

PRAYERS TO PREPARE FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP

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The following collection of prayers is offered to help you prepare your heart for Sunday worship service. Select and pray some of these prayers each week on either Saturday night and/or Sunday morning before church. Most of these prayers are written in the first person (“I/me”), but you can use them as a basis from which to pray for other worshippers as well.

Prepare Me to Worship You Authentically

Father, soon it will be time to gather with your people to worship you. I ask that you would help me to prepare to worship you authentically. Wherever I have distanced myself from you through willful sin, forgive and cleanse me through the shed blood of Jesus, your Son (1 John 1:9–10). Wherever I have distanced myself from you through spiritual lethargy and prayerlessness, nudge me – even shake me, if that’s what it takes – to wake me up to the splendor and majesty of who you are. Forbid that I would do anything less than worship you in spirit and in truth this Sunday (John 4:24). Help me to remember that in coming before you, I’m coming before the great King – the Creator of the universe; the one who appeared to the people of Israel at Sinai – and the mountain shook; the one who revealed himself in visions to Isaiah and John, and they fell on their faces, trembling at your indescribable glory; the one of whom the glorious creatures around your throne never cease to cry out, “Holy, Holy, Holy!” And as if all this weren’t enough to inspire me to give you my unreserved praise, you are the one who sent his one and only Son to become one of us, die for us, overcome sin and the grave for us, and give us new hearts that we might be restored in your image. Yes Lord... I think my heart’s more ready to worship now. Thank you! Amen.

Relationships and Worship

Merciful God, where I have unresolved relationship issues that may hinder my worship of you, enable me to forgive others as you have forgiven me (Colossians 3:13), and to be quick to make things right with those I have hurt or offended (Matthew 5:23–24). Where circumstances or the will of others prevent the possibility of mutual reconciliation, help me nevertheless to commit my heart to your care, as I seek your help and choose to let go of any anger, bitterness or ill-will that I have been harboring in my heart. Deliver me from all judgmental attitudes and uncharitable thoughts toward other people. Empower me to pray for my enemies, and to be content in the freedom of releasing them to your grace and perfect justice (Romans 12:18-21).

As I prepare to worship you this Sunday, I choose now to make the sacrifice of praying your blessings upon those who trouble me, knowing that you created them in your image, and gave your Son to die for them, just as you did for me. I especially pray your blessing on [name relevant names here]. Amen.

Deciding to Worship Well

Dear Lord, if this is one of those Sundays when I'm eager to go to worship, then let me say with the psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1). If this is one of those Sundays when for whatever reason I'm less eager, deliver me from just going through the motions of worship. Right now, I stir up my soul to worship you well, saying with the psalmist, "Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalm 103:1–5). I also recall some of the many evidences of your goodness and grace in my life, thanking you for... and... and... As I count my blessings and give you thanks, my heart begins to lift above my circumstances and is becoming more and more ready to "make your praise glorious" (Psalm 66:2) this Sunday. May it be so, O my King! Amen.

Investing Myself in Every Moment of Worship

Lord, as I prepare to gather with your people before your holy presence to worship you, help me to resist drift. Help me not to wait passively for something to grab my attention, but to choose to invest myself fully in every moment of worship. When I sing, let me sing with both heart and mind. When my heart and mind are not in synch with the words I am singing, help them to catch up. When my spirit doesn't feel like praising you, help me to offer you the sacrifice of praise, trusting that you will inhabit and transform me as your praise is on my lips. When I hear your Word proclaimed, may my ears and heart be open, and may my feet be swift to respond to your bidding. I surrender to you my personal preferences, any consumeristic or critical attitudes, and any undue self-consciousness. Worship is all about you, Jesus, so be my focus – be our focus, this Sunday and every day of the week – so that our worship of you may be genuine. In your name, my Lord. Amen.

When I'm Tempted to Skip Church

Today, I've entertained the thought of not going to church, Lord. My reasons, if I'm honest, are...

But you remind me that in missing church, I miss out on you. In missing worship, I drift further away from you, rather than drawing nearer. In missing worship, I miss being in the place where your people are, where your praises are sung, and where your Word is proclaimed. Right now, church might be where I least want to be, but it's where I most need to be. I need to be in worship more than I need a "little break." I need to be in worship more than I need "time to do my own thing." I need to be in worship more than I need the extra sleep. I need to be in worship more than I need to stay away and nurse my wounded soul. Perhaps in worship this Sunday, I'll have a turnaround, not unlike the embittered psalmist who was about to forsake his faith. His troubles were "oppressive" to him – until he entered the sanctuary of God (see Psalm 73, especially verse 16). He went into the place of worship deeply troubled, but he went, if for no other reason than for the sheer habit or discipline of

it. But he left the place of worship with a transformed perspective, saying, “As for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the sovereign Lord my refuge, I will tell of all your deeds” (Psalm 73:28). So I’m choosing to go to church today. And Lord, if you please, I could really use a turnaround day like the one that psalmist had. Thanks for getting me on my way. Amen.

A Prayer for Those Ministering on Sunday

Dear God, I want to lift up my brothers and sisters who are serving you in worship ministry this Sunday. For those in music ministry, help them to sing and play with joy in their hearts, as unto you, and not as unto people. Empower them by your Spirit to prompt us to look up to you, and to “make your praise glorious” (Psalm 66:2). May our worship be such that those in our midst who do not yet know Jesus may be moved to declare, “God is really among you!” (1 Corinthians 14:25). I pray for all those involved in audio and visual worship ministries. Help them to serve you with heart and soul, motivated and energized by love for you and passion for your church. Enable them to be “invisible” in their technical ministry, enlisting their technical skills so that all eyes and ears will be on you, and you alone, dear Lord. I pray for the pastor who is preaching today. Through him/her, speak straight into our hearts with nothing less than the convicting, motivating, and life-transforming power of your Holy Spirit. Help me, and help all of us, Lord, to be not only hearers of your Word, but doers as well (James 1:22–25). I pray also for the parking, greeter, usher and refreshment teams, Lord, asking that your hand will be with them to serve the congregation and our guests, welcoming others as Christ has first welcomed us (Romans 15:7), giving us the atmosphere in which meaningful relational connections can be made for Christ. I pray also that the whole congregation – me included! – will see ourselves as hosts, demonstrating the warm hospitality of Jesus to every newcomer and stranger who comes to our worship service this morning. Last, but certainly not least, I pray for the children’s and youth ministries that will be taking place this morning. Bless all those serving in these ministries, Lord, granting them fun and joy as they so graciously sacrifice their own time in adult worship service, worshipping you instead through the loving service and spiritual nurture of our young people. Let them bear much fruit for your glory. Help me to think of ways and words by which I can show my appreciation and encouragement to these, your servants, who do so much to enable our congregation to engage you in worship. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Preparing my Heart for the Sermon: “Speak, Lord, for Your Servant is Listening”

Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. Incline my ear to your words, and let your speech come to me as dew upon the grass. If I hear your voice, let me not be condemned for hearing the word and not following it, for knowing it and not loving it, for believing it and not living it. Speak then, Lord, for your servant listens, for you have the words of eternal life. Speak to me to comfort my soul and to change my whole life; in turn, may it give you praise and honour, forever and ever. Amen. (By Thomas a Kempis, based on 1 Samuel 3:1–14)