

“When I lie awake through the night watches, I earnestly pray for friends who are suffering greatly. I ask God to stretch their tolerance for pain, stoke the smoking embers of their hopes, and to build in them a rugged, more sturdy faith. And now, I have this excellent guide, *I’m Praying for You*, to assist me with my intercessions. I couldn’t be more thrilled, for my good friend Nancy Guthrie has filled this remarkable work with powerful scriptures and personal wisdom, all of it so timely and practical. After living long with pain and quadriplegia, I know firsthand the enormous impact prayer has on one’s ability to persevere through heart-wrenching suffering — so get out your prayer list, open the pages of Nancy’s book, and pour the authority of Scripture over the wounds and weary hearts of those for whom you intercede! They will never be the same ... and neither will you.”

Joni Eareckson Tada, founder, Joni and Friends International Disability Center

“This is a beautiful Scripture-grounded and Jesus-centered guide for praying for those who are hurting. Nancy Guthrie is gold and so is this book!”

Randy Alcorn, author; founder and director, Eternal Perspective Ministries

“This unique book is a precious gift for God’s people. In these short, devotional chapters, Nancy Guthrie teaches us to pray more effectively — more specifically and more biblically — for those around us who are going through trials and suffering. Unlike any book on prayer that I’ve ever seen, this is not a book that you simply *read* ... this is a book that you use. And I will use it often!”

Scott Anderson, President & CEO, Desiring God

“This book is a brilliant idea. It will help many of us pray for, and encourage, our brothers and sisters who are suffering. I thank God for it.”

Christopher Ash, Writer-in-Residence, Tyndale House, Cambridge

“The prayers of God’s people have always been a precious and priceless gift to me, but never more than during my husband’s recent journey with cancer. This wonderful, practical resource from Nancy Guthrie will help you give the gift of encouragement by praying biblically-grounded prayers for friends who are going through the fire and by sharing how you are praying for them that day.”

Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, author, *Revive Our Hearts* founder, and Bible teacher

“In *I’m Praying for You*, Guthrie has written the most practical, scripture-infused guide to prayer that I have ever seen. When someone near us is suffering in some way, we often spontaneously say we’ll pray for them. Often we don’t follow through or if we do, we don’t know how to pray. In forty short devotionals, each guided by the comfort and call of the gospel, Guthrie teaches us what it looks like to pray for someone with clarity and confidence, knowing that what we are praying is consistent with what God so graciously has revealed to us in his Word about who he is, what he has done and is doing for us and the life he has called us to as his children. As you walk with people through the troubles of life in this fallen world, you will turn to this little gem of a book again and again.”

Paul David Tripp, pastor, event speaker, and author of many books including *New Morning Mercies*.

40 Days of Praying the Bible for
Someone Who is Suffering

I'm
praying
for
you

NANCY GUTHRIE

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QR Code Instructions

Throughout this book we've included QR codes that will enable you to easily load and send a message to those you are praying for, letting them know exactly how you are praying for them on that day. You can practice using the test code below.

On iPhone:

1. Open the camera app on your phone.
2. Point your phone and focus on the QR code — this should scan it.
3. A pop-up window will appear. Now, press and hold until two options appear: 'Search Web' or 'Copy'.
4. Click 'Copy' then go to your preferred messaging app and press and hold to paste the text there.
5. Send the message to your friend to let them know that you are praying.

On Android:

1. Some android phones include a built-in QR scanner. You can test this by pointing your camera at the QR code on this page, or by using Google Lens.
2. If this doesn't work, go to the app store and download a QR Reader — there are many free options.
3. Open the app, point your phone and focus on the QR code — this should scan it.
4. Select text, click 'Copy', then go to your preferred messaging app and press and hold to paste the text there.
5. Send the message to your friend to let them know that you are praying.



I'm praying John 9:3 for you today, praying that you will sense that your suffering is not meaningless, but purposeful. I'm praying that people around you will see that God is at work in your life so that his glory will be on display for the world to see.

Introduction

When someone we care about is going through something difficult, we are quick to say, “I’m praying for you!” But then what? Do we really pray? And if so, what do we pray? How do we know what to pray?

If we’re honest, most of us might have to admit that we have a rather limited vocabulary when it comes to praying for others who are suffering. Our prayers are often limited only to asking/begging God to take away the suffering. Certainly, this is a good instinct! We pray, asking God to work, because we believe that he is able and inclined to do good toward those he loves. But our prayers tend to be mostly guided by what we think would be the best outcome for the situation, or for what the person who is suffering has asked us to pray.

If we really believe that God is sovereign over our suffering (and why would we even consider praying if we didn’t?), and that he is purposeful in allowing suffering into the lives of those who belong to him, shouldn’t that shape how we pray? Shouldn’t we welcome God to accomplish everything he intends to accomplish uniquely through the suffering for that person’s good and for his glory?

The Bible helps us to do that. The Bible provides us with a vocabulary for prayer that enables us to ask God to achieve what he intends in and through the suffering in our lives and the lives of those we care about. So, let’s use the words the Bible provides to call upon God. Rather than presume upon him to accomplish his good purposes in the life of the

person who is suffering, let's plead with him to do it! In the pages that follow, we'll work our way through forty Scripture passages that reveal something about God's purposes in suffering. The Scriptures aid us in offering prayers that God delights to answer. They help us to ask him rather than presume upon him to do what he has promised to do. And they keep us from becoming too focused on demanding that he do what he has not promised to do.

We'll consider carefully what God is saying in those verses and then we'll turn the words of that passage into a prayer. You'll be able to insert the name of the person you're praying for into the provided prayer. Using the QR code at the end of each prayer, you'll also be able to load and send a personal text message to the person you're praying for so that he or she will know not only *that* you are praying, but exactly *what* you are praying. In this way, each day's Scripture passage will not only guide your prayer, it will also focus and encourage the person for whom you're praying. We're going to pray for healing, relief, and restoration. But we won't stop there because the Bible doesn't let us stop there. Instead of praying only for the brokenness to be made whole, we're going to pray that the glory of God's character would be on display uniquely through the broken places. We're going to approach prayer not as a tool to manipulate God to get what we want, but as a way to submit to what he wants. Through prayer, we will draw close to him in our need. We'll welcome him to have his way because we believe that he is good and that his plans for us, and all who are his, are good.

There may be some prayers in this book that seem insufficient because they petition God to work in and through your friend's suffering rather than remove the suffering. Perhaps these prayers won't always seem bold enough or big enough. But when we allow the Bible to shape our prayers, we can actually be sure that our prayers are right-sized and rightly focused. Perhaps they will seem, at times, too focused on anticipating the joys of the life to come rather than petitioning God to deliver those joys in this life. Much of modern Christianity has taught

us to pray this way. But the consistent focus of the Scriptures is a call to set our hope on the life to come in the presence of God, which will commence on the day of resurrection. The Scriptures encourage eager longing for that day.

My hope is that this little book will help you to do what I know you really want to do, which is to faithfully pray for the person you care about who is in need of prayer. Out of a desire to keep sentences as uncomplicated and unencumbered as possible, and to make reading and praying with this book as personal as possible, I've used a variety of pronouns throughout. You'll find that I go back and forth between referring to the person being prayed for as a him or a her. I hope you'll make the needed adjustment as you read and pray.

So, let's begin. Let's pray. Let's allow the Bible to give shape and substance to our prayers. Let's pray in full confidence that God himself is giving us the inclination to pray, the words to pray, and the comfort of knowing that the Spirit is interceding with groanings that go beyond what we pray. Let's pray in confidence that God delights in our prayers and hears our prayers. Let's pray to our Father who invites us to bring all of our needs and concerns to him today, and looks forward to us coming back to ask him for his help again tomorrow.

1

I'm praying that the work of God will be displayed in your life

“It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered.

“This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.”

John 9:3

Jesus had just healed a man who had been blind since birth. And the disciples had a question. It's the same question we all have when we suffer: Why? But their question included an assumption. They asked, “Why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?” (John 9:2). Did you catch the assumption in their question? They assumed that the man's suffering was caused by someone's sin. They just didn't know whose.

The disciples' question was completely focused on the *cause* of the man's suffering. Notice, however, that Jesus' answer to their question “Why?” was all about *purpose*, not *cause*. It's as if he wanted to turn their gaze from the past to the present and the future. It's as if he wanted to get them less focused on pointing the finger of blame and more focused on

seeing the way he was putting his glory on display. They were all caught up in what *caused* the blindness but Jesus pointed them toward the *purpose* God had in it. The purpose, according to Jesus, was that the power of God, the work of God, the glory of God would be put on display in this man's life. In fact, this is a purpose God has in every believer's life.

So, let's pray that the work of God will be put on display in the life of the person for whom we're praying. Perhaps the work of God will be put on display in the way it was in this man's life — in the form of supernatural healing. Or perhaps it will be put on display in some other way as his Holy Spirit goes to work in the interior of our friend's life, transforming his or her character, perspective, interactions, opinions, and desires.

We all know that people observe those who are suffering to see if Jesus makes any difference at all when the worst things happen. Let's pray that they will see that Jesus is really making a difference in the way our friend suffers — that the work of God will be put on display for all who are watching.

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Prayer

Lord, we don't presume to know exactly what your purpose is in allowing this suffering into _____'s life. But we believe that because he belongs to you, his suffering is not random or meaningless. It's purposeful. And so we ask you to accomplish your purposes. We ask that your power at work in _____'s life would be seen in his life. May all he comes in contact with see that your Spirit is at work generating the fruit that only he can produce—the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. Lord, work a miracle in _____'s life. Work in such a way that it is obvious to all that something supernatural is taking place in his body and in his soul.

.....



I'm praying John 9:3 for you today, praying that you will sense that your suffering is not meaningless, but purposeful. I'm praying that people around you will see that God is at work in your life so that his glory will be on display for the world to see.

2

I'm praying that the Lord will take away your pain

So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."

2 Corinthians 12:7–9

Whenever we suffer, it is natural to ask, "Why?" But when Paul was given a thorn in the flesh (whatever it was) that brought him unrelenting agony, interestingly he didn't ask, "Why?" He seemed to know exactly *why* God had allowed this pain into his already pain-ridden life. He looked at the thorn and he saw the hand of God at work in his life, protecting him from sin. Paul had been granted the kind of spiritual experience that could make a person's head swell with spiritual pride — the opportunity to see into the glories of heaven. So, in the pain of the thorn, Paul saw God at work protecting him from something that

would be even more painful—allowing this supernatural experience to fill him with spiritual pride.

But while Paul saw the hand of God at work in the thorn, he saw another hand at work as well. He recognized it as a “messenger from Satan” to torment him. Paul was tormented with the temptation to resent God for allowing the thorn to invade his already pain-ridden life. What God intended to develop his faith, Satan wanted to use to diminish his faith. What God intended to use to train Paul to trust him, Satan wanted to use to tempt Paul to resent him.

So, Paul knew that God was at work for his good through the thorn ... and he still begged God to take it away. And then he begged again. And then he begged again. Most of us can relate to that. Even when we can see that God is using the hurts in our lives to accomplish something good in us, we still want the pain to stop.

Paul actually heard Jesus speaking to him in response to his begging for the thorn to be taken away. But it can't have been what he was hoping to hear. Jesus' answer to Paul's repeated prayer was not that he would take the thorn away, but that he would provide Paul with enough grace to endure living with the thorn. Paul would experience divine power, not in the thorn being removed, but in its being redeemed.

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Prayer

Lord, it is such a relief to know that you are sovereign over the pain in _____'s life. Give _____ the firm confidence that what Satan may intend to use to diminish her faith, you will use to develop her faith. We beg you to take away this pain. And we know you can. But if you choose not to, give _____ the grace and power to endure the pain.

.....



I'm praying 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 for you today, begging God to take away your pain. How I pray he will bring you relief! But I'm also thanking him for the grace he has promised to provide so that you can endure the pain that he does not take away.

3

I'm praying that this trial will develop your endurance

Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory. We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

Romans 5:2–5

The Bible continually sets before us a future to lean into and look forward to: a future in which we will share in the radiant, holy, satisfying, joyful glory of God. But sometimes in the midst of suffering in this life, that future can seem so far away with so many difficult days in between.

In Romans 5, Paul seems to want us to think and feel differently about

the problems and trials that plague us as we await eternal glory. He seems to want us to recognize that the problems and trials of this life are actually productive in our lives, helping us to set our hope more fully on what he has prepared for us. Instead of being frustrated or resentful about the suffering in our lives, Paul says that we can be genuinely happy. This joy is caused by recognizing that every day, as we experience God providing what we need to endure faithfully, something is being developed in us: a patience with trials; a rugged joy in disappointment; and a firm confidence that the God who supplied what we needed to get through today will provide what we need tomorrow too.

And as we endure faithfully, we realize something else is happening. A strength of character is developing in our lives so that we are less fussy, less entitled, less self-centered. We recognize that the Holy Spirit really is at work transforming us from the inside. The genuineness of our faith strengthens our confidence that God really has saved us, is saving us, and will one day save us from this sin-sick world to live in his presence. We become more convinced that we will never regret putting all of our hope in Christ.

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Prayer

Lord, as _____ deals with the difficulties this day brings, help _____ to remember that you are at work in the midst of problems and trials to develop something in _____. Do your work developing perseverance so that _____ will be able to trust and love you over the long haul. Do your work of developing Christ-like character in _____ so that _____ will radiate the beauty of Christ for all to see. Fill _____ with confidence that he will never regret putting all of his hope in you and what you are preparing for those who love you.

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