Prayers for a Widow’s Heart

Honest Conversations with God

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IF YOU ARE A WIDOW, this book was written with you in mind. I too am a widow, which means you and I probably think alike as we sort through our daily concerns.

Many of us have a deep, overwhelming longing to have our husbands back. Never mind that we know it can’t actually happen; it doesn’t stop us from wanting it. True, life will never be the same without our mates—but if you’re willing to trust your worry and pain to God and His good plans for you, life can indeed become good again. Different, certainly, but good.

Maybe you’re angry at God for letting your husband die and have no desire to adjust to widowhood. It might feel better pondering the what-if’s and if-only’s of your past. If so, the prayers that follow can help. It isn’t because of what I’ve written but because of the One to whom the prayers are addressed. Our God knows exactly how you’re feeling. And He has the ability to make you whole again.

Maybe your thoughts are ambivalent toward Him. You’re not sure you want to engage with Him at all. Please know that, no matter what you’re feeling, His love for you is fervent and unshakeable. Whether you sense it or not, God is tenderly watching over you, gently tugging you toward a future He has custom designed just for you. And He longs to talk to you about it.
And if you ever find yourself in a confusing place, unable to decide where to go next, your best move will always be toward God. He is never without an ample supply of encouragement and hope, or a fresh way to tackle your every problem. God has shown that to me—which is why I know He’ll come through for you.

You might want to use these short, topical prayers to sort through your distress. If you do, you’ll find God will gradually bring order to your jumbled thoughts. Call out to Him any time, day or night, knowing He is ever eager for one-on-one time with you.

Margaret

“This is what the Lord says . . .

‘Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.’”

Jeremiah 33:2–3
DEAR FATHER,

THE MORE I GET TO KNOW YOU, the more I see you are an all-or-nothing God. Your followers—and I’m one of them—are either all-in or not in at all. Even those who seem to have one foot in heaven and one in the world are really in one or the other. And you know who’s who.

That’s because you can look inside people and see their true motives and desires. You know what your children are thinking, and you never experience an error in judgment. Such accuracy is both reassuring and unsettling.

When you look into my heart, what do you see? I hope it’s that my motives and desires line up with your directives, Lord. My problem isn’t in knowing what to do as much as knowing how to do it while I stumble through widowhood. How can I be all-in with you and your will for me, when I’m really wishing I was living a different life? That sounds like I’m not in at all.

Right now I’m struggling to get used to my husband’s absence. Your scriptural instruction is to be thankful in all circumstances and to “rejoice always.” If I was all-in with you, wouldn’t I feel thankful and joyful? How can I be thankful for grief and joyful about widowhood?
“The Lord searches every heart
and understands every desire and every thought.
If you seek him, he will be found by you.”
1 Chronicles 28:9

Though sometimes it’s disturbing to realize you look directly into my heart, I also take comfort in it. I hope you’ve seen there how much I love you and how badly I want to please you. I do want to be thankful and rejoice, as you say. But some days I’m just not up to it.

I know you want me to be an all-in daughter. But losing my husband was a tremendous knockdown, and I’m having trouble getting back on my feet. I want you to know, though, that I’m listening for your voice. I may not be consistently thanking you and rejoicing, but I like to think that one day in the not-too-distant future, you’ll show me how—right in the middle of my widowhood.

I love you, Father, and I know you are loving me back, even during this time that I struggle to be all-in. And when I think of that, I’m suddenly thankful . . . maybe even to the point of rejoicing? Not about widowhood, but about your loving, heart-to-heart presence during these painful days. I appreciate you more than I’m able to show you.

And maybe, in spite of everything, that means I’m really all-in with you.

In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.
The purpose of my instruction is that all believers would be filled with love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and genuine faith.

1 Timothy 1:5 (NLT)
HUNGER PAINS

The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

Psalm 34:10

DEAR FATHER,

THESE DAYS I’M EXPERIENCING an intense hunger to talk to my husband. No matter what was going on in our lives as individuals, we always found time to talk things over. I miss that terribly.

If I was bothered by something a friend said, I knew I could take it to my husband. Even if he didn’t understand why it was a big deal to me, he offered me comfort anyway. And if something went wrong for him, he would give me a blow-by-blow, and I could encourage him.

But what about now, Father? I know you’re always with me, and you are even more interested in the details of my life than my husband was. That still hasn’t stopped me from missing his Input. And though I’m happy he is where he is, I feel a twinge of sadness that he no longer needs me as a listening ear.

As I hunger for him, I think of how you referred to yourself as “the bread of life.” Surely that’s more than sandwich bread and has to do with other types of hunger... maybe even soul-hunger. Could it be my husband-hunger is really that? Because if it is, longing for him will never fill me. It would be like trying to satisfy a sweet tooth with potato chips.
[The Lord] satisfies the thirsty 
and fills the hungry with good things.

Psalm 107:9

Father, please fill me up—even if I don’t exactly know with what. Those conversations with my husband filled me with a special satisfaction. He was willing to listen and respond, because he loved me.

Now that I think about it, though, you are willing to listen and respond out of love too. Your Word says your ears are always open to my cries. Your advice is always flawless, and you have an answer to every problem. I don’t know why I never thought of you that way before.

Maybe, even as I miss the camaraderie of my husband, I can be satisfied by connecting with you in much the same way. Though I miss hearing his voice, maybe I can learn to hear yours. Your words will come through the pages of the Bible and also directly into my heart, conscience, and will, by your Spirit.

I may need time to practice conversing with you. I’m beginning to understand that my husband-hunger, which is so natural for a widow, can no longer to satisfied. But my soul-hunger, a supernatural thing, can be fully satisfied through you.

Let’s talk more and more, Father. As I feed on conversation with you, I’m pretty sure my hunger pains will subside.

In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.
Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life.
Whoever comes to me will never go hungry.”

John 6:35
DEAR FATHER,

WHEN I FIRST BECAME a widow, I doubted I would survive. The longing to be with my husband was so strong, I hoped I would die, too. There was something appealing about that idea, since it would bring us together again.

But common sense finally surfaced, telling me how selfish that was. It would mean throwing the rest of our family into a second wave of grief that would threaten to overwhelm them. And once I thought of it that way, I knew I’d have to press forward as a widow. So here I am, Father, floundering. I want to show my family that your grace is sufficient, but I’m not always doing that very well.

Moving through sorrow is hard work. I come to the end of some days so exhausted I can hardly get ready for bed. I don’t feel like I’ve accomplished anything all day long . . . nothing except a day’s worth of grieving, which is unpleasant, tiring work.

I feel careworn and depleted much of the time, Lord, and need your sustenance more and more. Originally, I thought the situation would get better and better as time passed, with the burdens becoming less and less. Why hasn’t that happened?
Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you;  
he will never let the righteous be shaken.  
Psalm 55:22

My load of grief seems to be getting heavier. But maybe that’s because, without realizing it, I’m not letting you help me carry it. There’s a Bible verse that invites me to “cast” my cares on you. It’s an attention-grabbing word picture, Father. I see someone fly-fishing, throwing a line as far away as possible—which might be exactly what you want me to do with my widow-burdens.

I’m trying to deal with the reality I’ve been given—in one sense, it was given by you. I’m not blaming you, Father, just acknowledging your sovereignty. You could have let my husband live longer than he did, but you didn’t. Coming to this realization has done something positive for me. It helps me understand one reason you’re offering to take over the problems that come with widowhood. Because you allowed it, you’ll escort me through it.

Please help me to cast and re-cast my worries toward you, right when they come to mind, acknowledging your power over my situation. As I practice, I’m fairly sure my casting skills will improve. And I have confidence that eventually you’ll bring me to a brand-new version of widowhood, one with far less tension and much more joy.

In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13
RACING TOWARD CONTENTMENT

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

Hebrews 12:1–2

DEAR FATHER,

SOMETIMES I WISH I could walk around with blinders on, like a country horse in city traffic, eyes protected from all the disturbing distractions. It might be a good idea if the worries of widowhood were blocked from my view. I would stress less and could concentrate more on moving straight ahead. Knowing me, though, I’d probably crane my neck to look side-to-side anyway.

My mood slips into the what-if’s of widowhood the minute I look at the worrisome dilemmas around me. And I do that all too easily. Why does worry come so naturally while contentment is usually elusive?

In your Word, Father, you entrusted your biggest assignments to people who were good at focusing on their end goals—the goals you set for them. They were content to fight battles, rule nations, prophesy bad news, and endure persecution, all while remaining intent on the assignments you gave them. If they could do that, surely I can do widowhood.
I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation. . . . I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:12–13

If I want to follow you faithfully, I need to make up my mind to let nothing interfere with that. I really want to do what you want me to do—no matter how hard it is.

A great example of this was Jesus, even though his goal was the agony of the cross. He didn’t need blinders to keep Him focused but was all-in from the very beginning. Even at the tender age of twelve, when He told His parents He was about His “Father’s business,” Jesus was already stalwart in His march toward the ministry you’d given Him.

What would it take for me to be like that, Father? The tasks you’ve assigned me aren’t nearly as tough as His, and you’ve even offered to help me accomplish them. But I know success means doing away with the what-if’s and if-only’s. You’ll want me to stop wishing I could go back to the days when I still had my husband. And I’ll need to purposefully count blessings rather than losses, tackling each widow-dilemma with perseverance.

Help me to think of widowhood not as a sad end but as the start of something new, something different you’re doing, in and around me. Please show me how to be content right in the middle of it, without succumbing to the disturbing distractions.

In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.
One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind
and reaching forward to those things which are ahead . . .

Philippians 3:13 (NKJV)