

"If your prayer life begins — or begins again — at a time of intense need or sorrow, or at a time of death, you will be far from alone. This is true for many of us. Rather than worrying about whether your motives are worthy, simply be glad that you are now praying, however awkward or inexpert your prayers may initially feel."

—Stephanie Dowrick

When our feelings are strong, we might be afraid to share with anyone, including God, how we really feel. Sometimes we pray as though we need to protect God from our questions, our anger, our deep, deep sadness. But this is not the case.

God is our most capable and trusted companion and friend. In fact, we can't tell God anything God doesn't already know! These prayers are not meant to take the place of your own heartfelt words and silences, but perhaps they can get you started.

Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light around me become night,"  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.

...How weighty to me  
are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast the sum of them!  
I try to count them—they are  
more than the sand;  
I come to the end—I am  
still with you.

— verses from Psalm 139



## Prayers in Times of Sadness and Grief



Praying with a naked heart,  
perhaps with a heart  
that feels hurt or broken,  
you give yourself a perfect chance  
to experience how unconditional  
the path of love is,  
and how unstinting  
your welcome is on that path.

—Stephanie Dowrick

Dear God,

We struggle, we grow weary, we grow tired. We are exhausted, we are distressed, we despair. We give up, we fall down, we let go. We cry. We are empty, we grow calm, we are ready. We wait quietly.

A small, shy truth arrives. Arrives from without and within. Arrives and is born. Simple, steady, clear. Like a mirror, like a bell, like a flame. Like rain in summer. A precious truth arrives and is born within us. Within our emptiness.

We accept it, we observe it, we absorb it. We surrender to our bare truth. We are nourished, we are changed. We are blessed. We rise up.

For this we give thanks.

Amen.

—Michael Leunig

Lord, help me.  
My boat is so small.  
Your ocean is so immense.

—French Medieval Prayer



Peace I leave with you;  
my peace I give to you.  
I do not give to you  
as the world gives.  
Do not let your hearts be troubled,  
and do not let them be afraid.

—words of Jesus, John 14:27

Caring God,  
people tell me that the hurt will fade  
with time, but that's not how I feel  
today.

Today is bleak and lonely.

Hold out your arms of love to me,  
especially at those times when I  
feel that you're not there. Touch me  
with your care and help me to  
recognise when someone else is  
doing that on your behalf.

I need you. Now!

—Marjorie Dobsen

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so  
my soul longs for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for you,  
for the living God.  
My tears have been my food  
day and night.

Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God;  
for I shall again praise you,  
my help and my God.

—verses from Psalm 43