

"Some struggles last a long time, and some suffering may continue for the whole of a person's earthly life. Sat next to our Bible, this book will guarantee that when we turn to pray for those in suffering, we are sure to find fresh and important things to pray for."

Steve Midgley, Executive Director, Biblical Counselling UK

"This practical guide is such a needed tool in your prayer belt as you look to comfort, encourage and walk alongside a hurting brother or sister in Christ. Although you may not have answers to give them, these prayers will equip you with the words and wisdom to lay down the sorrow of a fellow sufferer at the throne of God's grace. You'll likely find your own heart encouraged along the way."

Sarah Walton, Author, *Hope When It Hurts*

"I love this series, and I love this volume. Helen has done us a great favour by showing how we can pray with biblical depth, hopefulness and clarity for suffering saints. So many of my prayers for friends are simplistic and lack the thoughtfulness that Helen provides. Helen has shown me afresh how Christ-like confidence enables me to pray more meaningfully and with greater expectation. This book is a precious help."

Adrian Reynolds, Head of National Ministries, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, UK

"Helen Thorne's heartfelt prayers are considered and sensitive. Already, I have known their powerful effectiveness as I have prayed through them, for those I know who are suffering from grief, anxiety and depression. My only negative is that this little book wasn't written sooner. May it be used not only to touch lives but to bring healing and wholeness."

Pauline Kennedy, Women's Ministry Development Officer for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland

"Helen has brilliantly assembled a range of clear, biblical and pastoral prayers that we can pray for others—and for ourselves—in the midst of suffering. These prayers are arranged thematically and supply us with rich content as we seek God for our friends. They are neither triumphalistic nor wallowing in sadness but grounded in all that Scripture says about suffering and discipleship. I highly recommend this book for your own devotional life and as a pastoral resource."

Andy Mason, Vicar and Elder, St John's Church, Chelsea

"Caring for a suffering friend can paralyze us. We don't want to be like Job's friends and we don't want to come off as uncaring. We might not always know what to say, but we can pray. And in this short book, Helen Thorne provides practical, biblical, and honest prayers for us to use as we pray for and minister to our suffering friends."

Courtney Reissig, Author, *Teach Me to Feel*

"Abounding in the truth, hope and encouragement of Scripture, this engaging book is a valuable companion as you pray for suffering friends. Whether you're a seasoned prayer warrior or new to bringing heartbreaking situations to the Lord, you will find deep inspiration and wisdom to fuel your prayers. I will be praying these things for my friends and would be delighted to know that they were doing the same for me."

Pauline Williams, Congregation member,
Roxeth Community Church, Harrow

"As someone who has had her fair share of suffering through illness, disability and family heartache, I want to say how wonderful it is to have this accessible guide which offers gospel truths and suggestions to love our brothers and sisters better!"

Nicola Thomas, Congregation member, Dundonald
Church, Raynes Park



**FOR A SUFFERING
FRIEND**

HELEN THORNE

5 things to pray for a suffering friend

Prayers that change things for friends or family who are walking through trials

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a world full of suffering. Ever since our rebellion in Genesis 3, our hearts, our relationships, the very earth on which we tread has been broken. And that means life is painful. From the horrors of abuse to the struggles of anxiety, from the depths of grief to the grinding stresses and strains of work and home—we all know what it is to suffer. We all have friends who suffer too. We often wonder how to help; sometimes the only thing and the best thing we can do is to pray.

But how do we pray for them well?

In this short book, we explore a variety of ways to pray for a friend who is finding life hard.

As you read, it is worth bearing some things in mind:

- *Not every prayer will apply to every person—everyone's struggles are unique. Some will have short-term challenges, others will have chronic ones; some will have lots of support, others very little; some will be Christians, others won't be—*

and so we will want to pray differently for different friends.

- *Not every section in this book is comprehensive; there are many more ways we might pray than are listed here.*
- *Specific prayers are not linked to specific struggles—there are no distinct prayers for those with depression or those facing relational strife. The prayer points given can be applied to many different situations.*
- *The book is weighted towards (though not exclusively for) praying for believing friends whose struggles fall in the “commonly experienced” kind of category.*

But within these pages there are truths to hold on to and words to speak out to the Lord who is listening and loving both us and those we care about.

More than that, there is encouragement to keep praying without ceasing, confident that even when we cannot see hope or change or envision how things might possibly improve, we have a God whose kindness, grace, sovereignty and plans are deeper and more beautiful than we can ever begin to grasp.

As you begin, think widely about who you can pray for—think creatively about which prayers to pray for which person—and enjoy speaking to your Father who will, without doubt, answer in the ways he knows to be best.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide will help you to pray for your friend in 21 different areas of focus. There are five different things to pray for in each of the 21 areas, so you can use this book in a variety of ways.

- ▶ *You can pray through 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 for the week and pray one point every day from Monday to Friday.*
- ▶ *Or you can dip in and out of it, as and when you want and need to pray for a particular area your friend is struggling with.*
- ▶ *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.*

Each prayer suggestion is based on a passage of the Bible, so you can be confident as you use this guide that you are praying great prayers—prayers that God wants you to pray, because they’re based on his word.



PRAYING THAT YOUR FRIEND WILL...

EXPRESS
THEIR PAIN
TO GOD

PSALM 3

PRAYER POINTS:

Turning to the Lord in hard times is a privilege. And he loves to hear your voice. Pray that your friend will be able to...

1 CALL OUT TO GOD

"LORD, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!" (v 1)

The Bible is full of lament—prayers that pour out the pain of hard times to the King of all ages. Each begin with addressing God, calling out to the one who knows and loves them. Pray that your friend will begin to speak to their Father, their King, their Saviour, their Friend.

2 TELL GOD ABOUT THEIR PAIN

"Many are saying of me, 'God will not deliver him.'" (v 2)

God knows what is going on—we do not talk to him to inform him—but lament includes pouring out our hearts. As we do so it builds our relationship with him. Pray that your friend will feel able to share their honest emotions with God and know that he listens.

3 REMEMBER GOD'S NATURE

*"But you, LORD, are a shield around me."
(v 3-6)*

Sometimes lament feels futile, we wonder if God hears our words or if he cares. But the Bible's many psalms of lament show us that God loves for us to call out to him in this way. He is present with us and he loves to protect. Pray that your friend will know it is safe to turn to the Lord.

4 ASK GOD FOR HELP

"Arise, LORD! Deliver me, my God!" (v 7)

Another integral part of lament is asking God for what we need. He does not always say "yes" to our requests—he answers in accordance with his will not ours—but he encourages us to ask and to ask with hearts full of trust. Pray that your friend will not forget to bring their needs before their Father today.

5 HAVE CONFIDENCE IN GOD

"From the Lord comes deliverance." (v 8)

God never promises quick relief, but he does promise to hold us fast. Lament is not just pouring out our hearts in the here and now but it spurs us to look towards a better future, whether that is in this world or the world to come. Pray that your friend will know God will be with them for the rest of their lives and lament with eyes that look forward to a time when they will suffer no more.



PRAYING THAT YOUR FRIEND WILL...

EXPRESS
THEIR PAIN
TO OTHERS

2 TIMOTHY 4:9-18

PRAYER POINTS:

We are designed to be interdependent with—not independent of—those around us. Pray that your friend will find the words to...

1 EXPRESS THEIR STRUGGLES

“Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas ... has deserted me.” (v 9-10)

It can be easy to assume that we should stay quiet when life is hard—that we should just press on. Nothing could be further from the truth. The apostle Paul shows us that it’s ok to express the pain we feel. When he was hurting, he said so. Pray that your friend will too.

2 EXPRESS THEIR NEEDS

“When you come, bring the cloak ... and my scrolls, especially the parchments.” (v 13)

When Paul was struggling in prison, he needed warmth and spiritual edification. So, he asked for what he needed. Pray that your friend will know there is no shame in asking for help from others. Pray that their friends will listen.

3 EXPRESS WARNINGS

"Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm ... You too should be on your guard against him." (v 14-15)

Sometimes, when life hurts it is because an individual or group is acting in ungodly ways. God is a God of justice—he does not ask us to stay silent in the face of sin. Pray that your friend will have the courage to alert people to the danger others pose—and to do so wisely, avoiding the pitfall of gossip.

4 AVOID BITTERNESS

"At my first defence ... everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them." (v 16)

It is good to express need in hardship; it is loving to warn of danger, but believers aim to do those things without seeking revenge. In the power of Christ, we can want those who hurt us to be restored rather than destroyed. Pray that your friend will shun bitterness.

5 EXPRESS HURT WITH HOPE

"But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength ... And I was delivered from the lion's mouth." (v 17)

Paul felt abandoned, hurt and cold. Yet he was able to look back and see how God had worked in his life in the past. God was faithful then—he will be in the future too. Pray that your friend will speak out God's track record of care.



PRAYING THAT YOUR FRIEND WILL...

TURN TO THE
SUFFERING
SERVANT

MARK 14:43-52

PRAYER POINTS:

When suffering hits, we sometimes assume God does not understand. We forget that Jesus has suffered immeasurably more than us. Pray that your friend will take comfort from knowing that Christ was...

1 OPPOSED

"A crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders..." (v 43)

Jesus knows what it is to be hated. He is so good, so pure, so holy, and yet despised. When we are opposed, he gets it. Pray that your friend will speak boldly of their experience of opposition to the one who was hunted down with weapons.

2 BETRAYED

"Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: 'The one I kiss is the man.'" (v 44)

Being reviled by strangers is one thing, being wounded by a friend brings a new depth of pain. Pray that your friend will lament their experience alongside the one who knows that agony personally.

3 ACCUSED

*"The men seized Jesus and arrested him."
(v 46)*

Jesus had committed no sin. He suffered though he was completely innocent. We are not sinless, but we do still suffer in ways we do not deserve. Pray that your friend will find comfort in the one who knows what it is to be falsely accused.

4 MISUNDERSTOOD

*"'Am I leading a rebellion,' said Jesus, 'that you have come out with swords and clubs?'"
(v 48)*

Jesus' mission was to save. His gospel is good news full of hope. Yet he was seen as a troublemaker, someone who would lead others astray. Pray that your friend will see the good news of Jesus, not misunderstand him. Pray that they would find strength in knowing he was misunderstood too.

5 DESERTED

*"Then everyone deserted him and fled."
(v 50)*

There can be a deep loneliness in suffering—an isolation that piles on the pain. Pray that your friend will see that Jesus understands their sense of aloneness. But more than that, that by his abandonment, he was able to bring the salvation that means they never need to be alone. Pray that they will know his presence with them in the pain.

PRAYER POINTS:

Pray that your friend will keep trusting in...

1 HIS RELATIONSHIP

"But I trust in you, LORD; I say, 'You are my God.'" (v 14)

God is not a distant God in a casual relationship with us. He is a covenant God—one who has promised to be our heavenly Father. Pray that your friend will know this is a solid and dependable relationship and will pursue and deepen that connection with him. Or, if they are not yet Christians, pray that they will come to know God in this way.

2 HIS TIMING

"My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me." (v 15)

When the people near us are hurting, our instinct is to want things to be better soon. But God's timing is not our timing and he is holding all things together. Pray that your friend will know that his plans and purposes—sometimes deeply mysterious—often mean slow change rather than fast.