



Prayer Devotions



January

Luke 18:1

Pray Always and Never Give Up

Prayer for Persecuted Church

Pray for those in the midst of persecution

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Hebrews 13:3

Global watchdog Open Doors reports that 322 Christians are killed every month for their faith while millions more suffer persecution on a routine basis.

Please pray that these believers will not only stay committed to the call of Christ but also will respond in love to the evil shown by their aggressors. God's love will open doors for these believers to share the Gospel even more.

This Month's Countries, these are some of the most dangerous countries to follow Jesus:

Pakistan

Sudan

Eritrea

Daily prayers for January... And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: “Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.” And he replied: “Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.” M.L. Haskins

Tuesday, January 1st: One of the best ways I can think of to enter into the New Year is with a clean slate. We all like to make resolutions about how we will do things differently, but first we need to address the old habits that have not been beneficial or honoring to God and to confess, repent, and praise Him that in Him all things are new and possible! James gives us some sound advice as to how we can accomplish this and just how vital it is to being authentic and successful in our resolve. We need to take a hard and honest look in the mirror, identify and put aside any and all “wickedness and filthiness”, and in humility receive His Word which has been implanted and is that which is able to save our souls. He has washed us, but it’s our responsibility to continue to cleanse our minds with “the washing of the water by the word.” Children typically need to be bathed by their parents, and we know that they can easily run from the tub to the mud puddle. They need to be trained to take responsibility for their decisions to avoid things that will soil them and to take a bath when they get dirty. That’s how we can keep it clean: learn what makes us polluted, do our best to avoid those things, and take the responsibility to bathe ourselves daily in the cleansing power of His Word. **James 1:21-26; Eph. 5:26**

Wednesday, January 2nd: The power of unified prayer by the body of Christ is incomprehensible! It ushers in the presence of the Holy Spirit to such a degree that the foundations can be shaken – both physical and spiritual foundations! And when the Holy Spirit shows up and is manifest in believers, they are empowered to go out into their community to speak the word boldly. Oh, that we would be in such unity and hunger for His presence to such a degree that there would be a life-altering shaking in the body of Pure Heart causing us to walk in the fullness of all He is! **Acts 4:31; Matt. 18:19-20**

Thursday, January 3rd: Each New Year, we make resolutions, committing to be healthier, more productive, and better people over all. As we begin 2019, let us consider how we can serve Jesus best by seeing Christ in one another. When we share our food with those who are hungry, when we share our drink with those who are thirsty, when we befriend the new at church or help someone with their troubles, we are serving Christ. This New Year, how will you serve God by serving God's people? Pray that God would help you to see those who need your friendship, your care, and your concern this day and every day. May you be His hands and feet in this world, reaching out to those who need to experience His love. **Matthew 25:31-40**

Friday, January 4th: Merriam Webster defines wellness as “the quality or state of being in good health, especially as an actively sought goal.” We could probably all agree that we would like to be in good health in all areas of our lives: physically, spiritually, and

emotionally. So what exactly can be defined as good health? First of all, health is the general condition of something in terms of soundness, vitality, and proper functioning. And *good* means of high quality or standard; having the appropriate qualities to be something or to fit a purpose. We were created by God to reflect His image in all aspects of our lives, so we already are equipped with everything we need pertaining to life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us. That means we have been granted the means to the soundness and resources for proper functioning, so our responsibility is to actively seek the goal of fulfilling our purpose. It takes intentionality and work, but if we can come to really see what overall “good health” can be in our lives, this should be all the motivation we need to adopt a lifestyle that will promote wellness and to enthusiastically strive to become all we were created to be! **2 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 9:25-27**

Saturday, January 5th: What does it take to bring something into being, something that simply did not exist? Can you imagine a time “before time?” The God we worship is not concerned about such constraints; God works totally outside our perceptions of time and space. This is the God who awaits you now in quietness. Seek the freedom to be in touch with your Creator. Pause and think about that. **Genesis 1:1-2**

Sunday, January 6th: I like words. Choosing just the right word can be so powerful, and often there are subtle nuances to a particular word that can add such a depth of meaning in its use. One such word is *sanctify*. Peter urges us to sanctify Christ as

Lord in our hearts so we will always have a ready answer for anyone who wonders where our hope comes from. What he's telling us is to understand with utter confidence and assurance that He is indeed over all, in all, and in control. When we really know and accept this, there's nothing that can faze us! Sickness? He's got that covered. Finances? That too. Relationship woes? All means all. Walking through these things may not always be easy, but we have this hope – this confidence in the One who is walking beside us and can be trusted to always lead us in our best interest. Let's *sanctify* Him in our hearts: set Him apart as holy, act with confidence and proper respect, and regard in our actions that He is indeed Christ our Lord. **1 Pet. 3:15; Is. 41:10; Ps. 56:3**

Monday, January 7th: “Fashionista” is probably not a word used to describe John, although today fur is a popular trim on many coats. While John could have been a fashion trendsetter, his dietary habits have not taken hold. John was peculiar enough in his dress that Mark noted it in his Gospel. Often it takes someone willing to stand out from the crowd to be noticed and heard. John shared a vision that was far different than many prophets of his time, or those claiming to be so today. John claimed that someone much greater than he was coming. John was open to a new way of thinking and a new way of doing. John talked about one who would baptize with Spirit, not just water. In our culture, much is made of those who are rational, with well-thought-out concepts and well-drawn schematics. God can use those types, but in the case of announcing Jesus to the world, God used someone who our culture might very well cast aside. May we not

rationalize ourselves away from serving God or from hearing from those unlikely candidates that He might send. **Mark 1:6-8**

Tuesday, January 8th: The last verse of James 2 is somewhat sobering. It reads, “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.” Oftentimes the idea of works is interpreted to mean serving in the children’s department, doing hours of volunteer work, or some other form of extracurricular activity that can be checked off a list. But this isn’t what James was referring to; the word he used was *ergon*, and it actually means everyday conduct measured by a standard of righteousness. It’s the integrity of our daily lives, believing that God’s guidelines should be observed always, and that the reason for our behavior should not be based on being seen or recognized for “how good” we are or how much we do. It’s all about obedience and reverence, trusting that He knows best. Acts of service will be the natural response to our core beliefs. That’s what faith is. That’s where we will find true life. Anything else is dead. **Jas. 2:14, 22-26; Gen. 15:6**

Wednesday, January 9th: Do you have a friend or family member that you know so well you know what they are going to say or do before they say or do it? Maybe they know you just as well, so that they can predict what you will say by the expression on your face. Sometimes we know someone so well that we can guess what they are thinking, and when they tell us, we might actually be right! In today's psalm (**Psalms 139:1-6**), the writer says that God knows everything about us through everything we

do, and that God searches every part of our hearts. Imagine the person who knows you best. Even though he or she might know almost everything about you, God knows your heart and mind perfectly. Like a loving parent, God knows us completely, and always wants to be close to us. The psalmist reacts to this by saying that this is too wonderful to understand! The creator of the world knows the corners of your heart, your every thought, and loves you continually.

Thursday, January 10th: Sometimes we have this skewed idea about what pastors do all week when it isn't Sunday. Sure, we know they write their messages and prepare lessons, and maybe they perform a wedding or funeral or counsel with someone, but beyond that? They carry on their shoulders the profound responsibility of shepherding a flock – and in our case, a very large flock – that actually belongs to a very powerful Master. The duties of a shepherd in Biblical times were onerous: ensure that the sheep were fed what would nourish them as needed – milk for lambs and pleasant pastures for the more mature, lead them on the correct paths, protect them from hostile forces, teach them to stay together and to listen for and respond to his voice, lovingly provide discipline when they strayed from the flock. Our pastors carry these same responsibilities, and they know that the sheep don't belong to *them*, and that the very lives of the sheep in their care depend on their fidelity to the directives of the One to whom the sheep belong. We need to appreciate, encourage, and pray for our shepherds. Father, we ask You to faithfully lead and empower those to whom you have entrusted us that they may fulfill their calling with joy and excellence. **1 Peter 5:1-4; Col. 1:25-29**

Friday, January 11th: When have you been surprised to find out where something came from? I recently saw a TV show about people who found old items in their attic that were extremely valuable. They had no idea that something that looked old and worn out was worth large sums of money! Treasures were located where no one expected to find them. When Philip told his friend Nathanael that he was going to follow Jesus, Nathanael questioned his friend's decision. He asked if anything good could come from Nazareth, since this was a small, unimpressive town, the last place people would expect the Savior of the world to live. The people were waiting for a Messiah who would be a powerful king to deliver them from their troubles. Philip followed Jesus anyway and told his friend to see for himself! We are also encouraged to come and see Jesus. While friends can tell us about their relationship with Christ, when we develop a relationship with God ourselves, we can hear how we too are called to follow God in new ways. **John 1:43-46**

Saturday, January 12th: Sometimes I wonder just how committed we are to being a house of prayer. Do we really believe that prayer matters? Or is it just an exercise we go through when we don't know what else to do? You don't have to look very far to see evidence of the power of laying your requests at the foot of the throne. Hannah was infertile and prayed for a son; Peter's chains in prison fell away when his friends interceded for him; Hezekiah prayed for deliverance from the Assyrians and an angel of the Lord wiped out 85,000 soldiers while Jerusalem slept. If that doesn't convince you, open your ears to the countless examples in our own body of how God has shown up in

ways that can only be explained as miraculous. He still can and He still does. All He needs is someone who believes that and is willing and committed to calling on Him. Might that be you? **Acts 12:5-12; Jer. 33:3; James 5:16**

Sunday, January 13th: In a museum, there are often areas that are roped off or enclosed with glass because the items inside are so valuable or breakable that they do not want anyone to touch them. Sometimes glass cases keep dust and fingerprints off the artifacts or paintings so that they won't be damaged and can be preserved for years. Arrowheads, mummies, pottery and other works of art are displayed so we can learn more about the past. In the time when today's scripture was written, temples were places that were thought of as so holy that they were perfectly maintained. Many people thought that God literally lived in the temple, so they took time to preserve this beautiful, physical space. Similarly, this passage talks about how we can take care of our bodies like temples. Since the Holy Spirit wants to be with us, we should make the best choices we can with our bodies. When we think of our bodies as being holy from God, this can inspire us to make better decisions. Pure Heart's Wellness Ministry is a great support in obtaining guidance with making better decisions with our bodies. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

Monday, January 14th: Imagine that first moment light came to be. All I can equate it to is going to the restroom in the middle of the night and clicking the light on, only to be blinded momentarily. God did this from nothingness. God spoke light into being from the darkness. Does light still require creativity? Sure, Thomas

Alva Edison had to be creative to create the light bulb, but let's think for a minute about creating light from darkness. Light and darkness take many forms, especially using them to describe situations. Human trafficking is darkness. Disease due to unclean drinking water is darkness. War orphans live in darkness. Creativity is a light in several ways. God gives you passion, gifts, and talents to share light in the world. One way to use creativity is to shed light in places where darkness reigns. Another is to be creative in finding solutions. Creativity gives you unlimited ways to be Christ's presence in the world. How is God showing you to express your creativity? **Genesis 1:3-5**

Tuesday, January 15th: Proverbs 28:14 presents something of a dichotomy. It tells us how blessed is the man who fears always! Somehow, the idea of fear and feeling blessed don't seem to belong in the same sentence, but the best way I can come to an understanding of what the psalmist is expressing is from personal experience. When I was quite young, my brother and our cousin and I "escaped" Grandma's house to go for a walk in the snow and possibly look for swans at the pond. We were sternly cautioned to stay off the ice! Of course, our adventurous spirits exceeded our healthy fear of our parents' admonitions, and we walked out onto the inviting ice on the pond, only to learn how cold the water was beneath the deceptively appealing surface. The "fear" we should have had was not so much for the inevitable reprimand we knew we would receive, since the evidence of our disobedience was obvious. Instead, it should have been a fear based on knowing their love for us that was the basis for their warning. When we have that healthy "fear" of God – when we

trust Him, being obedient to His superior wisdom which is founded on love for us – we can be assured that the result will be a blessing. **Prov. 3:5-6; Deut. 6:23-25**

Wednesday, January 16th: Have you ever seen a potter creating a pot or another object? The potter's wheel can be messy, with the shape of the clay constantly changing as the potter molds it into different shapes. The potter knows what he or she wants to make, and carefully guides the clay until it is transformed into something new and beautiful that people can use and admire. Although potters can choose to make identical pots, they often have a wide variety of art work in their shops. God made each one of us too, created uniquely with our own distinct qualities, gifts and talents. Amazingly, God did not make any of us exactly alike, but with our own personalities. Today's scripture talks about how God crafted each one of us. Even when brothers and sisters have the same parents and grow up in the same family, look how different they can be! We can be thankful that God creates each one of us with love, and that God wants to walk with us every day. **Psalm 139:13-18**

Thursday, January 17th: I love that Pure Heart loves our brothers and sisters at Crossroads. In doing so, we are extending the spirit of hospitality that John is extolling in his third letter to the church in Ephesus, and more specifically to a man named Gaius. John prays that Gaius will prosper in all things and be in health, *just as his soul prospers*. He goes on to say that the praiseworthy thing that Gaius has done is to walk in truth, or in other words, to

be genuine in emulating the love of Christ in humility and sincerity. You see, John had sent some brethren – outsiders – to the church, but not all had welcomed them. In fact, a certain Diotrephes, who was a leader, had refused to even receive them. John reveals that this man's problem was being too impressed with his own preeminence and therefore being afraid of anything or anyone that might undermine or challenge his position. When our hearts are open to humbly walking in His truth and love, we give our Father joy and we will prosper in health! **3 John; 1 John 4:19-21**

Friday, January 18th: Following God is never an easy ride. In fact, ironic as it may seem, often the more we do what God wants for our lives, the harder our lives might be. We may be picked on. We may not get everything we pray for. We might find ourselves doing things that we never thought we'd do, such as inviting a neighbor or co-worker to church , advocating for the individual walking through injustices for a friend trying to attain much needed benefits, or even giving money we were hoping to spend at the mall to a missions project. But the words of the psalmist today (**Psalm 62:5-8**) are meant to give us hope when we are in these unexpected and difficult spaces of life. God can be trusted. God longs to hear our thoughts. God's word and spending time with faith-filled friends can be refuge for us during our most desperate moments. We can find strength for each new challenge in our lives by simply calling upon the Lord.

Saturday, January 19th: Psalm 126:5 tells us that those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. This brings to my mind the prayers I lift in tears to my gracious and tender Father for a loved one who is not walking in His ways. Although I agonize in tears over this precious soul, I know that my God is faithful and does not tarry. I've seen Him move mountains in the lives of others He has put on my heart, and I believe I will see Him do it again in His perfect timing. And that will be cause for joyful shouting in celebration of His harvest. Never grow weary or give in to discouragement over prayers that may seem unanswered. We know that when we pray according to His will, He hears and will act according to His nature, which is good and just. He uses our tears to soften the seeds of redemption and restoration being planted in prayer. **Psa. 126:5; Gal. 6:9**

Sunday, January 20th: What did you get for Christmas this year that you are still treasuring? When many of us got that new iPad or perfect outfit from our favorite store, we were so happy! On that day, it seemed that nothing could have spoiled our happiness - not even our annoying younger brother or sister. But I can imagine by the time next Christmas rolls around, most of us will have trouble even naming the gifts we received the year before. Why is this? Paul reminds us in this passage that the stuff that fills our lives - whether it is a possession or a relationship in our lives that we treasure above all others - will not be with us forever. Such a thought can be depressing, of course, but as Christians we are also filled with hope that what we see right now is not all there is. Our job is to spend our lives getting to know the One who will never pass away - Jesus, our Lord! **1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

Monday, January 21st: We all can relate to being offended or mistreated. It hurts, and our natural response is to retaliate – to either defend or protect ourselves. But Paul has some radical advice on how we *should* respond; he tells us to bless those who persecute us! The word here for persecute is *diōkō*, and it essentially means to pursue in a hostile manner or in any way harass or trouble. This covers a lot of offenses, and we can feel quite justified in, at the very least, holding a grudge or pointing out to everyone the injustice we've suffered. But when we choose to bless the offender, we open the door to possibly winning a soul, and we can also perhaps our righteous response demonstrate the error in the way we have been maligned by. In any case, we will have walked in a manner worthy of our calling – to reflect the image of Jesus. **Rom. 12:14; Matt. 5:39; Col. 1:10**

Tuesday, January 22nd: As youth, when we think about our lives, we believe we have all the time in the world. There is no hurry. Folks tell us to slow down and enjoy life, because we have the rest of our lives ahead of us, right? But as we grow up, we soon realize that time is one of our most precious gifts, and it is, in fact, a limited resource. Jesus truly understood the idea of his time on earth being a gift. There was not a moment to waste, an opportunity to pass up, or a situation to be forgotten. Jesus lived his life on a mission, and when his time came, he couldn't help but share God's love with everyone around him. As we follow in Jesus' footsteps, we too are asked to make each moment of our lives count. It doesn't mean that we don't ever kick back now and then, but that we are ready, when our time comes, to speak up and do something in the name of our faith in Christ. **Mark 1:14-15**

Wednesday, January 23rd: I learned a new word today. The word is *perspicacious*, and it means having a ready insight into and understanding of things. It's from the Latin word *perspicere*, which means to look through or see clearly. This is what I want! I want to see clearly into God's Word in order to gain insight and understanding. Then I want to have the resolve to act on it and not just revel in my depth of understanding. Knowledge puffs up, but wisdom and understanding lead to blessing and fulfillment. Lord, help us to see clearly, understand deeply, and obey faithfully and expectantly. Let us be perspicacious! **James 1:22-23; Prov. 3:13, 4:5**

Thursday, January 24th: Often, when we think about what types of careers we may want to pursue, the first question asked is: "How much does it pay?" Our parents, our teachers, and sometimes even our friends encourage us to pick jobs with the highest wages. But the psalmist encourages us today that money is not everything when it comes to following God. Sometimes God may call us to do things that have no pay, and our calling to do them remains the same, trusting that as we believe in God, our needs will be met. A friend of mine told her father she wanted to take a job at an organization that serves homeless women. His response was "Don't you want to be a lawyer?" He kept repeating this question over and over again. There is nothing wrong with being a lawyer if God calls you to it, but in whatever career or job we find ourselves, our first goal should always be to serve God. – Pray God, lead me in your paths for my life. Open my eyes as I follow you to see the world as you see it, so that I may use my talents in service for you. , In Jesus name Amen! **Psalm 62:9-12**

Friday, January 25th: What are some of your favorite things to do? Do you like to draw, play sports, take care of your friends, or travel to different countries? Often, when we think of following Jesus, we have images in our heads of being sent away to become missionaries in the depths of Africa, preaching even though speaking in front of others or traveling is just "not our thing." But Jesus reminds us, as we learn through today's story about Simon and Andrew, that we are called exactly as God created us. Simon and Andrew liked to fish. It was their job. Jesus told them that, as they followed him, they'd still fish, but it would look a little bit different. Consider offering up to God some of your talents today, even if you don't think they are important or useful at all. I bet, as you do, you'll be surprised soon about how God wants to use you for great things just as you are! **Mark 1:16-18**

Saturday, January 26th: We're told in Romans 12 to abhor evil and cling to good. Sounds pretty easy when it's put in such strong language – of course we hate evil! But if we truly hate, detest, and are reviled by *anything* that may be detrimental to our minds we will be diligent to avoid it at all costs. You would probably be cautious about ordering a salad made with Romaine lettuce because of the threat of E Coli. The risk might be no greater than a slight infection or severe diarrhea, but it may also weaken your system and has the potential in some to lead to death! Our mental "immune system" is every bit as critical to our wellbeing as our physical health. What we expose ourselves to through what we view, read, or constantly think about has the same potential to contaminate our mental health. Is just that one indulgent program worth the risk? What we mentally ingest will eventually "come out"

one way or another, and just like any infection, it can begin to multiply, to attack other healthy areas, and could lead to the death of your heart, your mind, and your conscience. Lord, help us to sharpen our senses to anything that would pollute our minds so we will recognize and utterly detest any and all forms of evil. **Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5**

Sunday, January 27th: The sign outside the door says, “Please remove your shoes, you are about to step onto hallowed ground.” The room is dimly lit by candles. There is soft chanting rhythmic music playing in the background. There are no chairs, only large stuffed pillows covering a good portion of the floor. Every space of the walls is filled with newsprint and the newsprint is filled with bright colored writings and pictures. It feels incredibly peaceful, and in fact, there is a deep sense of being on hallowed ground.

This prayer room was created by an amazing group of young people after a significant tragedy happened in their lives. As a response to their growing sense of unpredictability in the world, they created a space of peace. A safe space where they could go and pray for themselves, for others, or for the world. A space where they felt the loving arms of God embrace them. There may be no greater way to prepare for the coming of the Christ Child than to create spaces for ourselves and others to feel God’s peace and love. What space are you creating? **Micah 5:4-5a**

Monday, January 28th: I love being surprised by God with the secondary messages I sometimes find hidden in familiar stories. We all know the lessons to be learned from the story of Jonah. He not only disobeyed God, but he ran the completely opposite direction! God got his attention in the belly of a whale and fulfilled His purpose of turning wicked Nineveh to repentance while showing Jonah the depth of His compassion and mercy. But tucked into the first chapter of the story I realized that the Ninevites were not the only ones whose eyes and hearts were opened. The sailors on the ship had cried out to their *own gods* in fear because of the great storm. When this was futile, the captain approached Jonah to petition *his god*. And when lots were cast and Jonah was identified as the source of the calamity, they came to understand the greatness of Jonah's God! They even called out to Him and earnestly prayed they would not perish on account of Jonah's sin. When they witnessed His faithfulness in calming the storm, they sacrificed to Him and made vows. God used Jonah's disobedience as the catalyst to the soldiers' salvation! Thank You, Father, that You are full of mercy and You are always working in us, through us, and sometimes in spite of our faithlessness to accomplish Your divine purposes. Help us obey. **Jonah 1:1-17; Phil. 2:12-13**

Tuesday, January 29nd: So what has God done for you lately? Picture yourself in your favorite outdoors spot — the beach, the park, the mountains — on a great day in your favorite season. Okay, the universe isn't all for you or all about you, but you have to admit it's a pretty amazing place, eh? Imagine looking inside your body — oxygen molecules being snagged by red blood cells

as they pass through your lungs, zillions of little chemical-electrical sparks that enable you to remember your dog's name and the names of the 1st ten presidents, all those things that happen without decisions, like heartbeats and breathing, that keep you alive and thinking. What an amazing, busy little universe your body is! Or think of group pictures — you, with your friends and family, you and all those people who love you and bug you and make your life awful sometimes and wonderful other times, but mostly make your life go on. Praise God for all God's works!

Psalm 111:1-3

Wednesday, January 30th: Little is known about a man named Agur except that he wrote Proverbs 30, had a very humble opinion of himself, and had a strong faith in God and His word. With this mindset, he prayed a prayer that we would all do well to adopt. He asked God to keep deception and lies far from him and to give him neither poverty nor riches. The first request reveals that he wanted to make sure his heart was not set on anything that was not solid, true, and in line with God's word. He sought integrity and a heart that was not captivated by idols or deceived by the false promises of sin. He then asked for moderation in material blessing to shield him from either the lure of prosperity, which could cause him to forget about God, or the snare of poverty that might tempt him to steal or to profane the name of God. Pray that we would truly desire to live free from the temptations of falsehood, idols, pride, and discontent with our provision. Help us to remember that He is all sufficient in every situation. **Prov. 30:7-9; Matt. 6:9-13**

Thursday, January 31st: People in Jesus' time believed that there were lots of evil, powerful, invisible spirits loose in the world, and that these demons sometimes took control of people. An ordinary, innocent person could be "possessed" without warning — pretty scary! Most people wore magic charms and said spells to keep demons away, but sometimes people still got trapped, like this poor man. Notice: He is in synagogue — his community can't cure him, but they are still caring for him. Notice: The demon is afraid of Jesus, and Jesus orders him out of the man. God's power is much greater than any evil. Notice: The same authority Jesus showed in his teaching enables him to overcome evil. He really believes God wants to rid the world of evil, and that gives him great authority. Do we believe God can use us to cure some of the evils loose in our lives and world? **Mark 1:23-28**

