

A close-up photograph of an elderly person's hands, with visible wrinkles and a small white ring on the ring finger, resting on a thick, old leather-bound Bible. The person is wearing a dark red, textured sweater. The background is softly blurred, showing a church interior with stained glass windows and a small, warm light source hanging from above. The entire image is framed by a thin gold border.

BIG WESLEY LIBRARY ♦ PRAYER



THE MOST *Loved* PRAYERS

*The great prayers of the Church, from the Lord's Prayer to Wesley's
Covenant Prayer, with what each line means in plain words*

WESLEY A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

1500 LOMBARD STREET · PHILADELPHIA · SINCE 1820

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SOME PRAYERS HAVE BEEN PRAYED SO MANY TIMES, BY SO MANY PEOPLE, that they have worn a path to heaven. Our grandparents prayed them. Christians in prison cells and hospital rooms and on long walks to freedom prayed them. When you pray them, you join a choir that stretches back through every generation of the Church.

This booklet gathers the best-loved of these prayers. Under each one you will find what it means in plain words, so the old language becomes your own. Learn one at a time. Say it slowly. Mean every line.

THE PRAYER JESUS TAUGHT

THE LORD'S PRAYER



When the disciples asked Jesus, "*Lord, teach us to pray,*" this is what He gave them. It is short enough for a child and deep enough for a lifetime. Christians everywhere know it by heart.

MATTHEW 6:9-13

6 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

KING JAMES VERSION

THE WORDS	WHAT THEY MEAN
Our Father which art in heaven	We come to God as children to a loving father. <i>Our</i> , not <i>my</i> — we never pray alone.
Hallowed be thy name	Let Your name be honored and treated as holy, starting with me.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done	Lord, have Your way — in the world, in my city, in my house, in me.
Give us this day our daily bread	Provide what we need for today. We trust You for tomorrow.
Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors	Forgive my wrongs, and help me forgive the people who wronged me.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil	Keep me away from what would pull me down, and protect me from harm.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory	It all belongs to You. That is why we can trust You.



Every Sunday at Big Wesley, the whole church prays these words together.

THE SHEPHERD'S PSALM

THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM



No passage in the Bible is read more often at bedsides and gravesides. David, who had been a shepherd boy, looked at God and saw a Shepherd. Every line is a promise.

PSALM 23 · A PSALM OF DAVID

23 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. ³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy

rod and thy staff they comfort me. ⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. ⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

KING JAMES VERSION

IN PLAIN WORDS

God takes care of me like a good shepherd takes care of his sheep. He leads me to rest. He puts me back together when I am worn out. Even in the darkest valley — even facing death — I am not afraid, because He is right there with me. His goodness follows me every day, and I will live with Him forever.

WHAT CHRISTIANS HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED

THE APOSTLES' CREED



A creed is not a prayer to God so much as a statement of faith before God. This one goes back to the early Church in Rome. Methodists, including the A.M.E. Zion Church, say it in worship to this day. It is the faith in a few lines.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

TWO WORDS THAT CONFUSE PEOPLE

"Quick and the dead" means *the living and the dead*. **"Holy catholic Church"** does not mean the Roman Catholic Church. *Catholic* means *universal* — the whole Church of Jesus Christ, in every place and every age, which includes us.

THE MOST LOVED PRAYERS
FROM THE METHODIST TRADITION
WESLEY'S COVENANT PRAYER

John Wesley, whose name our church carries, began a New Year's tradition in 1755: a service where Methodists would renew their promise to God. This prayer, printed in 1780, is the heart of it. It is one of the most honest prayers ever written. Do not pray it lightly.



THE COVENANT PRAYER

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

AMEN.

IN PLAIN WORDS

Lord, I belong to You. Use me however You want — in the spotlight or in the background, in good times or hard times, with plenty or with little. Whatever You decide is all right with me, because I am Yours and You are mine.

THE PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS



This prayer is named for Francis of Assisi, though it was first printed in France in 1912. It has been loved ever since, because it turns prayer outward: instead of asking God to change everyone else, it asks God to make *me* a peacemaker.



MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

AMEN.

FOR ANY MOMENT

SHORT PRAYERS TO *carry with you*



Not every prayer needs to be long. These short prayers come straight from Scripture. You can pray them on the bus, at the stove, in a waiting room, or in the middle of a hard conversation.

1

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

PSALM 51:10

David's prayer after his worst failure. Pray it when you need a fresh start.

2

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

MARK 9:24

A father with a sick son said this to Jesus. It is all right to pray with doubts. Jesus answered him.

3

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

LUKE 18:13

Jesus said the man who prayed this short prayer went home right with God.

4

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

1 CHRONICLES 4:10

Jabez asked boldly for God's blessing and protection, and God granted it.

5

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

PSALM 19:14

A prayer before you speak, preach, teach, or say something hard.

THE MOST LOVED PRAYERS

GRACE BEFORE MEALS

AT THE TABLE



A FAMILY GRACE

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed. Bless the hands that made this food, and give bread to those who have none.

AMEN.



A GRACE OF THANKS

Lord, we thank You for this food and for this time together. Make us thankful, keep us mindful of others, and use the strength this meal gives us to serve You.

AMEN.

THE OLDEST BLESSING IN THE BIBLE

THE BLESSING

God gave these words to Aaron, the first priest, to speak over the people of Israel. Pastors still pronounce them at the end of worship. Parents can speak them over their children at bedtime, with a hand on each head.

NUMBERS 6:24-26

6 The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: ²⁵The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: ²⁶The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

KING JAMES VERSION

SIT WITH IT

Which of these prayers do I want to learn by heart first?

Which line in this booklet spoke to what I am living through right now?



*“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when
thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret;
and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee
openly.”*

MATTHEW 6:6

WESLEY A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

“Big Wesley” · The Freedom Church · Founded June 6, 1820

SUNDAY SCHOOL	9:30 AM
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SUNDAY WORSHIP	11:00 AM
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