Father, who is heaven... You are my true Father. You dwell in heaven and are holy. Thank you for caring for me as your child. Forgive me for forgetting this or not believing. Help me to rest this day in your Fatherly care of me, your child.

Hallowed be your name... Your name, Father, is great and glorious. It is your name alone that is worthy of praise. Help me to carry your name in my heart with all of the weight that it bears. To your name I give glory this moment.

Your kingdom come...our kingdom, Father, is my true home. This world is not my true home. I confess that I have grown to comfortable here. Bring your kingdom to this earth. Use me as a citizen of your kingdom this day that others might see another home than here.

And so on...

V. Midday Self-Examination (5 minutes)

It is not mystery that morning devotions are important for the Christian life. Waking up early and spending time in prayer and reading the Bible is a given. But one of the things that is missing is the midday pause, reflection, and mindfulness on God. Here is the plan:

1. Find a quiet place after or before lunch, or any regular quiet time during midday.
2. Ask yourself the following questions:
 - a. How am I truly feeling at the moment?

- b. How have I been feeling throughout the day?
- c. Take note of any “off emotions” or “feelings of gratitude/joy” you have right now or that you had earlier in the day
- d. Process those feelings with the Lord in the following way:
 - i. Look honestly at the emotion
 - ii. Acknowledge any sin behind the emotion and confess it to Jesus, or...
 - iii. Acknowledge any sincere gratitude you feel for what he has done.
 - iv. Be mindful that all things are working for you good, even today
 - v. Ask Jesus for the Spirit to help you to live the rest of the day resting in his grace and sovereign care of you.

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

One of the greatest hymns focusing on the need for constant and regular prayer is What a Friend We Have in Jesus. It was written by Joseph Medlicott Scriven in 1855. His life was marked by trials and suffering, and he originally wrote it as a poem to comfort his lonely mother in Ireland. Today, it is sung by Christians all over the world to remind us of the dear friendship we have in Jesus through prayer. At the end of each service during this series we will sing this song together as a family. Consider using the hymn in your times of prayer this month. The version on the next page was adapted by Shane and Shane.

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer

Oh what peace we often forfeit
Oh what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations
Is there trouble anywhere
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Are we weak and heavy laden
Cumbered with a load of care
Precious Savior, still our refuge
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Do thy friends despise, forsake thee
Take it to the Lord in prayer
In His arms He'll take and shield thee
Thou wilt find a solace there
Thou wilt find a solace there

WEEK ONE

■ SOULS IN PARAPHRASE

SONG LYRICS OF THE WEEK

*What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer*

Sermon Text

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” Romans 8:26-27

Paraphrasing the Passage

In times when we feel unable to pray, the Spirit takes those deep longings within us and makes them accessible to God on our behalf.

How would you paraphrase the passage in your own words?

Paraphrasing our Souls

Here are a few things to pray for this week...

1. Pray for a renewed desire to pray, even when we feel weak and speechless (v. 26).
2. Pray for the Spirit to go deeply within us causing new desires for prayer (v. 26b).
3. Pray for the Spirit to intercede for us as a church family creating permanent renewal (v. 27).

WEEK TWO

▮ PARAPHRASING FOR HOPE

SONG LYRICS OF THE WEEK

*Oh what peace we often forfeit
Oh what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer*

Sermon Text

“I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” Ephesians 1:16-21

Paraphrasing the Passage

Paul prays for the eyes of our hearts to be opened so that we can see and sense the greatness of the hope we have in Jesus.

How would you paraphrase the passage in your own words?

Paraphrasing our Souls

Here are a few things to pray for this week...

1. Pray for God to open the eyes of your heart and soul to have a greater sense of hope in Christ. (v. 17-18a)
2. Pray for God to give your soul a new longing for the spiritual riches of heaven to come, rather than the wealth of the earth (v. 18b)
3. Pray for the power of God to move mightily within your soul for the sake of greater spiritual maturity and growth (v. 19-21)

WEEK THREE

▮ PARAPHRASING FOR LOVE

SONG LYRICS OF THE WEEK

*Have we trials and temptations
Is there trouble anywhere
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer*

Sermon Text

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:14-19

Paraphrasing the Passage

Paul prays for our souls to be given strength from God so that we might be able to absorb and take in the fullness of God’s love for us.

How would you paraphrase Ephesians 3:14-19 in your own words?

Paraphrasing our Souls

Here are a few things to pray for from this passage...

1. Pray for greater experiences of God’s love to be poured out into your soul (v. 17)
2. Pray for the Spirit of God to enable your soul to comprehend the magnitude of Christ’s love for you (v. 18-19)
3. Pray for the love of God to permanently free our souls to extend endless love to others (v. 15-16)

WEEK FOUR

▮ PARAPHRASING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

SONG LYRICS OF THE WEEK

*Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer*

Sermon Text

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Philippians 1:9-11

Paraphrasing the Passage

Paul prays for better spiritual discernment so that we only affirm and accept true and beautiful things into our lives in order to be filled with righteousness before Christ on the last day.

How would you paraphrase Paul’s prayer into your own words?

Paraphrasing our Souls

Here are a few things to pray for from this passage...

1. Pray for a new hunger and thirst for righteousness to be awakened in your soul (v. 11)
2. Pray for more discernment and approval of what is holy, righteous, and good (v. 9-10)
3. Pray for greater longing to stand blameless before Christ in the end, than for being approved in this life (v. 10b)

WEEK FIVE

▮ PARAPHRASING FOR ENDURANCE

SONG LYRICS OF THE WEEK

*Are we weak and heavy laden
Cumbered with a load of care
Precious Savior, still our refuge
Take it to the Lord in prayer*

*Do thy friends despise, forsake thee
Take it to the Lord in prayer
In His arms He'll take and shield thee
Thou wilt find a solace there
Thou wilt find a solace there*

Sermon Text

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Colossians 1:9-12

Paraphrasing the Passage

Paul prays for us to walk in a way that pleases God and for his strength to mightily help us to endure patiently with joy and gratitude.

How would you paraphrase this prayer into your own words?

Paraphrasing our Souls

Here are a few things to pray for from this passage...

1. Pray for a greater capacity in your soul to endure hardships, trials, and discouragement (v. 11)
2. Pray for endurance to walk faithfully in a manner that pleases only the Lord (v. 9-10)
3. Pray for joyfulness and gratitude to overflow from your soul as you endure faithfully to the end (v. 11-12)

CLOSING THOUGHTS

■ DISCIPLINE INTO DELIGHT

A few years ago, my prayer life was ignited by Tim Keller's book called Prayer. It opened my soul to new intimacies with Jesus. I had a disciplined plan for how and when I would pray. Sometimes I would be overcome by tears in my times spent in prayer. That was, until I hit a dry spot. I lost the discipline; I lost the delight; and I didn't feel like "wasting time" praying. Then one morning as I was reading my Bible, I came across Luke 18:1, "And [Jesus] told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." He proceeded to tell them the parable of the Persistent Widow. But the parable is not what struck me, rather it was the reason Jesus told the parable, "to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." Jesus wanted his disciples to keep praying and not grow weary in the pursuit of prayer. I found this so encouraging because Jesus knows that prayer is hard! He knows it is not easy! He knows we will be tempted to give up! The parable is a way of Jesus saying to us, "I know prayer is difficult, but don't give up. I am with you to help. It will be worth it. Hang in there."

So, I say to you, in the Spirit of Jesus and Luke 18:1, don't give up. Do not grow weary in your praying. Do not give up. Let's all strive together in prayer. The Lord will honor us, but we must remain faithful. Trust that the discipline in prayer will eventually give way to delight in prayer. May the Lord forever change us because of the prayers we have prayed in January 2021.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES ON PRAYER

Books and Readings on Prayer

Prayer by Tim Keller (The book that changed my prayer life, though it may not change yours. It is very thorough, practical, and even includes specific guides in the back)

“Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer” by Jonathan Edwards (One of the most convicting things I have ever read on prayer.)

Prayer by John Onwuchekwa (Short book on the importance and relevance of praying together as a church corporately.)

A Simple Way to Pray by Martin Luther (This is an extremely practical guide for praying, which was originally written to Martin Luther’s barber when he was struggling to pray.)

Praying with Paul by D.A. Carson (a classic exposition of the 4 prayers of Paul)

Praying the Bible by Donald Whitney (A short and simple book explaining how to use the Bible in your prayer)

Sermons on Prayer

[He Hears – How to Pray by Matt Chandler](#)

[Pride and Prayerlessness by David Platt](#)

[Prayer in the Psalms by Tim Keller](#)

[The Primacy of Prayer by Tim Keller](#)

Guides and Other Readings

Praying with Paul by D.A. Carson and Brian Tabb (This is the study guide companion that goes along with his book.)

Valley of Vision (Classic devotional book that is compiled of many prayers written by the Puritans. This is a great tool to get your prayers started.)

Songs of Jesus by Tim Keller (Easy to use practical devotional guide taking you through the entire book of Psalms and providing prewritten prayers to say.)

[5-Year Prayer Journal](#)