

Presented to

From

Date



Jesus Listens

Note-Taking Edition

DAILY DEVOTIONAL PRAYERS
OF PEACE, JOY, AND HOPE



SARAH YOUNG



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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*I dedicate this book to Jesus—Immanuel—who is with us continually, listening to all our prayers. The Bible assures us that Jesus is able to save forever those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for us with our Father-God (Hebrews 7:25). And when we pray, the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express (Romans 8:26).
How great and glorious is our triune God!*





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INTRODUCTION


I love Jesus' beautiful invitation to us: "*Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28 NASB). My hope is that this book, *Jesus Listens*, will encourage you to approach Him confidently and joyfully—finding peaceful rest in His Presence. It's such a blessing to know that Jesus listens to every one of our prayers! He loves us perfectly and is constantly caring for us, whether we're aware of His Presence with us or not.

All of my devotional books, including this one, are designed to help you grow closer to Jesus. This quest is my deepest longing—for you and for me. As you may know, I wrote my previous books from the perspective of Jesus speaking to you, the reader. But *Jesus Listens* is written from the vantage point of you praying to God. I hope you will not only read these prayers but make them your own—using them to guide you as you express your heartfelt longings to the Lord.

You will find prayers of peace, joy, and hope throughout this book. As I was writing, I drew on themes from *Jesus Calling: Enjoying Peace in His Presence*, *Jesus Always: Embracing Joy in His Presence*, and *Jesus Today: Experience Hope Through His Presence*. Other topics are also emphasized in the prayers—especially Jesus' boundless, unfailing Love for all who belong to Him.

Jesus Listens contains prayers for every day of the year. They are *devotional prayers*: designed to lead you into deeper, richer, more continual communion with God. These daily prayers are meant to be a starting point for your other prayers—helping you to enjoy your time with Jesus and bring all your concerns to Him.

I admit that praying doesn't come naturally to us; in fact, it is frequently



viewed as a chore. Prayer certainly does require effort, but we need to remember that communicating with the Creator and Sustainer of this vast universe is an amazing privilege! Jesus' sacrificial death for our sins opened the way for us to commune freely and fully with our Father-God. The moment Jesus died, *the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom* (Matthew 27:51). So our unrestricted access to God in prayer is a glorious, blood-bought privilege!


I'm thankful that God uses our prayers not only to change circumstances but to change *us*. We bring our prayer requests to Him, trusting that He hears and He cares. As we devote time to communicating with Jesus and enjoying His Presence, we gradually become more like Him.

I consider it a wonderful privilege and responsibility to pray for readers of my books. So I commit quite a bit of time to this pursuit each morning. I've found that no matter how I feel when I first get out of bed, I feel better and stronger after spending this precious time with Jesus. And you readers can start your day feeling encouraged because you know that I'm praying for you!

One of my favorite verses about prayer is Psalm 62:8. In this psalm King David urges us to *trust in God at all times and pour out our hearts to Him*. Jesus knows everything in our hearts, and He longs for us to trust Him enough to open up and be real with Him in our prayers. Since He understands us completely and loves us eternally, we can safely unburden ourselves to Him. He is indeed *our refuge*.

The prophet Jeremiah assures us that God listens to our prayers: "*You will call to Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart*" (Jeremiah 29:12–13 HCSB).

While Jesus lived on this earth, He listened wonderfully well to the people around Him. I'm grateful that He continues to listen—to us! Moreover, we have the miraculous help of the Holy Spirit. As we're praying, *the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches*



our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will (Romans 8:26–27). Our prayers may be inadequate and fragmented, but the Holy Spirit transforms them and makes them consistent with God's will.


I'm convinced that prayer is extremely important in all areas of our lives. Alfred Lord Tennyson famously wrote: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." The influence of our prayers goes far beyond what we can see and comprehend.

Scripture repeatedly instructs us to pray, and Jesus taught His disciples to pray what we call the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever. Amen.

Matthew 6:9–13 NKJV

I realize that unanswered prayers can be discouraging. While we're waiting for answers, we need to trust that God hears our prayers and responds to them



in ways that make perfect sense—from His infinite, all-knowing perspective. God tells us in His Word that *His ways are higher than our ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth* (Isaiah 55:9). Although we would love to understand more, it’s often impossible for us finite creatures to fathom God’s ways.


The Bible encourages us to persevere in our prayers. I’ve been praying for the salvation of some people for decades, and I plan to continue. I love the parable of the unjust judge versus the persistent widow. This parable teaches that *we should always pray and not give up*. Even though the judge didn’t care about people or justice, the persistence of the widow eventually wore him down and he granted her request (Luke 18:1–8). How much more will God, who is loving and just, answer our prayers in His perfect way and timing!

We live in stressful times, and many of us struggle with anxiety. The apostle Paul’s teaching in his letter to the Philippians is very practical and timely: “*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:6–7).

Instead of focusing on our problems when we’re feeling anxious, we can bring everything to Jesus—our struggles and confusion, our prayers and petitions, our thanksgiving and praise. After pouring out our hearts to Him, we can ask Him to fill us with His wondrous peace. To receive this glorious gift, we need to relax in Jesus’ Presence and *trust Him wholeheartedly*—instead of *relying on our own understanding* (Proverbs 3:5 NET).

Sometimes when I’m feeling stressed, I sit quietly and breathe slowly while praying, “Jesus, help me relax in Your peace.” If I continue praying this way for a few moments, I invariably relax and feel calmer.


The prayers in *Jesus Listens* emphasize trusting Jesus and living in



dependence on Him. The Bible is full of the tender directive to trust in the Lord, a crucial condition for living close to Him. The trust-emphasis in my book reflects this biblical teaching and also my personal struggle to trust God at all times—even when the world is full of uncertainties and things are not going as I’d hoped. At such times, I find it helpful and encouraging to whisper, “I trust You, Jesus; You are my Hope.”

As I’ve spent time with Jesus and studied His Word over the years, I’ve come to grasp the importance of having a thankful attitude. So the theme of thankfulness appears frequently throughout this book. First Thessalonians 5:17–18 instructs us to *pray continually* and *give thanks in all circumstances*. There is power in thankful prayers! They keep our focus on Jesus’ priceless promises and His perpetual Presence with us.

Recently, I wrote a personal story called “The Power of Thankful Prayers.” I’ll share part of the story here. When our two children, Stephanie and Eric, were young teenagers, they were scheduled to travel alone from Nashville, Tennessee, to Melbourne, Australia, where we were living and working as missionaries. This was a very long journey, requiring multiple changes in major airports. I was feeling anxious about their making this trip by themselves, and I was praying about it almost constantly. However, as I prayed, I was actually worrying more than I was trusting God. Eventually I realized that this kind of praying was displeasing to God—and it certainly wasn’t relieving my anxiety. So one morning I brought my concerns to Jesus and asked Him to show me a better way to pray. He taught me to change my prayer focus from voicing my concerns over and over to thanking Him for how He *was* answering my prayers. This change in my focus really did help me calm down. Yet little did I know the amazing adventures that were awaiting all of us! I don’t have space in this introduction to tell you the full story, but my many thankful prayers were




answered in ways that seemed miraculous! The rest of this story is recorded in *Jesus Calling: 365 Devotions with Real-Life Stories*.

Thankfulness and praise go together extremely well. I've found that prayers of praise deeply refresh me—and they increase my awareness of Jesus' Presence. Again and again throughout Scripture, we find the vital command to praise the Lord. We can joyfully obey this command because God is altogether worthy of our worship—and praising Him blesses us immensely. Our words of worship help us remember how great and glorious God is! Praising Him strengthens our confidence that the One to whom we pray is in control, even when our world feels terribly out of control.

Many years ago I went to Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis to get a master's degree in counseling and biblical studies. I especially enjoyed a course on the Bible's wisdom literature, and the professor was indeed very wise. From the vast array of wisdom he imparted, one simple teaching has stayed with me all these years. He shared with us his personal practice of praying "Help me, Holy Spirit" throughout the day—before answering the phone or doorbell, when engaged in an important conversation, when attempting to do something difficult, and so on. I followed my teacher's advice until this brief prayer became a part of me. Now I find myself praying it effortlessly, and it reminds me that I am not alone. The third Person of the Trinity is always available to help me!

The devotional prayers in this book are full of God's promises. To benefit from these precious promises, it's essential for you to know Jesus as your Savior. Because He is God, Jesus' death on the cross was sufficient to pay the penalty for all the sins of those who come to Him. If you have never acknowledged your sinfulness and asked Jesus to be your Savior, I urge you to do so. *Whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life* (John 3:16). I will



be backing you up with my prayers. Every day I pray that God will use my books to bring into His forever-family many readers who are not yet believers.

Finally, dear reader, I encourage you to delve into the prayers in *Jesus Listens*. You don't need to begin on January 1. Simply start with the prayer for today—and keep going, day by day. Remember that I will be praying for you. Most importantly, remember that Jesus is with you, listening to all your prayers.

BOUNTIFUL BLESSINGS!

Sarah Young



January



“I know what I have planned for you,” says the LORD. “I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope.” JEREMIAH 29:11 NET

JANUARY 1

My living God,

As I begin a fresh year, I rejoice that You are continually working newness into my life. Because *You are doing a new thing*, I must *not dwell on the past*. I refuse to let last year's disappointments and failures define me or dampen my expectations. This is the day for a fresh start! I know there are no limits to Your creativity, so I anticipate some lovely surprises in this year that stretches out before me.

Lord, I receive *today* as a precious gift from You. I realize that the present moment is where You meet with me. *This is the day that You have made*. I know You have carefully prepared it for me—with tender attention to every detail. So I have good reason to *rejoice and be glad in this day!*

As I journey along *the path of Life*, I'll search for signs of Your loving Presence. I delight in finding the little blessings You sprinkle alongside my pathway—sometimes in surprising places. As I discover them, I'll thank You for each one. This keeps me close to You and helps me find Joy in my journey.

In Your blessed Name, Jesus, *Amen*

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."
ISAIAH 43:18–19

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. PSALM 118:24 ESV

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. PSALM 16:11 NKJV

Compassionate Lord,

You tell me in Your Word: *“I have loved you with an everlasting Love. I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”* This means that You knew me and loved me before time began! Yet for years I swam around in a sea of meaninglessness—searching for Love, hoping for Hope. All that time, You were pursuing me, ready to embrace me in Your compassionate arms.

When the time was right, You revealed Yourself to me. You lifted me out of that sea of despair and set me down on a firm foundation. Sometimes I felt naked—exposed to the revealing Light of Your Presence. So You wrapped an ermine robe around me, *a robe of righteousness*. You sang me a Love song whose beginning and end are veiled in eternity. You infused meaning into my mind and harmony into my heart. I want to join You in singing Your song. Please use my voice in whatever way You will, as *You call people out of darkness into Your marvelous Light*.

In Your brilliant Name, Jesus, Amen

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”
 JEREMIAH 31:3

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ISAIAH 61:10

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 PETER 2:9 NKJV

Sovereign God,

Help me to make friends with the problems in my life. Many things seem wrong to me, but I need to remember that You're in control of everything. Your Word assures me that *all things work together and are fitting into a plan for good for those who love You and are called according to Your purpose*. I can access this magnificent promise through trusting You.

Every problem can teach me something—transforming me little by little into the person You designed me to be. Yet the same problem can become a stumbling block if I react with distrust or defiance. I realize I'll have to choose many times each day whether or not I will trust You.

I've discovered that the best way to make friends with my troubles is to thank You for them. This counter-intuitive act opens my mind to the possibility of blessings emerging from my difficulties. Moreover, when I bring You my prayers *with thanksgiving*, my anxiety diminishes and *Your Peace that transcends all understanding guards my heart and my mind*.

In Your wonderful Name, Jesus, Amen

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds. JAMES 1:2

We are assured and know that . . . all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good . . . for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose. ROMANS 8:28 AMPC

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 4:6–7

Holy Lord,

I love to *worship You in the beauty of holiness*. The beauty of Your creation reflects some of who You are, and it delights me! You are working Your ways in me: the divine Artist creating loveliness in my inner being. You've been clearing out the debris and clutter within me, making room for Your Spirit to take full possession. Help me to collaborate with You in this effort—being willing to let go of anything You choose to take away. You know exactly what I need, and You have promised to provide all of that—abundantly!

I don't want my sense of security to rest in my possessions or in things going my way. You are training me to depend on You alone, finding fulfillment in Your loving Presence. This involves being satisfied with much or with little of the world's goods, accepting *either* as Your will for me. Instead of grasping and controlling, I'm learning to release and receive. To cultivate this receptive stance, I need to trust You more—to *be content in any and every situation*.

In Your beautiful Name, Jesus, *Amen*

Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. PSALM 29:2 NKJV

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. PSALM 27:4

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 4:19 NASB

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. PHILIPPIANS 4:12

JANUARY 8

God, my Refuge,

Help me *not to dwell on the past*. I can learn from the past, but I don't want it to be my focus. I know I cannot undo things that have already occurred, no matter how hard I try. So I come to You and *pour out my heart*—remembering that *You are my refuge*, worthy of my trust *at all times*.

One way I can build up my confidence in You is to tell You frequently: "I trust You, Lord." Speaking these affirmations of trust brightens my day immensely—blowing away dark clouds of worry.

You are always *doing a new thing!* So I'll be on the lookout for all that You're accomplishing in my life. Please open the eyes of my mind and heart so I can see the many opportunities You've placed along my path. And protect me from falling into such a routine way of living that I see only the same old things—missing the newness.

I'm learning that You can make a way where there appears to be no way. *With You all things are possible!*

In Your amazing Name, Jesus, *Amen*

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.
ISAIAH 43:18–19

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. PSALM 62:8

And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." MATTHEW 19:26
NASB

JANUARY 9

Mighty God,

You are the God who makes me strong. So I come to You just as I am—with all my sins and weaknesses. I confess my many sins and ask You to *remove them from me as far as the east is from the west.* I rest in Your Presence, with my shortcomings in full view.

I am like a *jar of clay* filled with weaknesses, but I know that *Your Power is made perfect in weakness.* So I thank You for my insufficiency—it helps me depend on You to infuse strength into me. How I rejoice in Your infinite sufficiency!

You are also the One *who makes my pathway safe*—protecting me not only from dangers but from worry and excessive planning. Instead of gazing into the unknown future, I want to be mindful of You as I journey through this day. I'll endeavor to stay in close communication with You, relying on Your guiding Presence to keep me on course. Though You are always beside me, You also go before me—clearing away obstacles on the path up ahead. I trust that You're making the conditions on my pathway the very best for accomplishing Your ways in my life.

In Your strong Name, Jesus, *Amen*

He is the God who makes me strong, who makes my pathway safe. PSALM 18:32 GNT

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. PSALM 103:12

We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7

“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

Ever-near Jesus,

You've been calling me to a life of constant communion with You. Part of the training involves living above my circumstances, even when I'm up to my neck in clutter and confusion. I yearn for a simplified lifestyle—with fewer interruptions to my communication with You. But You have been challenging me to relinquish the fantasy of an uncluttered world. I need to accept each day just as it comes to me—and *search for You* in the midst of it all.

I'm thankful that I can talk with You about every aspect of my day, including my feelings. Help me remember that my ultimate goal is *not* to control or fix everything around me; it's to keep communing with You. You've been showing me that a successful day is one in which I have stayed in touch with You—even if many things remain undone at the end of the day.

I must not let my to-do list become an idol directing my life. Instead, I can ask Your Spirit to guide me moment by moment. He will keep me close to You.

In Your guiding Name, *Amen*

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.
COLOSSIANS 4:2

You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. JEREMIAH 29:13 NASB

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. PROVERBS 3:6

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
GALATIANS 5:25