



Feast on the Bible's big meal –
to draw strength for today and tomorrow

MAINSTREAM PRAYERS

These prayers have been written for use in predominantly adult worship. Use them on their own or mix with prayers from the Celtic flavour or, in an all-age service, with the all-age prayers.

INTRODUCTORY/CALL TO WORSHIP

God commands and creation blossoms
God promises and Christ redeems
God speaks and we can thrive
You call us together now to worship; fill us with the excitement your hope brings us.

Eternal God, known to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Speak into our darkness and bring the hope of light
Speak to our failures and bring the hope of forgiveness
Speak to our disappointments and bring the hope of change.

SHORT CONFESSION

Words in bold may be used for congregational response or spoken by the leader.

Living God, your words in Scripture have been gathered, written and heeded over many centuries;
forgive us for our careless attention to them.

Living God, your words in Scripture are varied, rich and nourishing; **forgive us when we are content with so little.**

Living God, your words in Scripture are empowering and encouraging; **forgive us if we ignore their strength.**

Living God, your words in Scripture are a meal to be shared with all the world; **forgive us for our failures to tell our children and neighbours your good news; forgive us for our failure to give so that all can hear them in their own language.**

Living God your words in Scripture bring health and vitality; **help us to hear you now. Amen**

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PRAYER OF THANKS

Before leading this prayer, it may be helpful to invite people to think of parts of the Bible they know. Invite them to recall their favourite story from the Old Testament and the New Testament. Ask them to recall a verse from the Psalms they like; to think again of a promise from God in Scripture which they value and a parable which inspires them. If there is time, the leader could mention his/her own choice to stimulate them.

Eternal God, you are the God of hope, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour.

We thank you for the long unfolding plan of love which we find in the Bible.

Thank you that we can trace the story of your patience with your people through the centuries, patriarchs, priests, kings and prophets.

Thank you that as we share this story, we can grow in patience, endurance and hope.

Option 1

Thank you that we can trace the many promises you made which bring hope to your people, particularly when they are suffering or oppressed.

Thank you that your promises encourage us when we need help.

Thank you for the life of Jesus, whose words and deeds demonstrate again your patience and whose death fulfils your promises.

Thank you that through his resurrection and ascension he makes hope live for us all.

Thank you for the coming of your Holy Spirit to keep us in the truth and to send us out with the story of your love.

Thank you that through your Spirit we can continue to grow in hope.

Option 2 – with responses in bold, if preferred

We thank you for all who have told and retold your story, scribes and preachers, apostles and evangelists. **[Together we praise you]**

We thank you for all those who kept your story alive in our nation,

poets and preachers, song writers and sculptors. **[Your Word makes us glad]**

We thank you for those who gave it to us with enthusiasm and faithfulness, parents and teachers, friends and leaders. **[Together we praise you]**

We thank you for all who transmit the story in fresh ways for today; broadcasters and filmmakers, musicians and actors. **[Your Word makes us glad]**

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We thank you for our brothers and sisters around the world who share with us in keeping your story alive in the hearts and minds of people and nations. **[Together we praise you]**

We thank you that wherever your Word is heard it scatters life and hope for there is a harvest wherever it is sown. **[Your Word makes us glad and we hope in you]**

PRAYER OF RESPONSE/ DISMISSAL

Loving God,
You have embraced us as honoured guests
Filled our emptiness with divine encouragement
Met our hunger with nourishing truth
Replenished vision with a banquet of hope.

Now, as you send us from here, continue to transform us - our relating and serving, our work and our leisure, our minds and our hearts. May God, the source of hope, fill you (us) with all joy and peace by means of your (our) faith in him, so that your (our) hope will continue to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

These prayers were written by Revd Dr David Spriggs, Bible Society Bible and Church Consultant.



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ALL-AGE PRAYERS

These prayers have been written for use in worship with all ages. Use them on their own or blend with prayers from the Celtic flavour or mainstream prayers.

These prayers will all stand on their own. However, if you are using them all in an all-age service, you can add a visual dimension to the prayers by associating each prayer with a fruit. You will need:

4 x different types of fruit (strawberries, apples, grapes, orange)

4 x identical bowls concealed in boxes so that the contents of the bowl cannot be seen. The bowls will each contain one type of fruit.

1 x identical bowl to mix the fruit in a fruit salad for the Fruit Salad activity.

Set-up:

The four bowls need to be in easy reach throughout the service, but their contents should not be on view.

Each type of fruit relates to one of the prayer resources given below. The object of this is not to randomise the prayers that are said during the morning, but rather to 'pretend' that it does so. You will have complete control over which prayer is said when by use of the correct bowl containing the correct fruit at any given time.

A suggested way of doing this is for the leader, at the appropriate place in the service, to pick up the correct bowl and either invite a volunteer forward or go into the congregation so a fruit can be picked. Explain as you are doing it that sometimes in church we have set ways of doing things, but for a change you thought it would be fun to mix things up a little! So the type of fruit our volunteer picks from the bowl will decide the prayer we're going to say.

Prayers may be introduced with 'It's time for us to pray again, let's see what type of prayer we will use now.' Or perhaps a prayer siren could sound! The correct bowl would be presented an explanation given and the prayers led.

It is suggested you do this to add a little intrigue to the service, but also to prepare for the prayer of response when you mix the fruits together to make a fruit salad, and make the point that we need all parts of the Bible to enrich our spiritual lives, rather than just choosing our favourites.

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1. INTRODUCTORY PRAYER – STRAWBERRIES

A version of Psalm 150 with actions and sounds!

Leader: Praise the Lord! (arms in the air)

All: Praise the Lord! (arms in the air)

Leader: Praise God in His house! (arms over head to make a roof)

All: Praise God in His house! (arms over head to make a roof)

Leader: Praise God in the heavens! (arms up – finger pointing up)

All: Praise God in the heavens! (arms up – finger pointing up)

Leader: Praise God for his strength! (strongman pose)

All: Praise God for his strength! (strongman pose)

Leader: Praise God 'cause He's good! (arms straight out in front, thumbs up)

All: Praise God 'cause He's good! (arms straight out in front, thumbs up)

Leader: Praise God with the trumpets – Ba-baaaaa! (mime playing a trumpet on ba-baaaaa!)

All: Praise God with the trumpets – Ba-baaaaa! (mime playing a trumpet on ba-baaaaa!)

Leader: Praise God with guitar! (play a solo riff on an air guitar with sound effects!)

All: Praise God with guitar! (play a solo riff and copy leader!)

Leader: Praise God with the tambourine! (mime tambourine with sound effects)

All: Praise God with the tambourine! (mime tambourine with sound effects)

Leader: Praise God with the strings! (mime playing a violin with sound effects)

All: Praise God with the strings! (mime playing a violin with sound effects)

Leader: Praise God with cymbals! Crash! Smash! (mime playing the cymbals)

All: Praise God with cymbals! Crash! Smash! (mime playing the cymbals)

Leader: Let all things with breath... (hands on chest, raise and lower hands as you inhale and exhale a big breath)

All: Let all things with breath ... (hands on chest, raise and lower hands as you inhale and exhale a big breath)

Leader: Praise the Lord! (arms up in the air)

All: Praise the Lord! (arms up in the air)

Amen!

2. PRAYER OF CONFESSION – APPLE

Dear God,

We are sorry that we sometimes get things wrong.

Sometimes we say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing and we cause people pain.

Sometimes we say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing and we cause you pain.

Sometimes we treat your words in the Bible as a light snack and pick at pieces of it to suit our mood – sometimes we fast from reading the Bible entirely.

Rarely do we tuck into all the fresh teaching that you have to say to us through your Word. Often, we leave things that you are asking us to do or change on the side of the plate and ignore what you are telling us.

We are sorry that we sometimes get things wrong.

Forgive us when we say sorry and help us to do the right thing.

Help us to enjoy the full feast of the Bible.

Amen.

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3. PRAYER OF THANKS – GRAPE

Loving God,

We have so many good things to thank you for;
For air in our lungs and life in our bodies,
For love in our hearts and joy in our friends,
For the knowledge of you in all that we do,
And the absence of fear, when we know you are near.

Thank you that through your word in the Bible,
You have given us a full feast to enjoy –
A feast of stories and promises that remind us that you are good and fair, loving and patient,
powerful and true.
A feast that tells us you have great love for us, great hopes for us and great plans for the whole
world.

With everything we have and with all that we are,
We give you our thanks today, now and always,

Amen.

4. INTERCESSIONS – ORANGE

Faithful God,

We pray today for those who are not able to feast on the Bible,
For those who long to have your written word – we pray for Bible Societies around the world to
have the money to produce Bibles people can easily afford, even if they have little money of their
own.

For those who cannot read – we pray that they may be able to hear recordings of your word and
through hearing be enabled to celebrate learning of your love and power.
For those who do not have the Bible in their own language – we pray for translators who patiently
work with local people over months and years to provide them with your written Word in a
language they can understand.

For those who are blind and cannot read the printed word – we pray for the skills and money to
create more Bibles in Braille.

We pray for Bible Society projects around the world, committed to increasing the number of
languages in which the truth can be heard.

We pray for Bible Society's work in our own country, working to show how the Bible is good news
for all.

We pray all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, so that those who are hungry, may feast on
all that the Bible can give.

Amen.

5. TIME OF RESPONSE – FRUIT SALAD

Now is the time to come clean and show the congregation all the bowls. Say that each bowl
really had only one fruit, and that's a bit like enjoying only one part of the Bible – your favourite
stories of Jesus perhaps. It's much better to enjoy the full fruit salad. (As you explain – use the fifth
bowl and create a fruit salad with your four fruits.)

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The Bible is a big, healthy, balanced meal of inspiration for us to feast on. Of course there are stories and passages we all enjoy. But we need to enjoy those alongside other parts of Scripture that are nutritious too, even though we don't know or understand them so well. Together they give us a much, much bigger picture of our great God and what he does in our world. And together they show us how he wants to work with us all and through us all, whoever we are and whatever our backgrounds, to bring his joy, peace and love into every corner of the world. (Show your now attractive-looking fruit salad as you say 'We need to take everything on board that the Bible and the Christian life offers in order for us to draw strength from God and His Word for today and tomorrow.'

6. PRAYER OF COMMITMENT – KITCHEN CUPBOARD

Explain that you've thought this morning about how the Bible is like a big feast and how we are to use all of it – not just the bits we enjoy – to enrich our lives.

Our prayer of commitment uses foods to help us think about the variety of ways in which the Bible nourishes us. Ask for volunteers to come and hold the objects up as you pray:

- Breakfast cereal: Gives us energy for the day ahead, just as the Bible encourages us to use all our energy to follow Jesus in all that we do even when doing so requires extra effort, strength and courage.
- Chocolate: Has anyone here, and be honest, ever munched on a bar of chocolate when they've been feeling a little down in the dumps? It's amazing how chocolate helps us to feel better, but the comfort and strength we can draw from the Bible will help us for longer – as well as being much kinder to the waistline!
- Carrots: Improve our vision, just as the Bible can give us a clearer view of all that God has in store for us.
- Curry powder/chillies: Add spice and a bit of a surprise to our food, just as stories from the Bible can warn and wake us up when we might be in danger of going wrong.
- Bread: We remember Jesus dying for us as we break bread and eat it during communion.
- Honey: Reminds us of the sweetness of God's love and his forgiveness because of Jesus.
- Water: We need it to live, to stay fresh and lively.
- Salt: Gives flavour and more taste, just as Jesus reminded us we should give flavour and make life better for those around us.
- You could also use an usual piece of fruit or veg from your local shop such as an ugly fruit, lychee, papaya or pak choi. Pick it up and express your surprise that it is there as you don't normally buy this when shopping. Perhaps we could use it as an encouragement to delve into parts of the Bible we've never tried before.

Prayer:

We commit ourselves to you today and respond to your call on our lives.

Help us to treat the Bible like a full feast and not a light snack so that in our daily living we may be fulfilled by all that your word has to offer us and that we may experience you in all that we do.

We commit to spending more time feasting on your word so that we may learn from it and grow through it and hope in everything we do.

Amen.

These prayers were written by Revd Paul Critchley, minister within the Garstang Circuit of the North Lancashire District of the Methodist Church and a former youth worker in Purton and Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire..



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PRAYERS WITH A CELTIC FLAVOUR

This liturgy and prayers can be used on its own or can be mixed with prayers taken from the Mainstream Prayers and All-Age Prayer sections.

1. OPENING RESPONSES:

God invites us
God the maker
God the provider
God invites us to the feast.

Jesus invites us
Jesus the storyteller
Jesus the challenger
Jesus invites us to the feast.

The Holy Spirit invites us
The Holy Spirit the interpreter
The Holy Spirit the encourager
The Holy Spirit invites us to the feast.

Come and eat
the food is ready
and we are invited to the feast.

2. PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

God our Father
you invite us to share in your bounty.
You offer us food and shelter and welcome
and often we stand hesitant at your gate.

Jesus our Saviour
You tell us stories of laughter and wisdom.
you call us to lives of truth and of justice
and often we walk away from your call.

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Holy Spirit our encourager
you dance through the Scriptures.
You fill us with hope and clothe us with glory
and often we turn our backs on your breath.

**God of bread and succour
you know us,
all our tears.....our dreams.....our excuses,
we do not need to pretend with you.**

**Often we hurt you;
we hurt ourselves
we hurt each other.
We are sorry.
We need your love and forgiveness in our lives.**

Leader:

Listen to the words of Jesus.
I love you.
I forgive you.
Come and share my way, my food.

Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

3. PRAYER OF THANKS

Thank you God for creation;
for the earth with its wonders,
for the changing seasons.
Thank you for your Word.

Thank you God for your world;
for people of many countries and cultures,
for beauty and dreams and difference.
Thank you for your Word.

Thank you God for the Bible;
for words of hope and encouragement,
for stories of wisdom and justice.
Thank you for your Word.

Thank you God for other believers;
for saints who went before us,
for saints among us and around us.
Thank you for your Word.

Thank you God for all that give us.
Gift us always we pray
with generosity joy and justice,
teach us to live and share your Word. Amen.

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4. SHORT INTERCESSIONS

God of love and glory,
we bring you our prayers for those who are hungry

We pray for those who are hungry for justice;
for those who live in difficult places,
for those who work and long for dignity and right.
God of hope **Feed your people.**

We pray for those who are hungry for your Word;
for those who long to read the Bible in their own language,
for those who tell your story with their words and in their lives.
God of hope **Feed your people.**

We pray for those who are hungry for peace;
for those caught up in conflict and warfare,
for peacemakers and fighters and decision makers in every land.
God of hope **Feed your people.**

We pray for those who are hungry for wisdom;
for those who read and pray and ponder,
for teachers and learners and seekers after truth.
God of hope **Feed your people.**

We pray for ourselves and for those who share our daily lives,
for our needs ... our hopes ... and our dreams.
God of hope **Feed your people.**

God of love and life,
you teach us through the Scriptures to be hopeful.
We ask our prayers in the name of Jesus
and in the love and power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

5. PRAYER OF RESPONSE

I opened the envelope just now God
the one with my name on it
and I read my invitation to your party.

Yes please.
I want to come.

You give the best parties in the world. **Amen.**

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6. CLOSING RESPONSES

Hope of God

Dream in us

Wisdom of God

Ground us

Courage of God

Dance in us

Glory of God

Surround us

Word of God

Nourish us

Arms of God

Caress us

Justice of God

Blaze in us

Love of God

Bless us. Amen.

These prayers are written by Ruth Burgess. Ruth is a member of the Iona Community. She lives in Sunderland with a large and hungry black and white cat.

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4 Prayers with a Celtic flavour

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