

The Prayer Jar

DEVOTIONAL



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with

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Our mission is to inspire the world with the life-changing message of the Bible.



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FORGIVENESS



Webster's Dictionary defines the word *forgive* as "to grant pardon for or to." God's Word teaches us that forgiveness is the act of pardoning an offender. The Greek word translated *forgiveness* means "to let go," as when a person does not demand payment for a debt. Jesus used this comparison when He taught His followers to pray: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4 KJV). In another passage of scripture, Jesus compared forgiveness to canceling a debt (Matthew 18:23-35).

In my novel, *The Forgiving Jar*, the main character, Sara, had to reach the point where she could forgive her deceased mother for not telling the truth about her Amish heritage and the parents who had raised her. She also needed to forgive Michelle, who in Book 1, *The Hope Jar*, fooled Sara's Amish grandparents by pretending to be Sara.

It is my hope and prayer that this devotional book will help you, the reader, to fully understand the true meaning of forgiveness. Emotional healing begins when we choose to forgive. And when God forgives us, our sins are washed away.

*For if ye forgive men their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

MATTHEW 6:14 KJV



What Is A Prayer Jar?



One of the most important things we can do to help forgiveness flourish in our lives is to pray. James 4:8 tells us that if we want to draw closer to God, we must reach out to Him. By going to God in prayer, we're able to offer our adoration, petitions, intercessions, and thanks to Him. One way we can remind ourselves to pray often is to make a prayer jar and place it where we will see it every day. Each time we look at the jar, we'll think of someone or something for which we want to pray. A prayer jar can strengthen our faith and deepen our relationship with God.

A prayer jar can be something as simple as a canning jar. It can be plain or decorated with ribbons, stickers, buttons, sequins, feathers, or glitter. The one I use is a plain antique canning jar. I write my prayer requests, scripture verses, and notes of thanks to God on small strips of paper. After praying about the request or reflecting on the Bible verse, I fold the paper in half and place it in the prayer jar. From time to time, I take out one or more of the prayers—and if that particular prayer has been answered, I thank the Lord and then write down the date. If my prayer request has not yet been answered, it goes back into the jar.

Do you have a special prayer request today? If so, consider creating your own prayer jar.



FORGIVENESS FROM GOD

Have you ever wondered how and why God can forgive sins—especially the most terrible ones by our standards? Big or small, our sins separate us from God, yet all we have to do is repent.

God forgives us because we need forgiveness. “And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me” (Jeremiah 33:8 KJV).

God forgives because He is merciful and wants to see our comfort. “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3 KJV).

God forgives us because He desires to take our worries away. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22 KJV).

Isn't it wonderful to know that our Heavenly Father loves us so much that He provided a way—through the shedding of Christ's blood—for our sins to be forgiven? The best part is that our forgiveness is only a prayer away.

SIN MAKES ITS ENTRANCE: PART 1

Do not love the world or the things that belong to the world. . . . For everything that belongs to the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s lifestyle—is not from the Father, but is from the world.

1 JOHN 2:15-16 HCSB



Without sin, we wouldn’t need forgiveness. So before we dive into the latter, we need to spend some time looking at the former.

Sin first entered the world in the beginning, specifically Genesis 3. God set the scene in Genesis 1-2, where He created the heavens and earth, flora and fauna, sea and creatures, man and woman. The humans were in the garden of Eden, happily living in communion with their Creator. Enter the serpent, God’s craftiest creature. He began to test the godly couple by getting Eve alone and questioning her about God’s instructions. In his own sly way, the father of lies started twisting God’s words.

Having taught Eve how to doubt God’s commands, the serpent convinced her to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. With one bite, the holiness of God’s creation was broken.

*Lord, may I love You and Your words more
than anything the world offers.*

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

With Your help, Lord, may I resist temptation.

SIN MAKES ITS ENTRANCE: PART 2

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

GENESIS 3:6-7 KJV



Having taken a bite of the forbidden fruit, Eve offered it to Adam. He, too, rebelled against God by eating from the luscious fruit. Now their eyes were opened to a new reality. They realized they were naked, and that fact filled them with shame. So, they sewed some fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Soon, the hapless couple realized that God was walking in the garden. Embarrassed and guilt-ridden, Adam and Eve hid themselves from His presence. But when God called out to Adam, asking where he was, the first man made the first confession: “I heard the sound of You [walking] in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:10 AMP). And in that moment, the ugly truth was revealed.

Lord, may I never hide anything from You, including myself.

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Give me the courage, God, to always come clean to You.

THE BLAME GAME

He asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” Then the man replied, “The woman You gave to be with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.” . . . And the woman said, “It was the serpent. He deceived me, and I ate.”

GENESIS 3:11-13 HCSB



Sin had entered paradise. Now shame, fear, and blame followed close behind.

God’s children were hiding from Him. He knew they’d learned to deny His words, that they’d disobeyed His one command by eating fruit from the forbidden tree. Having obtained the knowledge of good and evil, they realized they were naked and felt ashamed. Now in hiding, the couple heard God walking around in the garden and looking for them. Suddenly, fear made its first appearance.

When God asked them how this happened, Adam blamed God for giving him his companion, Eve, who’d given him the fruit. Eve blamed the serpent who’d tricked her into eating the forbidden food.

Yet, ultimately, each individual has no one to blame but oneself when tempted into sin. And each needs forgiveness from God.

When I sin, Lord, may I not play the blame game but admit it was I who erred.

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Lord, this was my fault. . .

CONSEQUENCES

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed. . . ." Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy. . . ." And to the man he said, "Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you."

GENESIS 3:14, 16, 17 NLT



In response to the misdeeds of the serpent, the woman, and the man, God laid out the consequences for their actions.

The serpent was fated to forever crawl on its belly, to grovel in the dust, to continually endure hostility between it and the woman and her offspring. The woman would have greater pain in labor and would desire her husband, who'd be the dominant partner in their relationship. The man would have to toil for every bit of food he received from the earth. Worst of all, God told Adam, "You [will] return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:19 NLT).

God makes it clear that our misdeeds, even after they're forgiven, will still have consequences. But fortunately for us, Jesus will transform the results of our sins. As F. B. Meyers wrote, "Where sin abounded, grace abounds much more."

*I look toward Your grace, Lord, to help me bear
the consequences of my missteps.*

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

God's grace abounds!

COVERED BY GOD

The LORD God made clothing out of skins for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them.

GENESIS 3:21 HCSB



Despite Adam and Eve's disobedience, God still showed them His love and care. In doing so, He revealed His forgiving nature. To protect His children from the heat and cold, God killed some animals and used their skins to tenderly cover the humans' nakedness. Perhaps the animal skins would remind His children of their fall into sin.

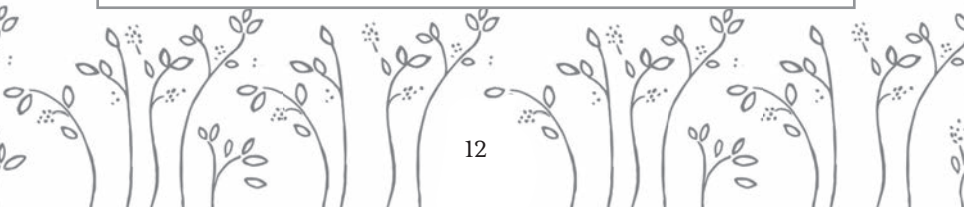
In their nakedness, Adam and Eve had been innocent and honorable. Now, to cover their shame and allay their fears, death entered paradise.

This killing to cover the couple's sins foreshadowed what Jesus would one day do to cover ours. Adam and Eve's fig leaves were not an adequate covering. But in His grace, mercy, love, and kindness, God made the pair long and durable coats of skin to protect them from the elements. This reminds us that God provides forgiveness for deeds past, present, and future.

Thank You, Lord, for always taking such good care of me—for Your love, gentleness, mercy, grace, and kindness. You alone allay my fears. You alone wipe away my tears. To You alone I sing my praise!

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Thank You, God, for always being there for me.



OUT OF THE GARDEN

Then the LORD God said, "Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!"

GENESIS 3:22 NLT



Man, who'd been made in the image of God, had lost his innocence. Because of his disobedience to God's command, he was now familiar with both good and evil. The present danger lay in creatures of man's ilk living forever.

Thus, the three-in-one God, the Holy Trio, the "us" referred to in Genesis 3:22, decided Adam and Eve must now vacate paradise. Although forgiven by God, the sinful creatures were driven out of the Garden of Eden to make their way in the outer world. The price of their missteps would be death. Their way back to God would eventually lie in the hands of a Redeemer who would willingly take their punishment.

This is how Genesis 3 ends: "After driving them out, [God] stationed winged guardians at the east end of the garden of Eden and set up a sword of flames which alertly turned back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life" (verse 24 VOICE). The individual who'd once been given the task to "tend and guard and keep" (Genesis 2:15 AMPC) the garden would now be guarded from it.

Thank You, Jesus, for redeeming me from sin and giving me eternal life.

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Jesus is my way back into Paradise.

A COMPASSIONATE GOD

Then the LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed: Yahweh—Yahweh is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving wrongdoing, rebellion, and sin. But He will not leave the guilty unpunished.

EXODUS 34:6-7 HCSB



God's love is lavish. Time and time again, we make mistakes, we revolt and rebel, we deviate from where He wants us to go and from what He wants us to be. Yet, our Lord still keeps loving His creation. Why? Because He is filled with compassion for us—even when we are coldhearted.

Thankfully, God is slow to get angry. He is faithful with His love. He always speaks the truth. And He forgives whenever we stray.

How do we know that God has all these wonderful attitudes toward fault-ridden females such as us? Because He allowed His one and only Son to die to cover our sins so that we could be close to Him again.

Today, bask in the truth of who God was, is, and always will be: “a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving wrongdoing, rebellion, and sin.”

Thank You, Lord, for having compassion on me.

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Yahweh is my compassionate and gracious God!

READY TO FORGIVE

For You, O Lord, are good, and ready to forgive [our trespasses, sending them away, letting them go completely and forever]; and You are abundant in mercy and loving-kindness to all those who call upon You.

PSALM 86:5 AMPC



Make no mistake: you belong to a God who is ready to forgive.

In Psalm 86, David begins by asking God to listen to him—to hear his words and answer his prayer. He describes himself as “poor and distressed, needy and desiring” (Psalm 86:1 AMPC) and reminds God he’s faithful to Him (verse 2). David then appeals to God’s mercy, explaining he has been crying to Him and calling on Him constantly (verse 3). David wants to rejoice as he lifts his soul up to the only One who can grant him the forgiveness he so desperately desires. He knows that God, out of the goodness of His heart and out of His abundant mercy and love, is ready, willing, and able to forgive.

You, like David, have the same assurance: when you come to God, He will be ready to forgive. You can be certain that when troubles come knocking, God will answer you (verse 7). Why? Because our incomparable God stands alone and above all others (verse 8)!

*O Lord, my God, I come with a heavy heart,
knowing You are ready to forgive.*

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

My God is always ready to forgive.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

"I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me."

ACTS 26:17-18 NLT



When it comes to forgiveness, God doesn't fool around. For proof, look no further than the life of Paul.

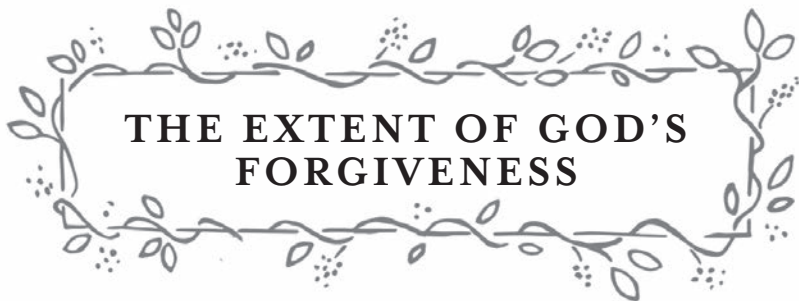
Before his conversion, Paul was called Saul. He actively persecuted Christians, and he even watched as Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:54-58). But then Jesus grabbed his attention. . . by striking him blind. He told Saul his new purpose: to open the eyes of others so that they could turn from darkness to light. These new believers would then receive forgiveness for their sins and join the company of God's people, set apart from nonbelievers.

If Jesus was that radical about forgiveness, all believers should stand up and take notice. We must strive to open the world's eyes to the light and blessing that comes from the One who holds the universe in His hands.

*Lord, thank You for being radical, for rescuing me,
for showing me the way to Your light.*

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Keep me, Lord, in Your love and light!



THE EXTENT OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS

It's impossible to overstate the extent of God's forgiveness. When Jesus said from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30), He meant "paid in full." The death of God's Son satisfied sin's penalty for all sinners throughout history. Nothing else could've worked. This is why it's no longer necessary to offer the blood of animals as sacrifices for sin—it's already been taken care of.

It helps to see the sins in our life as God has seen them. Our view is confined to the present moment; the past is a memory, and the future is only a possibility. God, however, has no such limitations; He views our life in its totality.

God didn't save us only to regret it—He's always known everything we've done or will do. So when Jesus died for our sins, God had our entire life in view. He didn't give us eternal life only to take it back when we do something bad. The Lord already knew what sins we would commit as believers, but He forgave us anyway. However, the quality of our fellowship with God depends on constant confession of our sins as we become aware of them. First John 2:1 (KJV) says: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

SAFE AND SOUND

God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life. For God did not send the Son into the world in order to judge (to reject, to condemn, to pass sentence on) the world, but that the world might find salvation and be made safe and sound through Him.

JOHN 3:16-17 AMPC



God loves you to the moon and beyond! He loves you, His daughter, so much that He gave up His only Son to save you. To cleanse you from your sins. To set you free.

Your part in being saved is to simply believe in Jesus. To trust in Him more than money, things, people, or other gods. You are to cling to Him when your feet can find no purchase. You are to rely on Him to meet all your needs.

When you believe, you're no longer subject to the penalty of sin; instead, you gain eternal life with the God who loves you more than anything in this world.

Lord, in You I believe and trust. To You I cling. Thank You, God, for sacrificing Your Son so that I, Your daughter, can live forever with You!

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Through Jesus, I am safe and sound.

FOR YOU

When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”

LUKE 23:33-34 NLT



Luke, the writer of the Gospel that bears his name, calmly lays out all that happens to Jesus in His last days. . . .

For you, Jesus was put on trial. For you, an innocent Man was judged, interrogated, and falsely accused. For you, God’s Son quietly bore insults, mocking, and degradation. For you, He was handed over to the crowd, forced to walk to His place of execution, and nailed to a cross, suspended between two criminals.

While hanging, Jesus prayed that God would forgive those who had abused Him. For you, He died.

When you begin to wonder if God loves you, when you feel unforgivable and all alone in this world, remember what God allowed to be sacrificed. He did it so that you would know that He loves you and wants to embrace you—that He would rather lose His Son than be separated from you.

God did it all for you.

May I ever praise You, Lord, who sacrificed so much for me!

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Your forgiveness for me is overwhelming!

OVERWHELMING PRAISE

He has not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great are His mercy and loving-kindness toward those who reverently and worshipfully fear Him.

PSALM 103:10-11 AMPC



When we see people committing despicable acts, our outrage brings us to our feet in protest. We may even cry or shout out when witnessing their evil. And then, when those people receive their just desserts, we feel vindicated. Our hearts are less heavy, knowing the evildoers got what they deserve.

Yet, our God must have the same feelings of outrage when we hurt His heart by sinning. But even then, He is so merciful that He doesn't give us our just desserts. Instead, His mercy and love, His kindness and grace—which are higher than the heavens are above the earth—come flowing out toward us. Why? Because He is more benevolent toward us than we deserve.

Today, reflect on God's mercy and love. Consider that because He does not treat you as you deserve but instead forgives all that you do, He deserves more than just your obedience and love. He deserves immeasurable praise.

Let me begin this day by lifting up a great amount of praise to You, Lord!

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

God's mercy and love overwhelm me!

ETERNAL LOVE

You see, God takes all our crimes—our seemingly inexhaustible sins—and removes them. As far as east is from the west, He removes them from us. An earthly father expresses love for his children; it is no different with our heavenly Father; the Eternal shows His love for those who revere Him. For He knows what we are made of; He knows our frame is frail, and He remembers we came from dust.

PSALM 103:12-14 VOICE



God doesn't just forgive our countless misdeeds. He actually *removes* them from us! The sins that once stained our souls vanish. They are removed as far as the east is from the west.

That makes God the best Father in the universe. He is incomparable! He is wonderful! He is heavenly! His love can never be measured!

If you're wondering why God is so good to those who worship Him and respect His might and power, it's because He knows who we are. He knows that we are but dust. That our frame is frail, that our souls sometimes wander from His will. He knows that we sometimes have difficulty bearing up. And He cannot help but look upon us with compassion.

*Thank You, Lord, for Your immense love and compassion.
May I follow Your example in my own life.*

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

*My God forgives and removes my sins with
His eternal love and compassion!*

GOD OF SECOND CHANCES: PART 1

"I cried out to the LORD in my great trouble, and he answered me. I called to you from the land of the dead, and LORD, you heard me!"

JONAH 2:2 NLT



God called Jonah to go to the great city of Nineveh, where he was to pronounce that the wickedness of its people had caught the Lord's attention.

This bad news was not a message Jonah wanted to deliver. So, instead of going to Nineveh, he went to Joppa and boarded a ship going to Tarshish. But God wasn't done with him. He sent a violent storm to rock Jonah's boat.

Jonah, realizing God was sending him a not-so-subtle message, convinced the sailors to toss him into the sea. As soon as they did, "the storm stopped at once!" (Jonah 1:15 NLT). But God, still not done with His rebellious prophet, "arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah" (Jonah 1:17 NLT). From inside the fish, Jonah cried out to God. In response, "the LORD ordered the fish to spit Jonah out onto the beach" (Jonah 2:10 NLT). God not only forgave the renegade prophet but gave him a second chance to do the right thing.

Today, consider how many second chances God has given you. And praise Him for doing so!

Thank You, Lord, for both forgiving me and giving me another chance to do right!

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

My forgiving God allows me second chances.

GOD OF SECOND CHANCES: PART 2

God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God revoked His [sentence of] evil that He had said that He would do to them and He did not do it [for He was comforted and eased concerning them].

JONAH 3:10 AMPC



God is relentless in His willingness to forgive and offer second chances. Even after the prophet Jonah ran away to avoid warning Nineveh of God's judgment, God forgave and then recommissioned him.

Now realigned with God's direction, Jonah announced to the people, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4 AMPC).

It was the faith of the people of Nineveh—their belief in God—that brought them to fast and mourn over Jonah's message. Even the king of Nineveh "covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes" (Jonah 3:6 AMPC), hoping God would forgive and relent. And He did!

This doesn't mean we should continue to disobey God until He threatens us or chases us down. We *should* promptly change tack as soon as we realize the error of our ways. Yet, at the same time, it's good to know God will give us second chances when we prove to be more stubborn than we should.

Help me, Lord, to make sure my ways are aligned with Yours!

PRAYER JAR INSPIRATION:

Lord, thank You for Your unrelenting forgiveness!

