

*When It Feels  
Impossible to Pray*

PRAYERS FOR THE GRIEVING

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## CONTENTS

*Openings to Prayer*

5

*Grieving Is Godly*

9

*Questions Can Be Prayers*

15

*You Can Ask for Hope*

29

*Classic Words of Prayer*

*—But Only When You're Ready*

45

INDEX

64

# *Openings to Prayer*



**Y**OU DON'T HAVE TO PRAY, TO PRAY.  
In other words, you don't have to do the things one normally associates with prayer to actually be connecting with God in a way that's prayer-like.

Just sit still if you like. Grieving people often find themselves doing a lot of sitting still. Stunned. That's perfectly fine. Just sit. Allow yourself a time to be quiet, to answer to no one, to accomplish nothing at all. Quietness in itself is prayer for many people.

Or if you're so inclined, do the opposite: get up and move. For some, sitting still at a time like this is precisely *not* what they most need. Move. Go running. Go biking. Row a boat. Swim. Walk until you are exhausted. Then, be still and listen.

There are many, many ways to pray that don't include talking, or concentrating with words, or any of those traditional postures and activities that we use at other times throughout our lives when we want to connect with God and we call that connection "prayer."

There is a classic hymn by the British Moravian James Montgomery, “Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire,” and the first three stanzas go like this:

Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,  
uttered or unexpressed;  
the motion of a hidden fire  
that trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech  
that infant lips can try,  
prayer the sublimest strains that reach  
the Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,  
the Christian’s native air,  
his watchword at the gates of death:  
he enters heaven with prayer.

But there it is right there in the first two lines:  
“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, uttered or  
unexpressed.”

You don’t have to talk in order to pray.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said:

We forget that in the silence of the heart God speaks,  
and from the fullness of the heart we speak.

Only when we have heard him in the silence  
of our hearts, only when we have learned to listen  
to God in the silence of our hearts,  
only then can we say: I pray.

# *Grieving Is Godly*



**N**O ONE NEEDS AN EXCUSE TO GRIEVE, and no one is ever prepared for what grief will mean in their lives. Grieving is not something we ever train for.

But we should realize that not only is grieving without question our right and our need, but grieving is godly.

Jesus said:

“Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.”

(MATTHEW 5:4, NIV)

## ❧ JESUS GRIEVED ❧

(AND COMFORTED THE GRIEVING)

In this important account from the Gospels, Jesus both comforted the grieving, and grieved himself:

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

(JOHN 11:17-37, NIV)

*Questions  
Can Be Prayers*



W<sup>H</sup>Y?  
Why me?  
Why us?

Why was this allowed to happen?

What will happen to me now?

What is the purpose in all of this?

How am I supposed to move on?

Where will I go?

What will people think of me now?

Who am I?

Where are you, God?

Why did God do this to me?

When will I feel myself again?

When will this feeling of helplessness go away?

What's next?



❧ BAD THEOLOGY ❧  
A QUIZ

A POEM BY SCOTT CAIRNS

*And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them,  
and the glory of the Lord shone round about them:  
and they were sore afraid.*

Whenever we aver “the God is nigh,”  
do we imply that He is ever otherwise?

When, in scripture, God’s “anger” is said  
to be aroused, just how do you take that?

If—whether now or in the fullness—we  
stipulate that God is all in all, just where

or how would you position Hell? Which  
is better—to break the law and soothe

the wounded neighbor, or to keep the law  
and cause the neighbor pain? Do you mean it?

If another sins, what is that to you?

When the sinful suffer publicly, do you

find secret comfort in their grief, or will

you also weep? They are surely grieving;

are you weeping now? Assuming *sin* is *sin*,

whose do you condemn? Who is judge? Who

will feed the lambs? The sheep? Who, the goats?  
Who will sell and give? Who will be denied?

Whose image haunts the mirror? And why  
are you still here? What exactly do you hope

to become? When will you begin?

