



40 Prayers for the Days You Have No Words

Words to borrow when your own run out

HOPE HEALING WORDS

40 Prayers for the Days You Have No Words. Written for Hope Healing Words. First edition, 2026. Revision 2026.1.

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This book is not a substitute for medical or mental health care. If you're struggling, please tell a doctor or a counselor. This is meant to sit alongside that, not instead of it.

In the United States: call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org, any hour. In Canada: call or text 9-8-8, any hour. Anywhere else: findahelpline.com lists crisis lines in more than 175 countries. If you have already done something to hurt yourself, or you cannot keep yourself safe for the next hour, call 911.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

There are days when praying is the last thing you can manage and the thing you most need.

These are forty prayers for those days. They are short on purpose. Find the one that matches where you are, say it out loud if you can, and let it stand in for the words you cannot find.

Nothing here has to be read in order. Nothing here has to be read at all.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ARRANGED

It goes roughly the way these things go. Part one is the day it happens. Part two is the waiting rooms. Part three is the nights, which are their own country. Part four is what becomes of your faith somewhere in the middle of all that. Part five is for the people you are carrying while you are carrying this. Part six is for the morning you notice something has eased, and it will keep if that morning has not come.

You do not have to go in order. Most people won't.

HOW TO PRAY WHEN YOU CAN'T

Nobody is good at this. The people who look good at it are using words they learned somewhere, which is all this book is.

If you want a pattern, here is the oldest one. Say what happened. Say what you want. Stay.

That is it. Say what happened, not what you think you ought to feel about it. Say what you want, plainly, without deciding first whether you are allowed to want it. Then stay, which is the only part that is hard.

The psalms of lament do those three things in that order, and a good many of them stop before anything gets better. You do not have to end well. You do not have to end at all.

WHAT THE VERSE IS FOR

There is a line of Scripture above each prayer. It is not the answer to the prayer and it is not there to cheer you up.

It is there so you know somebody got here first and somebody wrote it down. Some of them are complaints. Psalm 13 asks God how long he intends to keep this up. Job says he is not going to keep his mouth shut. Those are in the Bible on purpose.

CHANGE THE WORDS

Say these the way they fit your life. Where a prayer says they, say the name. Where it says my child, say whoever it is. If a sentence is not true for you today, leave it out.

Where it says Father, say God. Where it says Lord, or Lord Jesus, say it or don't. Say whatever you call God, or nothing at all.

Nobody is marking this.

IF SOMEBODY HANDED YOU THIS BOOK

Then somebody was thinking about you. Maybe they were worried and did not know how to say it. Maybe they just wanted you to have it. Either way you do not owe anybody a report. Start anywhere.

IF TONIGHT IS HEAVIER THAN YOU CAN HOLD

In the United States you can call or text 988 any time, or chat at 988lifeline.org. It is free and confidential, and somebody is there at every hour, not only at night.

If you have already done something to hurt yourself, or you cannot keep yourself safe for the next hour, call 911.

You can call if you are worried about somebody else too. That is what it is there for.

OTHER WAYS TO REACH IT

EN ESPAÑOL

llama al 988 y marca 2, o envía AYUDA al 988.

VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS

call 988 and press 1.

DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

ASL users can dial 988 on a videophone. You can also text 988, chat at 988lifeline.org, use your relay service, or dial 711 and then 988.

IN CANADA

call or text 9-8-8, any hour.

ANYWHERE ELSE

findahelpline.com lists crisis lines in more than 175 countries.

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PART ONE

When the ground gives way

For the hour after the thing you were not ready for.

1

WHEN YOU HEAR IT

*“Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes fail from sorrow,
my soul and body as well.”*

PSALM 31:9

I heard the words, God. I haven't caught up to them yet. Part of me is still standing in the minute before. I finished what I was doing first. I don't know why I finished it. Don't leave while the rest of me gets here.

Amen.

2

WHEN YOU CAN'T STOP SHAKING

*"I will strengthen you; I will surely help you; I will uphold you with My
righteous right hand."*

ISAIAH 41:10

I put my hands under my legs to make them stop. They're still going. Nothing is even happening right now. I can't tell you what I'm afraid of. That's the part nobody can help with. Give me the next five minutes. I'll come back for the five after when I've done these.

Amen.

3

THE MORNING AFTER YOU WERE TOLD

“His mercies never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness!”

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23

I woke up and had a few seconds before I remembered. Those seconds are the best part of my day now, Lord. The first hour is the one I need help with. Tomorrow is not my job yet.

Amen.

4

THE FIRST DAYS AFTER

"I am not at ease or quiet; I have no rest, for trouble has come."

JOB 3:26

I've carried the same folder around for two days and still haven't opened it. I gave somebody the wrong date this morning and apologized after they'd already hung up. I'm in no hurry to finish this list, God. I'll find more of it tomorrow.

Amen.



5

WHEN THE JOB IS GONE

"You are the God who sees me,"

HAGAR, IN GENESIS 16:13

I did the math again, God. I do it at night, when doing it can't help. I'm not explaining it to you again tonight. You were here the last time. Get me through the waiting and the asking without taking it out on somebody who didn't do this to me.

Amen.



6

THE MONEY ISN'T THERE

"But I am poor and needy; may the Lord think of me."

PSALM 40:17

I counted it twice, as if it would come to more the second time. I know exactly how much I have and I'm not going to say it out loud, even here, even to you. I know where I could go and ask. I haven't gone. Get me through that door before the week is out.

Amen.



7

WHEN SOMEONE YOU TRUSTED LIED

“But it is you, a man like myself, my companion and close friend.”

PSALM 55:13

Father, I've been rewriting the same conversation for days, looking for the place where it started. In my version I say the thing that would have ended them. I've said it out loud to nobody, twice. I'm not able to be generous today and I'm not trying to be. Keep me from saying it a third time.

Amen.



8

WHEN THEY SAID THEY'RE LEAVING

"Look to my right and see; no one attends to me. There is no refuge for me."

PSALM 142:4

I've picked things up and put them back exactly where they were. I was polite all day, Lord, and I'm done being polite. I'm supposed to want what's best for both of us. I don't.

Amen.



9

WHEN YOU HAD TO TELL THE CHILDREN

“He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart.”

ISAIAH 40:11

God, the first thing they asked was whether we were still going on Saturday, and I said yes, because I couldn't think fast enough to say anything else. Be with them tonight after I've said everything I can think of.

Amen.



“Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

PSALM 61:2

10

WHEN YOU HAVE TO GO BACK TO WORK ANYWAY

*“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit and
when I rise.”*

PSALM 139:1-2

I sat outside for as long as I could without being late, Father.
Nobody in there knows what happened. Give me a face. I've already
practiced the answer for when somebody asks how I am.

Amen.



PART TWO

In the hospital and the waiting

For the hours you spend in a chair you didn't choose.

11

IN A WAITING ROOM

"I wait for the LORD; my soul does wait, and in His word I put my hope."

PSALM 130:5

I've been in this room since they took them in. I've run out of things to think about, God. The coffee is bad and I keep drinking it. When somebody finally comes through those doors, don't let me hear it alone.

Amen.

12

BEFORE THE SURGERY

“My times are in Your hands.”

PSALM 31:15

They'll come for me in a few minutes, Lord. My clothes are in a bag with my name written on it in marker. I've said my own date of birth to four different people since seven this morning. Be with the hands that do the work today. Let me wake up.

Amen.



13

WHEN YOU ARE THE ONE IN THE BED

“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

PSALM 73:26

Everybody who comes in here calls me strong. What they call strong is me not pressing the button again. When it goes quiet tonight, stay. You don't have to say anything.

Amen.



14

STILL WAITING ON THE RESULTS

“And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in You.”

PSALM 39:7

I've had something on in the background for an hour, Father, and I couldn't tell you one word of it. The phone hasn't been out of reach since eight. However it comes, be here for the second I know it.

Amen.



15

AN ILLNESS WITH NO END IN SIGHT

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.'"

2 CORINTHIANS 12:8-9

I filled the box for the whole week this morning, Lord, and my hands did it without me watching. There's no date on this one. Nothing to count down to. Give me sleep if sleep is available. And something to look forward to that has nothing to do with getting better. I've stopped saying next year out loud.

Amen.

IF TODAY WAS THE DAY THEY TOLD YOU

You do not have to hold this alone, and you do not have to be brave about it. Ask your team about palliative care. It is not the same as giving up, it can start now, and it runs alongside whatever treatment you are having. A chaplain will sit with you whatever you believe or don't believe. If tonight gets heavier than you can hold, call or text 988, any hour. This page is not a person. Let there be a person too.

16

THE DAY THEY TELL YOU IT ISN'T CURABLE

"I have called you by your name; you are Mine!"

ISAIAH 43:1

So now I know, Lord. I've been trying the word out in my head all afternoon and I can't get to the end of it once. Don't let me spend whatever this is pretending I've made my peace with it. I'd like some of it to be real. Don't go anywhere tonight. I'm not asking how long.

Amen.



17

SITTING UP WITH SOMEONE TONIGHT

“Behold, the Protector of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”

PSALM 121:4

They're asleep and I'm counting breaths again. There's nothing useful left for me to do, so I'm doing this. Stay awake with me as long as I'm needed. Be the first thing in this room at seven.

Amen.



“I will fear no evil, for You are with me.”

PSALM 23:4

18

DRIVING HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL

“Turn to me and be gracious, for I am lonely and afflicted.”

PSALM 25:16

The radio's off because I can't stand it tonight, God. Nobody's been in there since this morning. Ride with me. Get me inside.

Amen.



PART THREE

In the night

For the hours when the rest of the world is asleep.

19

AT THREE IN THE MORNING

"You have kept my eyes from closing; I am too troubled to speak."

PSALM 77:4

I got up for water I didn't want just to have gone somewhere. One thought keeps coming around. Same one. I've stopped expecting a different one. I'm too tired to pray well. You take it for a few hours. If I can't sleep, sit up with me.

Amen.



20

AFRAID OF TOMORROW

“When anxiety overwhelms me, Your consolation delights my soul.”

PSALM 94:19

I've rehearsed tomorrow all night, God, and most of the versions I couldn't get through. It's only going to happen once. Wake me for the one that's real.

Amen.

IF TONIGHT IS HEAVIER THAN YOU CAN HOLD

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21

WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO BE HERE ANYMORE

"Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' And he looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water."

1 KINGS 19:5-6

Lord, I don't want to be here anymore, and I mean it the way it sounds. I've been sitting on the edge of the bed with my shoes still on since it got dark. I'm telling you because I haven't told anybody who could do anything about it. Hold on to me. Somebody answers 988 all night and every night. Make me able to call before morning.

Amen.

22

WHEN YOU CAN'T PRAY AT ALL

“For we do not know how we ought to pray, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words.”

ROMANS 8:26

God, I've got nothing tonight. I'm here, and that's all of it.

Amen.



*“He has not hidden His face from him, but has attended to his
cry for help.”*

PSALM 22:24

23

BEFORE YOU FINALLY FALL ASLEEP

"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."

PSALM 4:8

I got into bed with my socks on because bending down felt like too much. The day is over and I did it badly, Lord, and I don't have it in me to walk back through it now. Take whatever was good in it and forgive what needs forgiving. Keep watch while I sleep.

Amen.



PART FOUR

When faith is thin

*For the stretch when you are still here and nothing is landing.
These five do not agree with each other. Take the one that is
true tonight.*

24

WHEN YOU FEEL NOTHING AT ALL

“My spirit grows faint within me; my heart is dismayed inside me.”

PSALM 143:4

I'm saying this out loud so that at least one of us has heard it. Nothing answers. Maybe nothing is supposed to, and nobody told me. I'm going to keep saying it. Stopping would be a decision, and I'm not making decisions this year.

Amen.



25

WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY AT GOD

"Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul."

JOB 7:11

I'm angry with you, God, and pretending otherwise hasn't got me anywhere. Here it is. You could have stopped this and you didn't, and I don't know what to do with somebody who could and didn't. I've said that out loud before and I haven't taken it back. I'm still here after saying it, which is more than I expected.

Amen.



26

WHEN YOU HAVEN'T PRAYED IN YEARS

"O You who listen to prayer, all people will come to You."

PSALM 65:2

It's been a long time, Father. Or maybe it never really started. I looked up how to do this and then didn't use any of it. If you're there, here I am. I'll work the rest out as I go.

Amen.

27

WHEN YOU CAN'T FORGIVE YOURSELF

“Even if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and He knows all things.”

1 JOHN 3:20

Lord Jesus, I know exactly what I did, and I could take you to the hour it happened. Some of it I can't put right and I never will be able to. What I can put right, make me go and do it. You carried it to the cross yourself and said it was finished. It's done whether I can feel it right now or not. Help me take you at your word until I believe it in the daytime too.

Amen.



*“My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and
earth.”*

PSALM 121:2

28

WHEN YOU'VE DONE ALL OF IT AND NOTHING HAS MOVED

*"How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide
Your face from me?"*

PSALM 13:1

I've said the prayers and kept my end of it for years, Father. It's the same this year as it was the first year. I know it was never a bill I could hand you. I did it because I wanted you, and I still do. If the answer is no, give me the grace to take it. If it stays quiet, give me the grace to stay too.

Amen.



PART FIVE

For other people

For the people you pray for instead of yourself.

29

FOR SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T KNOW YOU'RE PRAYING

“He is always wrestling in prayer for you, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in the full will of God.”

COLOSSIANS 4:12

I said their name out loud this morning and they'll never know it. There's no version of this where I'm the one who gets to tell them. Whatever this afternoon is for them, be in it. I'd rather be the one who fixes it. You can work on that later.

Amen.

30

FOR A CHILD WHO IS STRUGGLING

“Can a woman forget her nursing child, or lack compassion for the son of her womb? Even if she could forget, I will not forget you!”

ISAIAH 49:15

They've stopped telling me things, Lord. I asked one question too many last night and I heard them decide not to answer it. Go where I can't follow. Put one person in their day who notices them. Tomorrow I'll say less than I want to.

Amen.

31

FOR SOMEONE WHO WALKED AWAY

“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?”

LUKE 15:4

They stopped going, and they say they left you too, and they told me why. Some of their reasons were good ones. I didn't argue. Stay near them in the places they wouldn't call yours.

Amen.

IF YOU ARE NOT SAFE

If the person who hurt you is still in your life and you are not safe, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is free and confidential, any hour: call 1-800-799-7233, text START to 88788, or chat at thehotline.org. If you are Deaf, the Deaf Hotline videophone is 1-855-812-1001. If what happened to you was sexual assault, RAINN is free and confidential, any hour: call 1-800-656-4673, text HOPE to 64673, or chat at rainn.org. If a child is being hurt, Childhelp is 1-800-422-4453, call or text, any hour. Praying for somebody is not the same as staying with them.

32

FOR THE PERSON WHO HURT YOU

“You have taken account of my wanderings. Put my tears in Your bottle— are they not in Your book?”

PSALM 56:8

Father, I'm praying for them because I don't want to become them, and my heart isn't in it yet. Do whatever it is you do with people like that. Take the part of me that wants them to suffer and work on it slowly. Keep me out of their reach while you do. None of this is me saying it was all right.

Amen.



33

FOR SOMEONE WHO IS DYING

“If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”

ROMANS 14:8

Lord Jesus, the time is short now and the room has gone quiet. Let whoever needs to be here get here, and if nobody can, don't let that be the thing anyone carries. Let yours be the first face they know. I'm not going anywhere.

Amen.



34

FOR THE ONES WHO STAY

“For God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love you have shown for His name.”

HEBREWS 6:10

Bless the one who came back a second time tonight without being asked. Bless whoever left something where I'd find it and didn't put their name on it. They're not waiting to be thanked. Fill them back up without telling them it was you.

Amen.



“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted.”

PSALM 34:18

35

THE ONE HOLDING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

“Surely you and these people with you will wear yourselves out, because the task is too heavy for you. You cannot handle it alone.”

EXODUS 18:18

I did what had to be done today, God, and I resented every minute of it. I was pleasant to every single person who needed something from me, and not one of them noticed what it cost. Give me somebody to say that to who won't repeat it. Then give me enough for tomorrow.

Amen.



PART SIX

When the light returns

For the morning you notice something has eased. If no such morning has come, these five will keep. Nothing here is behind schedule.

36

THE FIRST MORNING THAT FELT LIGHTER

“Taste and see that the LORD is good.”

PSALM 34:8

The sun got to where I was sitting this morning and I stayed in it until it moved off me. That's the entire thing that happened, and I noticed it happening. Thank you. When it comes back, and it will, remind me about the sun.

Amen.



37

WHEN YOU LAUGHED AND IT SURPRISED YOU

"Then our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with shouts of joy."

PSALM 126:2

I laughed out loud at something and then looked around to see who'd heard me. I felt bad about it for most of an hour, and if that was you, thank you. I'd like to get faster at not looking around.

Amen.



38

LIFE STARTING AGAIN WITHOUT THEM

“Jesus wept.”

JOHN 11:35

Somebody at the counter wished me a good weekend and meant it. I said it back, Father. I still start the message before I remember. There are things in the drawer I'm not going to sort this year, and I don't want to be asked about them. Before long I'll be the one saying it first.

Amen.



39

WHEN YOU CAN HELP SOMEBODY ELSE NOW

*“...so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves
have received from God.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 1:4

I've got the whole speech ready for somebody who's where I was not long ago, God, and I've worked out who it's for. Most of this is going to be me in a chair not saying it.

Amen.



*“Return to your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to
you.”*

PSALM 116:7

40

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS BOOK

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

PSALM 119:105

I borrowed somebody else's sentences because I couldn't make my own. If this ever gets out of my hands, whoever opens it will open it somewhere in the middle, the way I did. Be on that page, Lord Jesus.

Amen.

Six psalms to say out loud

When the words have to be older than you are.

BEREAN STANDARD BIBLE

WHEN YOU FEEL ABANDONED

“My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Why are You so far from saving me, so far from my words of groaning?”

PSALM 22:1

“For He has not despised or detested the torment of the afflicted. He has not hidden His face from him, but has attended to his cry for help.”

PSALM 22:24

WHEN YOU ARE WALKING THROUGH IT

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

PSALM 23:4

WHEN YOU ARE FAR FROM HOME

“Hear my cry, O God; attend to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call out to You whenever my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

PSALM 61:1-2

WHEN YOU NEED HELP

“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

PSALM 121:1-2

WHEN NOBODY CAN SEE IT

“The LORD is near to the brokenhearted; He saves the contrite in spirit.”

PSALM 34:18

WHEN IT IS FINALLY OVER

“O LORD my God, I cried to You for help, and You healed me.
Weeping may stay the night, but joy comes in the morning.”

PSALM 30:2, 5



THIS BOOK IS FREE.

So is everything else at Hope Healing Words. A verse and a few words of hope go out every morning, and they will always cost nothing.

If one of these pages belongs to somebody you know, print it and give it to them.



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