



Carolyn Larsen



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Carolyn Larsen, 100 Days of Prayer for Difficult Times

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Introduction

Dear gentle reader,

These last couple of years have been *difficult* . . . hence the name for this book of prayers. I suppose Covid started the spiral into struggle, fear, despair, hope, then struggle again. But other things willingly jumped on the bandwagon: a broken relationship with someone I love very much; retirement and moving to a new state, which, yes, has its good points, but also meant leaving behind old friends, hobbies, and activities I enjoyed very much; my aging body announcing that we'd no longer be participating in certain sports; saying goodbye to a church my family had been part of for over forty years. All of that comes under the heading of "Change," which is never easy.

As I've thought about my struggles and where to find a new pathway forward, the gift of prayer has shone brightly in my darkness. God invites us to come to him and tell him what's on our hearts and what floods our thoughts at 3:00 a.m. (Seriously, 3:00 nearly every dark morning, my mind will jump to "what if" scenarios.) He invites our prayers simply because he cares. Isn't that amazing? The God of the universe, the God of all things, cares about my piddly problems—because they are not piddly to me. He patiently listens as I pray, even though sometimes my prayers are a laundry list of what I want him to do and how he should "fix" things. Sometimes my prayers are cries of despair. But, oh yes, sometimes they are declarations of submission and trust because I know—I believe—that he can do something about the situations and that he will, even if it isn't what I think he should do. He listens to my prayers because he cares.

I also think about the privilege of praying for others' needs. It brings to mind the childhood game of Red Rover. Did you ever play that? Teammates clasp hands, forming a hopefully unbreakable chain so

that when an opponent runs full speed at the chain, trying to break through, the chain stands strong. Sure, their arms may get bruised and sometimes the chain breaks, but the goal is—TOGETHER WE ARE STRONG. I see the privilege of praying with friends and for friends as a Red Rover kind of prayer experience. We are joined by our concern for the situation or person we pray for. Together we bring our intercession to God. We are joined together by our care. Together we are strong.

Perhaps you have a specific prayer need. Check out the index of topics in the back of this book. One of these prayers may help you jump-start your conversation with God. Read these prayers through the filter of your own relationship with the God who cares and in the midst of your own difficult times. I pray you find comfort and the assurance of God's answer as you come to a humble submission to his will. Together we are strong, so "Red Rover, Red Rover, send problems right over," because God cares.

Blessings,
Carolyn




1

When You're Barely Hanging On

Dear God,

I pray for women today who are holding on to the wildly frayed ends of their ropes. I've been there many times and probably will be again at some point. I pray for their weary hearts to be focused solidly on you, Jesus. Give each one a true awareness of your presence with them through the chaos that is their life right now. Give them more than just the head knowledge



of your presence. Instead, give them an intense visceral sense deep in their hearts that you've got their backs, you're giving them strength, and you're guiding their steps, and that means they are not alone. I pray for your power in their hearts to shut down Satan's efforts to cause doubt, confusion, or hopelessness, because that evil being will be relentless with those thoughts.

Oh loving, powerful God, remind these dear ones that they are truly never alone. And with that knowledge, give them confidence to get up every day and do what they must do with the assurance that you are in front of them, beside them, and behind them. Only you can help them through these days, Lord. I know. I've been there.

*I know the LORD is always with me.
I will not be shaken, for he is right
beside me.*

Psalm 16:8




2

Battling the Worry Monster

Dear Father,

Sometimes I facetiously quip that worrying is my spiritual gift. I know it isn't actually funny though. I humbly confess that too often I worry instead of trusting you, and then I worry more because I know I'm not trusting you. Worry feels like an endless loop. It doesn't seem to take much these days to send me over the edge. I have trouble settling my heart on something that brings peace and keeping it there. I need you, Lord. I need to know . . . to actually



believe . . . that you aren't surprised by anything that's happening in my life. I need to know . . . to truly trust . . . that you see the road ahead and you already know how things will turn out. I need to know . . . well, I do already know . . . that you love me more than I can possibly imagine. I just forget that truth once in a while. Help me focus on your love. Help me find peace in your love. Help me push worry away so there is room in my heart to trust your love.

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Philippians 4:6–7 The Message




3

Growing through Problems

Loving Father,

I know I'm supposed to appreciate the challenges I'm facing these days. I guess I should be celebrating them because, through them, my faith has the opportunity to grow stronger as I learn to lean on you and trust you. Of course, I want a deeper, stronger faith, but I have to be honest. My heart is bruised and battered, so I don't feel very strong right now. However, I don't want to miss out on the opportunity for



faith growth, so all I can do is ask for your help. Father, I ask you to give me strength. Please, fill my heart with your strength and power. Help me recognize the good lessons I'm learning through these struggles. Help me appreciate the growth and maturity that will come from this as I stay close to you and stay true to you. You know how I struggle. You know my weakness. But you also know that, even in the midst of the pain, I truly long to grow into an ever-deepening relationship with you.

Oh precious Lord, be patient with me and help me to be patient with myself as I learn, a step at a time, to hang on tightly to you and your Word through difficult times. Celebrate with me that my faith muscle is growing stronger with each bruise and wince of pain. I celebrate all I'm learning through these tests!

My friends, be glad, even if you have a lot of trouble. You know you learn to endure by having your faith tested.

James 1:2-3 CEV




4

Death Is Not the End

Oh Lord,

I'm grieving today. My precious friend just took her last breath on this earth. But even in my grief, I choose to celebrate because I know that this was not the end for her since she belongs to you! Thank you, Father, that even though my heart is breaking today because I have said goodbye to my friend, I am assured that we will have a future "hello" because Jesus said that he *is* the resurrection and the life and that anyone who believes in him will not die.



I am your daughter and so is my friend, so we will be reunited in heaven one day! What joy there is to know that today's goodbye is not forever. It's only a pause until I see my friend again in your glorious heaven. And it's even more wonderful that neither of us will know any pain—physical or emotional—in our eternity with you. We will have no problems and no trouble. Life with you will be a glorious celebration forever and ever. And what joy to know that as my friend closed her eyes to life on this earth today, when she opened them again she was in your presence! Thank you, Lord, that this is not the end. It's not the end. It is a glorious, wonderful, eternal beginning.

Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying."

John 11:25




5

Following My Leader

Dear loving Father,

I love the words of Deuteronomy 31:8 because they tell me that you're walking ahead of me, clearing the bushes and branches of the jungle, swinging a scythe to chop away the weeds and vines with which Satan tries to entangle me. You are the Waymaker. You are the Path Clearer. You are the Scout going before me. I don't need to be afraid because you already know what's ahead. You may not change what I'm going to face, but you're preparing me to



handle it. I know that I may not see the entire cleared path because you may show me only one cleared step at a time. However, I know that I am not going through the jungle alone. You're leading me every step of the way, just as you always have been.

Father, I'm going to visualize putting my hand on your shoulder as you lead the way. I will step into the footprints you have made. I trust that you will not let me get lost along the way. Help me, encourage me, strengthen me as I make every effort not to doddle behind you with complaints and fears. Help me, Father, not to be afraid but to always stay close to you, knowing you will lead me to safety and peace.

Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.

Deuteronomy 31:8




6

Step by Step

My patient Father,

I confess that I'm a slow learner. Time and time again I've seen you work miracles in the most difficult situations. Big miracles and small miracles (is there really a "small" miracle?). I've sensed your comforting presence when I have been in deep pain. I've heard your gentle voice say, "Be patient, child. This is step one. I'm not finished with your journey." Yet here I am, once again facing a painful crisis, and just like so many times before, I couldn't sleep last night. In my wakefulness I agonized about what *could* happen. I planned out strategies in my mind to handle the



“what if” situations. I practiced conversations I might have with the people involved, and I . . . need to just stop.

I honestly do believe that no problem is too big for you, so why can't I remember that you will always, always, always show up for me? I know you love me more than I can begin to understand. Please, help me stop worrying and give me the strength to focus on step one—the here and now—and to patiently wait for step two. Oh Father, I will give you the credit for every step along the way.

*You are my strong shield,
and I trust you completely.
You have helped me,
and I will celebrate
and thank you in song.*

Psalms 28:7 CEV


A decorative illustration at the top of the page featuring various flowers and leaves in shades of light orange and peach. The flowers are stylized with soft, layered petals and dark orange centers. The leaves are simple, elongated shapes with small veins. The overall aesthetic is warm and gentle.

7

Good and Perfect Gifts

Dear Father,

I'm more aware than ever today of the many ways you take care of me. And I just want to say that I am grateful. So very grateful. Some days I feel like I'm in the center of a dark, dark cloud. There's no light guiding me and I have little hope of things getting better. Oh God, you understand what a heavy heart feels like. You see the powerful effort it takes to get up, get dressed, and go about the obligations of the day. And you provide the strength I need.



I'm not saying that you aren't enough for me, God, because I know I wouldn't make it through a single day without the assurance of your presence, strength, and love. But you lovingly provide above and beyond by sending a phone call from a friend or a visit from a neighbor with a bouquet of flowers. Or a meetup with my bestie for a good heart-to-heart chat. Or a cardinal on my patio. I know all those things are from you. I just want to say thank you, Father, for knowing what will encourage me—moment by moment. Thank you for knowing when I need a smile, a conversation, or just a small connection with the world around me and sending it. You're awesome. I love you.

*Every good and perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of the heavenly
lights, who does not change like shifting
shadows.*

James 1:17 NIV