

Praise for other books by Rachel Jones in the Five Things to Pray series:

"These books take an old idea, tested and tried throughout the ages—a prayer list—and turn it into a thought-provoking, vision-expanding, prayer-stimulating tool. These books are small enough to fit into your pocket, but big enough to change your life. Simple, but brilliant."

Dr Sinclair B. Ferguson, Ligonier teaching fellow and Professor of Systematic Theology, Westminster Theological Seminary

"We watch the news, read articles, and hear stories about difficulties in our world. The needs are so massive, the stories so heartbreaking, that often we don't even know how to pray. Rachel Jones's excellent book, *5 Things to Pray for Your World*, offers a needed guide to seek God's help by praying God's word. We may feel powerless, but we have the ear of an all-powerful God. May we faithfully cry out to him for the world around us."

Melissa Kruger, author, *The Envy of Eve and Walking with God in the Season of Motherhood*

"Praying God's word is my number one tip to help people invigorate their prayer life. So read these books and invigorate your prayers."

Tim Chester, Pastor of Grace Church, Boroughbridge, faculty member of Crosslands Training, and author of *You Can Pray*



**IN A GLOBAL
CRISIS**

RACHEL JONES

SERIES EDITOR: CARL LAFERTON

the goodbook
COMPANY

5 things to pray in a global crisis
Prayers that change things in times of trouble
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INTRODUCTION

We are living in literally extraordinary times—times that will permanently shape us, our families and our nations. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that, even in the 21st-century Western world, life is fragile, wealth is fleeting and plans are easily disrupted.

In other words, we are living in the same world that James wrote about in his letter to our first-century spiritual ancestors (read James 4 v 14; 1 v 10; 4 v 13, 15). And what does James urge God's people to do when crises come? "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray" (5 v 13). Why? Because—and here is a verse to cling to in times of trouble:

"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." (James 5 v 16)

James is telling us that when righteous people pray righteous prayers, things happen. Things change. The prayers of God's people are *powerful*. They are not powerful because we are powerful, or because the words we say are somehow magic, but because the Person we pray to is infinitely, unimaginably powerful. And our prayers are *effective*—not because we are special, or because there is a special formula to use,

but because the God we pray to delights to answer our prayers and change the world because of them.

So what is the secret of effective prayer during the coronavirus crisis? How can you pray prayers that really change things? James suggests two questions that we need to ask ourselves.

First, are you righteous? A righteous person is someone who is in right relationship with God—someone who, through faith in Jesus, has been forgiven and accepted as a child of God. Are you someone who, as you pray, is praying not just to your Maker, not just to your Ruler, but to your heavenly Father, who has completely forgiven you through Jesus?

Second, do your prayers reflect that relationship? If we know God is our Maker, our Ruler and our Father, we will want to pray prayers that please him, that reflect his desires, and that line up with his priorities for our lives and for the world. The kind of prayer that truly changes things is the prayer offered by a child of God that reflects God's heart.

That's why, when God's children pray in the Bible, we so often find them using the word of God to guide their prayers. So when Jonah prayed in the belly of a fish to thank God for rescuing him (Jonah 2 v 1-9), he used the words of several psalms strung together. When the first Christians gathered in Jerusalem to pray, they used the themes of Psalm 2 to guide their praise and their requests (Acts 4 v 24-30). And when Paul prayed that his friends would grow in love (Philippians 1 v 9), he was asking the Father to work in them the same thing the Lord Jesus prayed for us (John 17 v 25-26), and which the Holy Spirit is

doing for all believers (Romans 5 v 5). They all used God's words to guide their words to God.

Many of us have been prompted to pray more by the crisis we are living through. But equally, many of us are unsure precisely *how* to pray and what to ask. How can you pray prayers that are powerful and effective—that change things? First, by being a child of God. Second, by praying Bible prayers, which use God's words, to make sure that your prayers are pleasing to him and share his priorities.

That's what this little book is here to help you with. It will guide you on how to pray about 21 different aspects of life during this pandemic—how to pray well for yourself, your loved ones and your church... for the response in your nation and across the world... and for God's kingdom. Not all the prayers will be relevant to your particular personal situation all the time—but where that is the case, you can use them to pray for others who are facing the situation being addressed.

Each prayer suggestion is based on a passage of the Bible, so you can be certain that they are prayers that God wants you to pray at this time.

There are five different things to pray for each of the 21 areas. So you can use this book in a variety of ways.

- *You can pray a set of "five things" each day, over the course of three weeks, and then start again.*
- *You can take one of the prayer themes and pray a part of it every day from Monday to Friday.*

- *Or you can dip in and out of it as and when you want and need to pray about a particular aspect of this crisis.*
- *There's also a space on each page for you to write in the names of specific situations, concerns or people that you intend to remember in prayer.*

This is by no means an exhaustive guide. But you can be confident as you use it that you are praying prayers that God wants you to pray. And God promises that “the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective”. That’s a promise that is worth grasping hold of confidently. As we pray trusting this promise, it will change how we pray and what we expect to come from our prayers.

When righteous people pray righteous prayers, things happen. Things change. God is powerful; and so your prayers are too.

Carl Laferton

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PRAYING FOR...

PEACE WHEN
I AM ANXIOUS

PSALM 23

PRAYER POINTS:

Father in heaven, help me to trust that you are...

1 MY GOOD SHEPHERD

*"The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing"
(v 1).*

There are lots of reasons to feel afraid and vulnerable right now. But praise God that you are a sheep with a good shepherd. He knows you, and loves you, and is committed to caring for you. Thank him for the good things he's given you—the "green pastures" and "quiet waters", which show his kindness (v 2). Thank the Lord Jesus for being a shepherd who laid down his life to provide all that is needed for the salvation of his sheep.

2 GUIDING ME

*"He refreshes my soul. He guides me along
the right paths for his name's sake" (v 3).*

Perhaps you are worried about a decision or are unsure how to help someone you love—ask God to guide you. Then ask him to use this time to make you ever more prayerful. Pray that as you spend time with him in his word each day, he would refresh your soul.

3 LEADING ME THROUGH

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (v 4).

Anxiety feels like a valley that we see no way out of—but our shepherd has promised to lead us through to the other side. Ask God to calm your fears and bless you with a real sense of his presence. Then pray the same for any people who you're worried about.

4 WITH ME TOMORROW

"Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life..." (v 6).

Jesus' words are apt for this crisis: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6 v 34). Ask for his help to take things one day at a time, knowing that whatever you face when you wake up tomorrow—and on every day that follows—God's goodness and love are assured and his grace is sufficient.

5 MY SHEPHERD ETERNALLY

"... and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (v 6).

Thank God that because you are one of Jesus' sheep, you will spend eternity dwelling with him, in perfect security and peace. Pray that knowing this would help you not to fear sickness or death, but instead to live with growing joy and confidence.



PRAYING FOR...

COMFORT
WHEN I AM
LONELY

PSALM 139

PRAYER POINTS:

Father, when I am lonely, help me to remember...

1 YOU KNOW ME

"You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise" (v 1-2).

Loneliness is so hard to endure. But praise God that, even when we feel at our most alone and unknown, he sees us and understands us perfectly. It may be that no one else can share in what we're doing or see how we're feeling, but God is "familiar with all [our] ways" (v 3). So talk to him now—out loud if that helps—about whatever is on your heart.

2 YOUR SPIRIT IS WITH ME

"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" (v 7).

God isn't just "out there" looking down on us—he dwells *within us* by his Spirit. Thank him for this truth, and ask him to graciously give you an increasing awareness of his Spirit's presence. Pray that in this season of isolation you'll walk closely with him day by day.

3 YOUR HOPE

"Even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you" (v 12).

Loneliness can make us feel very low. Ask God to help you to hold on to the gospel hope—that Jesus, the light of the world, has come and is coming again soon.

4 YOUR SOVEREIGNTY

"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (v 16).

One of the hardest things is not knowing how long this is going to last, or when we'll be able to see our loved ones again. But praise God: he does know! These are not wasted days but ones ordained by him for our good. Pray for a growing sense of awe at his sovereignty.

5 YOUR CALL TO LOVE OTHERS

"See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (v 24).

In a situation like this it is so easy to become inward-looking or to give in to self-pity. Humbly ask God to show you whether there are any ways in which you might be responding to your circumstances sinfully. Pray that in each day of isolation you will still be looking to love and serve others—perhaps by praying for them or by calling to encourage them. Start by praying for the needs of some people you know now.