

MAY I

Holy God,

As I take a moment to pause and catch my breath, it is not lost on me the immense loss, grief, distance, and division this year has brought. Pandemic. Economic strife. Racial disparity. The list goes on.

God of grace, mercy, and love, instead of being apathetic to situations and circumstances that might not impact my personal self and daily life, may I be empathetic to the heartaches and outcry of my fellow sister and brother who are marginalized and cast down.

Instead of being complicit in unjust and oppressive systems, may I allow myself to be convicted and compelled to pursue compassionate allyship. Instead of being isolated from those who are not like me, or those who I tend to deem “other,” may I choose to stand in solidarity with them. Instead of taking a posture of power and privilege, may I humble myself before your throne and be reminded that I am not the one who determines who has a place at the table you have prepared.

I give you permission to convict me, Holy Spirit. May I have the moral courage to not only listen to you, but to live, walk, speak, and act as an agent of your restorative love. Amen.

Courtney Rice Alford

BE STILL

Lord God, we pause for this moment to be still in your presence. We know that you are God. We have assurance that, when you speak, your voice is greater than the noise of this planet and your presence is without limits.

For in this moment we are still, we silence the noise of:

- The pandemic sweeping the globe,
- The racial injustice that distracts and destroys, and
- The economic crisis that inflicts fear and doubt.

Lord God, we remain still in this moment. We have stopped striving, struggling, pushing, and trying to manage circumstances. Lord God, be our refuge and strength. Be very present with us.

- Be very present with us;
- Be Jehovah-Jireh, our provider;
- Be Jehovah-Rapha, our healer;
- Be Nissi, our banner; and
- Be Jehovah-Shalom, our peace.

Lord God, in this still moment, you are exalted among the nations. You are exalted in the earth. You are the Lord Almighty, forever and ever. In the strong name of Jesus, amen.

Arnetta McNeese Bailey

AN RN'S PRAYER

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. —Isaiah 53:5 NKJV

Heavenly Father,

We ask that you touch every healthcare worker, those in food and environmental services, laboratory services, and all those who deliver care to your people. Father, you are the Great Physician and we believe, by faith, that you can do all things but fail! Give us the strength to do the work you have called us to do in the hospitals, nursing homes, private care, and rehab facilities.

We lift those diagnosed with cancer, autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases, heart disease, respiratory and GI afflictions, neurological diseases, and COVID-19. Father, touch families who have lost loved ones to illnesses and tragedy.

We pray for the anointing of our hands as we continue to do the work. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Vanessa M. Burton

WE CONFESS WE HAVE

Read 1 Kings 19:1–12. Meditate on verses 11 and 12.

In silent stillness, center your heart and mind with this prayer:

Gracious God, in days past you disclosed your regenerative presence to Elijah when hope seemed as insubstantial as fistfuls of midnight fog. In our own day, pandemic, racial injustice, societal discord, and economic adversity sear our skittish souls like a sizzling skillet.

Still my mind and heart amid the cyclonic winds of change deconstructing and demolishing familiar landscapes, the seismic tremors toppling jury-rigged certainties, the raging infernos reducing sure hopes to sooty ashes. Lead me to quiet inner spaces as I listen for your “gentle whisper” (NIV).

Gift me with a fresh inkling of next steps—humble, trembling, toddler-like though they might be—that I may bear your transforming love, light, and spirit as I walk with others in our wobbly, woe-begotten world. Amen.

Sam Collins

WE CONFESS WE HAVE

Lord Jesus, you know us and our blind spots. You know we find it hard to admit we have sinned. We often think other people need to change but we don't. Yet in many ways, we have separated ourselves from you and from others.

We have thought we could keep our promises to you and still live life on our own terms.

We have failed to recognize that outward chaos is a telling symptom of chaos within.

We have allowed our confirmation biases to obscure our seeing your truth.

We have been loveless toward others whom you also created in your image, our sisters and brothers.

We have missed the mark of being like you.

Lord, we confess our sins. We ask for your forgiveness. We pray for grace, wisdom, and courage to live as healed people. Please help us remember your call to serve others with *your* attitude, *your* mind, in *your* name. Amen.

James R. Cook

THE GOD OF EVERYTHING

God of grace and love, who has saved us from sin; sanctified us through Your Spirit; lifted us out of the pits of despair, destruction, and sin; set us on the firm foundation of your Word, hear our prayer.

Your children are suffering under the weight of plagues that have driven us into isolation, racial injustice, segregated worship, and financial hardship. We cry out to you to heal prejudice, destroy racism, and care for us as you clothe the lilies of the field or the birds of the air.

Destroy this pandemic; destroy all forms of disunity and racial separation; heal us and allow us to trust you for our economic wellbeing.

We praise your name, testify of your goodness, and witness to the unity of the Spirit.

We pray this in the mighty name of Jesus, Savior, Healer of body and soul; who is neither color nor gender, old nor young, but the God of all of us; the God of everything—amen.

Jeff Frymire

PRAYER FOR OUR FRIENDS IN HAITI

God who created the universe, we humbly present our Haitian brothers and sisters to you now as they face a time of political uncertainty, a time of economic hardship, and a time when they need your reassurance, your touch, and your guidance.

We believe in your comfort, your wisdom, and your touch as the hardships of this world threaten the availability of basic necessities. May your Spirit be palpable and undeniable!

Mark and Kathy Fulton

YOU & YOUR HOUSEHOLD WILL BE SAVED

Prepare to be in the presence of the Lord. Get comfortable and clear your mind of any distraction that can hinder your prayer. Ask God to come and speak to you through this time of prayer. Prayerfully read Acts 16:31: They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household” (NIV). Read again, slowly, and reflect on every word of that verse. What is God telling you at this hour?

Now pray:

Dear heavenly Father, at this hour I come before you, just as I am, without pretenses or appearances. May your Spirit fill my heart, my mind, and my spirit. I recognize that all strength comes from you; that there are issues bigger than I, and that I totally depend on your mercy and intervention.

Thank you for the promise you extend not only to me, but to my family. That promise gives me the strength to face the struggles of the present time. Trusting that word, I confess with my mouth that I believe in you. I know that you are saving my household and that your presence covers and protects us. Thank you, Jesus; I love you. Amen.

Mary Ann Garcia

LORD JESUS, YOU ARE ENOUGH

Sit quietly, hands on lap, with open palms. Take five deep breaths, read slowly:

Jesus, Lord Jesus—Lord, have mercy...have mercy—on me, on our community, on our country, on our world—your world.

Jesus, thank you for your Spirit living in me. Holy Spirit, fill me. Open my heart so I can listen—to you, to my loved ones, to those crying out. Help me seek to understand before seeking to be understood. Open my mind to learn, to see the world the way you do; to serve, to give.

Help me to love—freely, unconditionally; like Jesus—everyone, always.

Spirit, help the world see your fruit in me. Help me live out grace and peace, as a wounded healer, as an advocate; like Jesus—for those who are lost, poor, desperate, oppressed; for those who have no voice.

Lord Jesus, you are enough. Thank you. I love you. Amen.

Scott Green

JESUS CLEANSSES TEN LEPERS

Read Luke 17:11-19. Answer a few basic questions:

- Is the location of this story important?
- What is the request of the lepers?
- How does Jesus respond?
- What is the relationship between obedience and healing?
- What is the relationship between praise and healing?
- How important is it that the one who returned to Jesus was a Samaritan?
- “Your faith has made you well.” Only the Samaritan heard this. What do you make of that?

Read the story again three times from three different perspectives:

- The nine lepers that didn’t return,
- The one Samaritan leper that did return, and
- The disciples (while the disciples are not specifically mentioned, it is hard to imagine that they are absent).

Explore these questions:

- How might each of these three participants have viewed Jesus?
- Is it possible that each participant might have heard the command to “Go show yourselves to the priests” differently?
- Might the disciples have been scandalized throughout this story?
- If all ten lepers were healed, what did the Samaritan gain that the other nine did not?

Now, in light of this story, how might you pray as this pandemic crashes around us?

Here is a start:

“Lord God, you have come to us in Jesus. You know our concerns. You hear our cries. You see us as we are: at risk, tired of this pandemic, worried and anxious, and grieving. You are our healer. You are the healer of our cities, nations, and world. You invite us to follow the “tried and true” ways to healing. You call us to be wise. You call us to let our faith be expressed through obedience. You welcome our return. You welcome our praise. We long, oh Lord, our Savior and healer, to experience your presence. In the midst of this pandemic, in the midst of the rising numbers of infections and deaths around us, we desire to hear your words “Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”

John M. Johnson

STILL THE ONE

Lord, I am distracted. I feel disconnected and even dislocated. I am not, in these times, where I want to be. Uncertain. Lost. Frantic. Too often alone. Masked. Sometimes, I am frightened.

I feel homeless and cannot find my way. My GPS does not work and the sky signs—the North Star—are hidden by dangerous clouds. Crowds. It seems that much—too much—does not hold and my map is hard to read.

So, I turn my face to your Face: Open my eyes that I might see again. Clearly. To re-orient. To relocate. Until then, I believe I am still yours, even though I feel lost for I cannot see my True North Star; then, and only then, can I navigate the great sea and find my way Home. Lord, Divine Center, I believe you are here. Still here. Still Lord. Still the Center of the universe. Still the One around whom all things revolve.

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25–26 NRSV).

Arthur M. Kelly

HEAL US!

Dear God, we realize a pandemic engulfs our nation and world. It covers the earth. We are aware of its burdensome impact on the poor among us. People are grieving the death of hundreds of thousands of family and friends. We do give thanks, however, for those who have been healed.

Dear Lord, we humble ourselves before you, for we know we are woefully inadequate for these challenges we face. This pandemic sickens and kills the body, but it also exposes and deepens divisions among us. Forgive us, dear Lord, for politicizing and deepening divisions among us. We repent for being so unloving to one another, for all kinds of reasons, during this pandemic. Lord, I repent—we repent—of our sins. In faith and hope, we embrace your love and promise of deliverance. Heal our bodies! Heal our divisions! Heal our nation!

In the authority of the One God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, amen.

James W. Lewis

OUR GOD WHO MEETS US AT THE CROSSROADS

Our God, the God who never falls silent, the God who most often speaks to us indirectly—through nature and through history: we know that this is not the first time the world has been at a crossroads.

But this is present and real to us. This is our particular crossroads. We are besieged by strife—an apparently never-ending war in Afghanistan. And unrelenting conflict in the Middle East. The entire world is also besieged by the global pandemic of COVID-19. Many have died of this disease; and millions more are sick—some gravely sick.

And then, there is economic hardship as the whole world is feeling the pain of lost jobs and incomes.

We ask for forgiveness. We repent. And we relent. You, God of Abraham, forgive us and intervene in the world as you have done so many times before. And bring back life.

Gilbert Lozano

ALL THINGS NEW

Well, Lord, this year has been nuts.
So many plans disrupted.
School disrupted.
Work disrupted.
Health disrupted.
So many MINISTRY plans disrupted.
So many ministry plans to grow your Kingdom, disrupted.
What's the point of that??
What's the point of any of this??

So many times I have asked, "Can we start over? Can we have another go at 2020?"
But time marches on. The news is often overwhelming. The challenges keep coming.
Fear. Frustration. Helplessness.
Didn't you once say, "Behold, I make all things new?"
Any day now would be fine with me.

I don't know when and I don't know how, but I will cling to your words.
I will choose to trust in your words:
"BEHOLD, I make all things new."
"Behold, I make ALL THINGS NEW."

And in the meantime, please, please develop in me, in all of us:

Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-Control

All things new.

Jamie Nachtigall

STIR IN ME

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. —Matthew 5:8 NASB

Lord, when I read this, I say, “This is who I want to be; the pure in heart, because I want to see God for all eternity.” I am fully aware that it is my journey here that leads me into the everlasting. So, examine my heart, Lord. I release any emotion that may hinder your purity—doubt, fear, anger, rejection, anxiety, and anything connected to those feelings. Examine my mind; the seat of my thoughts or ideas that connect to my heart.

Teach me to see my brothers and sisters as you do; whether they sit by the pool of Bethesda, come out of Canaan or Samaria. Or sit in a tree. Let me see others as you did, in need of your loving compassion. Stir up within me the boldness to be genuinely different for you.

Amen.

Rosilyn Noble

A PRAYER FOR UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Most gracious and loving God, we honor you and praise you, but we also want to be honest with you. This moment in history of social distance, hand sanitizer, and loved ones dying alone in starch hospital beds is, well, *unprecedented*. We are weary. We are surrounded by protests and polarized politics and plummeting economies and a never-ending pandemic. We are watching neighbor turn against neighbor.

Yet, *you are still God*.

Thank you, God, for meeting us right here at this moment. Would you humble us as we pray, seek your face, and turn from our grievous ways? As we take these actions, would you hear us, forgive us, and heal our land? Empower us, in holiness and unity, to face these uncertain times with the strength of your spirit. In the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.

Alyssa Peterson-DeWitt

PRAYER FOR A WEARY CHAPLAIN

Divine Healer, we still ourselves in your presence, remembering those who work as your hands and feet, to restore others from physical, mental, spiritual, and societal illness. In moments of uncertainty, we ask that you reorient us from our initial self-serving reactions to a posture of service, seeking to treat our neighbor as ourselves and seeking their best interest. Lord, remind us of who you call us to be as part of your body here on earth.

Create in me a new heart when I grow weary and feel that I am deserving to be an exception to the rule. Remind me that I am my siblings' keeper, and that I am responsible to do my part in making your kingdom more safe, welcoming, and inclusive for all your children.

Help me elevate the voices that have long been ignored, and give me grace in the discomfort of it all, O Lord, for I am growing. Amen.

Jennie Prior

SEEK JUSTICE

In silence... in stillness... I seek your holy presence, O Lord. I humbly pray that I may see your face, that I may know the truth, the light, and the love that embody You. As I witness our nation in this time of turmoil, I pray that I will be cleansed of any wickedness that may reside within me and that I may learn from You, O Lord, to love, to truly love all my neighbors, no matter their creed or their color. I believe that you, O Lord, can heal our land, but that healing can only take place when we, your people, come to realize that racism, in all of its forms, is a principality and a power that can be overcome only by way of Your miraculous, loving grace.

Help us, O Lord, to oppose the evil of racism and seek justice for all of your children. Amen.

Kevin Radaker

A CALL TO FAST

Let us proclaim a fast that gets the Lord's attention!

“Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?” —Isaiah 58:6–7 NKJV

Dear Lord God, help us to really have the burden for the things that touch your heart. You care about those who are under the bonds of wickedness and suffer under the yokes of injustice. You want us to forsake those things that we say and do which are fed by the forces of darkness and that are passed down from generation to generation. You want us to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless poor, clothe the naked, and be a help to our own families. You want us to care about the downtrodden and seek to help them. When we fast to do those things, you have promised to deliver and empower and restore. Help us to set our hearts, minds, and hands to this type of fasting and submission. Empower us in it, and bless us through it we pray, in the precious and powerful name of Jesus Christ, amen!

“Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, And if you give yourself to the hungry, and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness, and your gloom will become like midday. And the LORD will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell. —Isaiah 58:8–12 NKJV

Dear Lord, we want our light to shine like the dawn. We want our recovery to come speedily. We want our righteousness to go before us. We want your glory to be our rear guard. We want to be able to call and hear you answer. We want you to let us know that you are with us when we cry. Please give us the heart and the strength to be the people who have a heart for you and the things you want in and from us, so that we can experience all the blessings and glory that you desire to pour upon us. Help your people, Lord. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray, amen!

Mark K. Richardson

WELCOME, HOLY GOD

Holy God, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; giving God, of parted waters, wilderness, and manna; powerful God, of Rachel, Rebecca, and Ruth; mysterious God, of dry bones, crying rocks, and whispering voice; Loving God, whom Jesus reflected in all ways—

We hunger for strength beyond ourselves to hold us up so that we may hold others up. We lament about wasted opportunities, wasted dreams, and wasted lives. We yearn for a peace that overcomes the floods of hate and fear and disinterest. It is your love that we need in our hearts, homes, and culture.

We take this moment to stop. Stop the noise of raging winds that bring fires over hillsides and hurricanes from beaches. Stop the evil that threatens to envelope and surround us. We say stop.

And we say welcome.

We welcome our holy, giving, powerful, mysterious, loving God into this moment and into every moment to come.

Amen.

Mary Stephens

WE ARE WORN

Lord, we are worn. Wave after wave of fear, frustration, anxiety, anger, confusion, and chaos have relentlessly buffeted our hearts. We have tried to stay afloat, but we are exhausted, and we don't know what to do.

As the wind and waves rage around us, calm the storm in our hearts. Help us to know when to step out of the boat and when to join you for a time of rest. Either way, may our eyes be fixed on you.

May we not focus on ourselves or our circumstances, on our rights or being right. Instead, teach us to see you in the faces of the vulnerable: the ill, the oppressed, the widow, or the child in our home. Speak peace to our hearts, we pray, and cause it to shine as a beacon of hope to all who need to find you in the storm. Amen.

Abby Torgeson

GOOD THINGS

Lord of the past, present, and the future,

I pause now to listen. Direct now my attention to the contours of your movement in the world around me. Father, I now choose to rejoice as I acknowledge one truly good thing you have been doing around me. I join the community of saints in proclaiming: “Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!” (Revelation 15:3)

Lord, I trust you. I trust that you care for a breaking world. I trust that your heart is for and your attention is on those who are struggling even now to breathe; those who are struggling even now to pay their bills; those who are struggling even now to maintain a base level of mental health. I ask you now to reveal more of your perspective to me.

Lord, the pandemic has limited me in so many ways. But I dare now to ask: what opportunities are available to me now that were actually not available before? How, O God, might I make myself available?

I lean into your word for me from the book of Ephesians: “For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” (Ephesians 2:10)

Lord, what good things have you held back just for me to do in this tumultuous time?

I’m thankful, Lord. Amen.

Jason Varner

GOD-DEFINED

God of the Universe, you made us to be God-defined. You set the parameters long ago, creating every human in the image of You. But we have chosen to define ourselves; call ourselves by our own names. We each make our community in our own image with our own understanding, then shake our fists at the sky asking why things are the way they are—even blaming others who call themselves by other names. Reveal to us this day how to be God-defined.

My Child, you have made for yourself a mud castle and called yourself after its likeness. But this is not what you were made for.

I have called you to much more.

You don't even know you sit in the muck; making kingdoms that don't grow living things.

Come out of your kingdom, out of your mud castle.

See the reality that you have mud on your face.

Wash in the river of my Spirit.

And come to me.

Then we can return and raze the castle you made; plant the seeds of a living garden that grows and bears fruit needed for the hungry world at hand.

Come to me.

Let me define you.

My name for you is much lovelier than any you are currently sitting in.

Let me name you.

Return to me.

Audrey Weiger

ANCIENT OF DAYS, BE NEAR

Creator God, you've prepared this day for us. Because we have a story with you, we bend our hearts and our minds to our awareness of your presence. In your good plan, you've allowed the sun to set on our yesterday. You invite us into the nascent dawn of the present in this twenty-four-hour adventure.

Where chaos is the slogan, restore your peace. Where destruction is the agenda, upend the plan. Where division is the refrain, rewrite the melody to tune to your harmonies of joy and hope. Set in motion through us a mighty wave of love and light that will not be extinguished.

We take your hand, Holy Companion, and step out in faith on the footpath you've made ready. Our faltering spirits are refreshed in the possibility of another walk with you.

With the psalmist, we say, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

Amen.

Carma Wood