

PRAYER

Lord, in the macro and the micro, I choose to put You first. Keep me close to You this year.

NEW YEAR, NEW PRIORITIES

"Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans."

PROVERBS 16:3

AT THE START of a new year, many of us engage in self-reflection and set fresh goals for the days ahead. What habits will you adopt, and which ones do you want to kick?

As you're dreaming about your future, the God over all creation offers you this choice: If you choose to prioritize His kingdom and His righteousness, everything else you need this year will be added to you.

God is always working on a cosmic scale, holding the universe together—but He is also intentionally focusing on how to give *you* specifically what *you* need. There are things you don't even know you need yet, but He does, and He is working to provide for your life.

When you put God first in your plans, everything else falls into place. You gain perspective of what really matters—making disciples, living for His glory, using your talents to honor His kingdom, and you learn to let go of fleeting whims and desires. As you start this year, start with God. Prayerfully consider His ways and decide today that no matter what else comes, you're going to depend on Him.

LIVING IN THE FULLNESS
OF CONTENTMENT

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

JOHN 10:11

NOTHING ON THIS earth will ultimately satisfy the thirst in the human soul. Yet, in a world that constantly compares everything, we oftentimes feel like we're missing out or falling short. A job? A relationship? Money?

In John's gospel however, we read that the Enemy comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). He wants to steal your contentment by always highlighting what you're lacking. But that's not the end of the story. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, also comes. And when He does, He brings with Him new life. And not just life, but life to the full! That means that for those of us who have been brought to spiritual life, we have everything we need. We can experience a godly fullness that counteracts every feeling of want and lack from the Enemy.

That is why David could say in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want." Today, you too can declare the same bold statement. You can live a lifestyle characterized by contentment and fullness.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You that You are a good Shepherd. I gratefully embrace Your fullness of life, and I find contentment in You today.

THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY OUT

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind . . ."

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

PRAYER

God, You made a way when there was no other way. When I could do nothing on my own, You died for me and gave me new life.

SLOW DOWN FOR a moment to say these words out loud to God:

"Because of Your victory, I can go forward. I'm opening myself up today for You to create lasting change in my heart. By the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, I trust that You will work in me and guide me through every situation I face today."

This is resurrection power at work, and this is how God invites us to victory. It's fantastic news! Through Jesus' righteousness, we can reject sin and walk free with Him because He has given us a permanent "way out." This is what it means in 1 Corinthians 10:13 when Paul said, "But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

Let that sink in.

God. Will. Provide. A. Way. Out. It's a bedrock truth you can build on. A promise to you from God Almighty. Because of this promise, you can live with assurance of victory. You can stand strong against sin and be holy as God is holy.

GETTING UP OFF THE STRETCHER

"As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

LUKE 7:12

PRAYER

Jesus, Your timing is perfect and Your power unrivaled. I was dead in my sins, but You called me up to new life! Thank You, Jesus, for interrupting my funeral.

HAVE YOU EVER felt so sick that you didn't think you'd be able to get out of bed? The kind of weighty malaise that chills your bones and zaps your energy?

Sin is like that, except the consequences are infinitely more dangerous. Before you know God, your sin puts you on a stretcher heading toward the grave.

But the gospel is actually a gospel of resurrection power. Jesus stops death, lifts you off the stretcher, and brings about new life.

When Jesus walked this earth, He was clear on His purpose and mission—to glorify the Father by conquering death. He often showed up at the right time and at the right place to cross paths with a person's funeral procession.

That's how He is working in your story, too. Interrupting death to bring about new life. If He has raised you from the dead, don't spend today living under the power of sin. Rejoice! Jump for joy. You are alive and forever free.

PRAYER

God, I humbly admit my full and entire dependency on You today. All credit, all glory is Yours.

WORTHY OF ALL GLORY

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things."

REVELATION 4:11

WE'VE ALL EXPERIENCED someone taking the credit for something we've done. Maybe it was a group project back in school. Or an idea in a brainstorm meeting at work. The temptation to make ourselves look good is so strong that it can even filter into our relationship with God.

God does all the work in salvation. He restores us. Cleanses us. Purifies us. Makes us new. But as we live out this gift of new life, we can start to fixate on our own efforts. Our own merit. Our own worthiness. We subtly start to give ourselves the glory. We convince ourselves God is merely a supporter of the things that we need Him to do in our lives.

Your life will change dramatically when you truly understand that God is God, and we are only in the story by His wonderful grace. Our lives are meant to amplify how great and how good He is, not how great and how good we think we are. Keep Him first today, and step into the mission He has for you.

THE CALL IS TO SURRENDER

COMPLETELY

"That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers."

PSALM 1:3

JESUS LIVES IN you, and when Jesus lives in you, your slate is clean. You are set free from condemnation, and you are given a new life and placed into a new family. This is not a negotiation. This is a call to surrender completely to Jesus. When you do so, you will be like a tree that is planted by streams of living water.

Your sapling of faith will thrive best when you set your mind and heart on Christ daily. God has made a way for you to bear much fruit, but you'll have to do it in His season and in His timing. God's way is not a restriction. It's an overwhelming freedom, because not only do you prosper, but you also have protection—your leaf will not wither.

This kind of life that's dependent fully on the power of the Holy Spirit can be yours, and it's activated by you stepping forward in faith.

PRAYER

Lord, plant me near Your streams of life. Draw forth my fruit that is pleasing to You and satisfying to me. Protect me in all that I do and sustain me as I live fully surrendered.

PRAYER

God, give me the words to sing. Teach me a new song, once again!

A SONG THAT RISES TO HEAVEN

"Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth."

PSALM 96:1

WHEN YOU FEEL like you've finally reached rock bottom, it feels like there's nowhere else to go. You question if God could ever lift you from the depths of the pit you dug for yourself. You may be tempted to think, *I'm shattered. Scared. Desperate. If you only knew my story, what I've done, how far I've fallen.*

When you're at the end of yourself, don't count God out—He's been saving people ever since the garden of Eden. Your sin isn't special. It's not something He hasn't seen before. There is nothing He cannot redeem, no life He cannot uplift.

From the bottom of the pit, look up and celebrate and worship a God who is bringing you back to life again. You may be in a low moment, but, even in our darkest night, God still provides breath in your lungs and a balm for your heart. So, with the confidence of the cross rising in your soul, praise Him. Praise the one who has given you the gift of grace and forgiveness today, who has given you new life. Sing a new song of victory, of redemption. Rise up in Him.

BRINGING GOD INTO FOCUS

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."

1 JOHN 4:9

MAYBE YOU'RE WEARING glasses or contacts to help make the words you're reading right now legible. Most people can't see everything perfectly, and the same is true for our study of the cosmos. In order to see the vastness of the universe clearly, we invented telescopes to help us see what's all around us.

While man-made telescopes are spectacular, have you ever thought about the greatest telescope that God gave to His people—the Word of God? The whole Bible zooms in on one central scene—the cross. On this cross hung not just one of us, but God Himself in human flesh. His name? Jesus. He chose to come to earth, embodying God's indelible proclamation: *I love you.* His incomprehensible death provided a covering for our fallenness, His resurrection life bridging the way back to the arms of our Maker.

When you look through this telescope, you can see the wonder of the cross clearly, and your heart can't help but feel awe and gratitude for His glorious grace that saved you.

PRAYER

God, give me eyes to see Jesus' work on the cross as the epicenter of history so that I may find new life through Him.

PRAYER

Jesus, I commit today to waging the good fight against my sin because I want to maximize Your glory and embrace true freedom.

GRACE-FILLED STRENGTH FOR TODAY

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17

AS A RECIPIENT of God's grace, you can live confidently knowing all your sin was wiped away when Christ paid your debt. You have a clean slate, but that doesn't give you a free pass to do whatever you want.

You are called to the saving work God set in motion. God can convict you of your sin, but He doesn't force you to confront it. You have to say, "My sin has to go. Not ten or twenty years in the future. Now."

God wants you to live free. Sin no longer has power over you. He has made you a new creation. He wants you to live without the chains that bind you, unfettered from beliefs that limit you. And you can!

Lean toward Jesus in faith and action. It's not a mild action you're taking. It's grace-filled, strong, and even severe. If there's a voice in your head saying, *Life will never change for the better*, that voice isn't the voice of Jesus. That voice of shame and discouragement can—and will—be silenced!

COMPLETELY ALIVE IN THE POWER OF JESUS

"Then [Jesus] went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still.

He said, 'Young man, I say to you, get up!'"

LUKE 7:14

THINK BACK TO a time in your life when you wanted something to change, but had to wait for it. We're not used to shifts happening instantaneously, but when Jesus spoke to the dead man outside of Nain (Luke 7), resurrection was immediate. Scripture describes how the dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

I love that there's an exclamation point in the Bible in verse 14. "Get up!" Jesus was reaching with His power and authority into death and commanding that which was dead to be alive again. Jesus wasn't merely hoping something good would happen. He was giving death an order, in effect: *Death, you don't have the power here. I have the power. You will obey!*

That's the same word Jesus is saying to you now, "Get up!" Jesus can intersect your life with intentionality and power, so don't let sin rule over you for one more second today. Claim your new life and go from here with joyful peace.

PRAYER

Jesus, You called me to get up, so I will no longer live under the rule of sin, but I will honor and glorify Your name alone!

PRAYER

God, help me see more of You today. Reveal Your character and nature to me, that I may worship You rightly.

HE REVEALS HIS ATTRIBUTES

"Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit."

PSALM 147:5

YOU WERE CREATED to have a relationship with the almighty God. Life and eternal life is knowing God. But how do you actually come to know Him, personally and intimately?

You come through the Word of God and the person of Jesus Christ who said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." You come with the aid of the Holy Spirit, listening to His promptings, and relying on His help to translate the ways of God into your heart.

You also come to know God by looking at His creation and discovering His attributes therein. When you witness a great rainstorm, you can see His kindness and mercy poured out. When you see a bolt of lightning and hear the resounding clap of thunder, you observe His power and mightiness on display. When you watch a parent with their child, you can see a mirror of God's tender love and gentle affection.

If you look for Him, you can see His divine attributes all around. He shows you who He is, and in doing so, He invites you to study and commit your life to knowing Him more.

SEATED FAR ABOVE IT ALL

"And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms."

EPHESIANS 1:19-20

WHEN MARY MAGDALENE went to the tomb where Jesus' body lay, she found that the heavy stone blocking the entrance had been moved. An angel sent by the perfect Father rolled the stone away. Turns out, moving the stone was the easy part. God had already done the more miraculous work when He called forth His Son from the depths of hades. The powers of darkness trembled as sin and hell were defeated; Jesus was alive forever, a victorious champion over sin and death.

We serve a powerful God! When our eyes are opened with the new "revelation sight" that Paul talked about in Ephesians 1:17-18, we come to see this: God's power is limitless and His arm is mighty to save. This is why Christ is seated "far above all rule and authority."

What is blocking you accessing the power of God today? What stone is keeping you from trusting in Jesus' resurrection power? Pray that God would roll away the "stones" blocking you from Him that you might experience "revelation sight" today.

PRAYER

God, Your power rose Jesus from the dead and You've given that same power to me through Your Spirit. May I use it to glorify You today.

PRAYER

Father, I move my heart toward worship because I know that when I look up, I see You and I align myself with Your heart. When I'm in step with you, I can face any challenge.

CORRECTIVE LENSES FOR THE SOUL

*"When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought me joy."*

PSALM 94:19

IF YOU'VE EVER tried seeking peace and joy through your own strength, you know it doesn't work.

When anxiety rises, the most radical decision you can make is to stop fixating on your troubles, and instead look to the One who holds your troubles in His hands. Don't withhold your worship from God in the face of fear. Worship is the antidote to all of our worry.

Worship isn't *only* church songs and music. Worship is a way of life. It's a shift of attention that allows you to see God better. Worship is like corrective lenses for your soul, bringing God more clearly into view.

Worship puts God in focus. When the Almighty is in view, the fears in your life begin to flicker and fade. Worship helps you remember that Jesus is fighting for you—and that He has won. Jesus is the all-sufficient source for all you need, available every step of the journey. He is inviting you to come and see what He has done.

SOMETHING IS GOING TO LEAD YOU

"People are slaves to whatever has mastered them."

2 PETER 2:19

THE KEY TO living a godly and holy life is allowing Jesus to shepherd your heart. All of us are shepherded—whether we realize it or not—because we're all led by something. What you let into your heart, whether it's social media trends or the anthem of the world, will end up steering your life and become your leader.

Some of you are your own shepherd. You're leading yourself. You're depending on yourself to guide you to still waters and green pastures. If you are living outside of Jesus' path, it's likely you are in want and experiencing the negative effects of sin.

When you allow Jesus to be your Shepherd, He steps into this stressed-out culture and becomes your replenishing guide. He leads you, watches over you, and gives you rest. When you put your trust in Him and commit to following Him, all the pressure weighing you down is lifted off. He is inviting you into a burden-free life today, a life that is godly and holy.

PRAYER

Jesus, You are my Shepherd. Protect me, provide for me, steer me toward goodness and grace. I will follow You alone because You are good and You care for me.

DWELLING IN THE WORD OF GOD

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

JOHN 1:1

PRAYER

God, I am blown away by the fact that as I read Your Word, You are with me. Help me to slow down and dwell with You today.

SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL AND transformational happens when we linger and sit in the Word of God. Through Christ and the inspired words of the Spirit, we have access to the very depths of God. We don't have to settle for a surface-level relationship with our Savior. Scripture is the revelation of the One who spoke the cosmos into existence, and it now rests in your hands.

Something powerful shifts when you realize that Jesus, the eternal Creator of the universe, is with you in these pages. So many times we come to read the Word and we fail to acknowledge that Jesus is with us. When you allow this reality to sink into your heart, it will change the way you read your Bible. It's not a chore—it's communion. A kinship. A conversation.

Let your Bible be well-worn as you come to Him every day with humble curiosity and honest prayers. Seek and search for His character in the pages, as the Holy Spirit empowers you to uncover His mystery.

REDEMPTION IS HIS CALLING CARD

"I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten."

JOEL 2:25

CHRIST DIED, AND in three days rose again from the dead—conquering evil forevermore. The Son of God is an overcomer, and He offers you that same resurrection power in your life today. God can restore and bring about something beautiful from the chaos, and He can rewrite the legacy of devastation in your past. He can and will bring the change that displays His power and love as He leads you forward into life and fullness of joy. This is not some fairytale promise or some wishful mumbo jumbo. It's bedrock truth anchored in history at the cross of Jesus.

The prophet Joel proclaimed this. Even if people have hurt you, or circumstances have stolen good and fruitful things from you, even if loss has left your heart like a devastated mountainside, clear-cut of everything beautiful and fruitful and promising—it's not the end of your story. Even if a firestorm of destruction has left your life bare, God is in the business of giving beauty for ashes—of repaying what the locusts have eaten—and that's what He wants to do for you.

PRAYER

God, You are the great restorer. Take my chaos and bring about a beautiful display of Your holy renewal in my life.

PRAYER

God, I find great comfort in the truth that Jesus has been raised from the dead. It gives me confidence that no matter my circumstances, You can bring dead things back to life.

A RESURRECTION PROMISE

"If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised."

1 CORINTHIANS 15:13

WHEN A DIFFICULT season descends on you, sometimes you're there for a short time. At other times, it seems you find yourself in that season for what feels like forever—with the end nowhere in sight.

The good news is that the life Jesus calls us all to enter is a life of resurrection and redemption, where He redeems even the worst of circumstances for His glory and our best. We can trust that our resurrection is possible because Jesus Himself has been resurrected.

Maybe the problems you're wrestling with won't be solved immediately. Yet God offers you His presence in the middle of your problems. In His presence you find a deeper sort of solution, one that holds forth fulfillment, peace, and the hope that He has a wider purpose for your life than you could ever live out on your own.

Resurrection power can be linked to any situation. No occasion is too small for the mighty power of resurrection. If you are in the middle of a hard circumstance, call out to God today. He is near, and He wants to lavish you with gracious confidence.

HIS LIGHT SHINING
THROUGH US

"When Jesus spoke again . . . he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"

JOHN 8:12

HUMANS ARE BOTH luminous and illuminating, spiritually speaking. Without God, we were dead in our sins. But in Christ, we become both carriers of His divine light and beautiful reflectors of His glory.

Just as the moon reflects the sun's light, God shines in the darkness and our hearts reflect His light. When we are in full view of Jesus, His love, grace, goodness, and power directly impact us. In that place, in the brightness of His presence, His light will reflect off us so others can see, no matter how dark the night.

It's amazing to think that, simply by our proximity to Jesus, we can bring hope and life to people and places trapped in discouragement and despair with the light that He shines through us.

This knowledge means there's no striving on our part. No straining to light the world around us. Only positioning; staying close to the source of all light—Jesus Christ—and letting that love shine in and through us to the world around us that's desperately looking for hope.

PRAYER

God, I choose to remain in You today. Help me see opportunities to reflect Your light to those around me.

PRAYER

God, I do not want to forget Your faithfulness. Rather, help me think about what is right, true, and lovely. Lead my mind toward peace.

YOU ACT ON WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

PHILIPPIANS 4:7

THE BIBLE IMPLORES us to play offense with our thought life. Harmful thoughts effortlessly slide past our defenses, especially when we're tempted to return to our former ways. The past always looks better in hindsight than it was when you were living through it.

After the children of Israel were released from bondage in Egypt, they dreamt of returning to slavery. Numbers 11:5–6 records how they complained about manna, the perfect food that God had provided for them in the wilderness. Instead of rejoicing, they remembered with fondness the "cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic" of Egypt. How crazy is that?!

If you want to remember God's miraculous works, it helps to build a mental framework that nourishes holy contentment. You'll need a compass that guides you toward peace, and beliefs that point you back to Jesus. To have your heart and mind guarded by the peace of God that comes when your mind is set on the right things.

LET NO SIN REMAIN

"So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me."

ROMANS 7:21

HAVE YOU FOUND yourself caught in the cycle of trying change your life, but never being able to? That no matter how hard you try, the Enemy seems to continue to win in your life?

Satan was defeated on the cross. Thanks to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, Christ has rendered Satan powerless. But Satan can still wriggle and squirm and make the hairs on our necks stand up. Just like a dead snake, if we step on Satan's "fangs," he can still poison us and cause serious harm. We're not in heaven yet, and the Enemy is still slithering around on planet Earth.

Even though the Enemy is conquered, his poison will diminish our hope and weaken the abundant reality of what our lives can be in Christ.

There are two truths to keep in mind. One: Satan was overcome on the cross. Jesus has won the victory. And two: the snake still wriggles. The snake still has venom. Ours is a now-and-not-yet reality. So stay vigilant. Stay ready. And depend on Jesus to sustain you today.

PRAYER

Jesus, help me remain watchful, and lead me in Your steady grace.