

Caring for the Creation Working Group (CCWG)

PRAYER RESOURCE

(Web Version published February 2012)

Aim: To compile a Library of phrases useful for public and private Prayers.
To provide a structure through which prayers may be composed.

Headings: Prayers may include:

- PRAISE AND ADORATION
- THANKSGIVING
- CONFESSION
- PETITION (ourselves)
- INTERCESSION (others)
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SCRIPTURE
- CONCLUSION

Method: Start a list of useful phrases under each type of Prayer.
Proceed from a beginning phrase, to a middle and/or end phrase
Join up selected phrases to make a complete sentence.

If desired, compose a full prayer with a sentence for each type of prayer above.

Example: *For each type of prayer (Praise, Confession etc) choose a phrase for the beginning, middle and/or end from the lists provided then join to make sentences.*

(1) PRAISE AND ADORATION

We can start with a phrase from (i), then from (ii) and finish with (iii) :

- (i)
 - Almighty God, Heavenly Father,
 - O God,
 - Loving Creator,
 - Dear Heavenly Father,
 - O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 - Awesome God, Creator of the Universe,
 - All-powerful, all-knowing God, heavenly King,

- (ii)
 - we praise you
 - we adore you
 - we give you thanks and praise
 - we bow before you
 - we worship and adore you
 - we bow in humble adoration

- (iii)
 - for the wonder of your creation
 - for the beauty of your creation
 - for the wonderful complexity of life on Earth
 - for all you have made
 - for all you have made in Heaven and on Earth
 - for all creatures great and small

If we choose the first phrase from each section, we get the following prayer:
" Almighty God, Heavenly Father, we praise you for the wonder of your creation."

If we choose the second phrase from each section, we get
"O God, we adore you for the beauty of your creation."

We can string phrases together or mix the order:
"Dear Heavenly Father, loving Creator, we praise you and bow in humble adoration for the beauty of your creation and the wonderful complexity of life on Earth."

We can add to the lists we started with.

(2) THANKSGIVING Part A - Physical blessings

- (i) *We experience God's good Creation through the 5 senses:*
 (a) sight (b) hearing (c) taste (d) touch (e) smell
 (ii) *Our experience is added to by books and media such as TV.*

- (i) - We thank you for (a) eyes to see ...
 - We thank you for (b) ears to hear ...
 - We thank you for our sense of (c) taste ...
 - We thank you for textures we (d) touch ...
 - We thank you for fragrances we can (e) smell ...

(a) (see ...) a lush rainforest
 brightly coloured butterflies

a coral reef
 creatures in a seaside rock pool
 grass blowing like waves in the wind

(b) (hear ...) the sound of birds feeding their young
 water running over rocks in a stream
 waves washing on the seashore
 an awesome thunder storm
 cicadas in summer

(c) (taste ...) that helps us appreciate the food you provide

(d) (touch ...) such as the bark of a tree
 the fur of an animal
 the sand of a beach beneath our feet

(e) (smell) ... like flowers in a garden
 the freshness of air after a storm
 a salty ocean breeze

(ii) (In addition) ... and for those things we experience through books / TV /
 videos, e.g.

Emperor Penguins in Antarctica,
 Elephants in Africa
 lemurs in Madagascar,
 Pandas in China
 Polar Bears in the Arctic

If we choose the first phrase from each section, we get the following prayer:
*"We thank you for eyes to see a lush rainforest and for those things we may
 experience through books, for example Emperor Penguins in Antarctica."*

If we choose a couple of phrases from each section, we may get
*"We thank you for ears to hear water running over rocks in a stream, fragrances
 we can smell, like flowers in a garden and for those things we experience
 through TV, such as lemurs in Madagascar or Polar Bears in the Arctic."*

THANKSGIVING Part B - Spiritual blessings

God provides spiritual blessings, according to the promises in His Word, which go beyond physical blessings this world offers.

- (i) Spiritual gifts, such as Patience, Peace, Faith, Hope, Love, Endurance, Joy, Courage, Kindness, Holiness of life
- (ii) Blessings in Christ: Salvation, Repentance, Power in the face of temptation, freedom from Guilt, the hope of Heaven

Spiritual blessings help us to focus on things beyond this world.

Some prayers of thanks might include:

- (i) *“We thank you for the gifts of the Holy Spirit: for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Gal 5:22)*

“Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of God.” (Heb 12:2)

“We thank you for Jesus who said, I am

- *the Bread of Life*
- *the Light of the world*
- *the Resurrection and the Life*
- *the Door to eternal life*
- *the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John’s gospel)*

- (ii) *“Thank you for Jesus, who died on the cross for our sins to bring us to God; not by our own works, lest any man should boast.”*

“Lord, help us not to seek the material wealth or physical blessings so highly valued by the world but to remember that Jesus came into this world in lowly circumstances and that He lived simply and humbly without pretence of position or power within it. May we value Christ above all material things.”

A prayer of Thanksgiving for spiritual blessings using some ideas from the above might be:

“Lord, we thank you for Jesus who said ‘I am the Bread of Life’. Help us not to seek the material wealth or physical blessings so highly valued by the world but to remember that Jesus came into this world in lowly circumstances. May we value Christ above all material things.”

(3) CONFESSION

When we look at the natural world and the suffering of creatures other than humans we realise that, for one reason or another, we have failed to be good stewards of God's Creation. We need words to confess our failings. A prayer of confession may be made by putting together elements from (i) to (iii) below:

- (i) - O God, our heavenly Father and Creator of all living things
 - Loving God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom, and for whom all things were made
 - Loving Father, who sent us Jesus to be the Saviour of the whole world

- (ii) we confess that

- all is not well for the creatures you have made and given into our care
- too often we have ignored the needs and welfare of other creatures you made and declared to be 'good'
- we have put our own interests above the interests of other species you made to share the earth with us
- we have thoughtlessly destroyed the habitats of plants and animals
- we have accepted blessings from your hand such as good medical care, which results in population increase, but been blind to our responsibility in turn, to keep our own numbers down in order to safeguard other species
- we have seized economic opportunities without thought as to the impact of our actions on natural ecosystems such as forests and coral reefs
- we have disposed of wastes carelessly, polluting air, soil and water
- our sadness in knowing other species of plants and animals are becoming extinct has not led to effective action to reverse this trend
- we have been wasteful of resources you have given to us
- we have endangered marine creatures such as dolphins, turtles and seabirds through tangled netting, fishing lines and discarded plastic.

- (iii) Forgive us our sins, we pray
 Forgive our sins for Jesus' sake
 Forgive us and renew a right spirit within us

If we take any phrase(s) from each of the three sections, one possible prayer is:
"Loving Father, who sent us Jesus to be the Saviour of the whole world, we confess that all is not well for the creatures you have made and given into our care. We have thoughtlessly destroyed the habitats of plants and animals. We have accepted blessings from your hand such as good medical care, which results in population increase, but been blind to our responsibility in turn, to keep our own numbers down in order to safeguard other species. Forgive us and renew a right spirit within us."

(4) PETITION

Petitions are prayers for ourselves that we may pray in Jesus' name, i.e. knowing they are the kinds of prayers He would approve.
Some petitions could be made from (i) and (ii) below:

- (i) - We pray
 - We therefore pray for ourselves
 - We ask that you will change our hearts through the power of your Holy Spirit
- (ii) - that we may be obedient to you in looking after your Creation
- that we would take seriously our responsibility for looking after other species
 - that we might take better care of your world
 - that we may honour you by respecting animals both domestic and wild
 - that we might be worthy stewards of your Creation

Taking any two phrases, our prayer might be:

"We pray that we might be worthy stewards of your Creation."

Taking one or more phrases from each section:

"We ask that you will change our hearts through the power of your Holy Spirit, that we might take better care of your world and be worthy stewards of your Creation."

(5) INTERCESSION

Interceding is an action we take on behalf of another; in this case, on behalf of other species. We may pray for God's strength for those who look after nature or for nature itself.

We can combine elements from sections (i) and (ii) below:

- (i)
 - We ask that you will bless
 - We ask your blessing upon all creatures, especially
 - We ask that you will strengthen and guide Park Rangers who help
 - We ask your guidance and wisdom on all organisations that protect
- (ii)
 - threatened species
 - threatened species in Australia, such as the Bilby
 - endangered wildlife- endangered wildlife in the oceans
 - mistreated animals- disappearing species of frogs in polluted waterways
 - cassowaries in the Daintree area
 - Lemurs in Madagascar
 - Birds of Paradise in Papua New Guinea
 - Koalas in the coastal forests of NSW
 - whales in the southern ocean
 - natural habitats of plant and animal species, like tropical rainforests, grasslands, mangroves, woodlands and coral reefs.

Taking two phrases, we can construct the prayer:

"We ask that you will strengthen and guide Park Rangers who help mistreated animals."

Taking one or more phrases:

"We ask your guidance and wisdom on all organizations that protect endangered wildlife, such as whales in the southern oceans, Lemurs in Madagascar and Birds of Paradise in Papua New Guinea."

(6) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SCRIPTURE

The basis for a Christian's prayer is found in Scripture. It is helpful for us to remind ourselves of what the Scriptures say, for example:

- (i) - We acknowledge that
 - We acknowledge the Scripture that tells us that

- (ii)
 - of all the creatures you have made, you have equipped humans to look after the rest (Gen 1:26)
 - you have appointed us to rule in the same manner as Jesus - who showed Himself to be a Servant Lord (John 13)
 - over all species of plants and animals on land or in the sea, for their benefit and not for ours alone (Gen 1:26)
 - you loved the whole world, the 'cosmos', so much that you sent your one and only beloved Son Jesus to die for sinful humans (John 3:16), that we might be saved and receive a new heart towards you, towards each other and towards the other living things you have created
 - Creation groans as it waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed (Romans 8: 19,22)- we are the 'tenants' (Matthew 21) you have left in charge of your vineyard, to bear fruit through the power of your Holy Spirit and exercise responsible care of all that belongs to you
 - you want your will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven (Matthew 6:10)

If we take e.g. the last phrase of each group, our prayer becomes

"We acknowledge the Scripture (in Matthew 6:10) that tells us you want your will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."

If we take one or more phrases from each section, our prayer might be:

"We acknowledge that, of all the creatures you have made, you have equipped humans to look after the rest. Creation groans as it waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed and we are the 'tenants' you have left in charge of your vineyard, to bear fruit through the power of your Holy Spirit and exercise responsible care of all that belongs to you."

(7) CONCLUSION

Possible ways to end our prayer include:

- And we ask all these things in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord
 - And we ask all this in the precious Name of Jesus, through whom and for whom all things were made
 - In Jesus' Name we pray
- AMEN

A conclusion for our prayer might be

"And we ask all these things in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

COMPILING A PRAYER USING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRAYER

If our prayer for the care of the Creation is to cover several different types of prayer, we can put together the prayer sentences we have already constructed, then 'tidy up' the final product:

" Almighty God, Heavenly Father, we praise you for the wonder of your creation."

"We thank you for ears to hear water running over rocks in a stream, fragrances we can smell, like flowers in a garden and for those things we experience through TV, such as lemurs in Madagascar or Polar Bears in the Arctic."

"Lord, we thank you for Jesus who said 'I am the Bread of Life'. Help us not to seek the material wealth or physical blessings so highly valued by the world but to remember that Jesus came into this world in lowly circumstances. May we value Christ above all material things."

"Loving Father, who sent us Jesus to be the Saviour of the whole world, we confess that all is not well for the creatures you have made and given into our care. We have thoughtlessly destroyed the habitats of plants and animals. We have accepted blessings from your hand such as good medical care, which results in population increase, but been blind to our responsibility in turn, to keep our own numbers down in order to safeguard other species. Forgive us and renew a right spirit within us."

" We pray that we might be worthy stewards of your Creation."

"We ask your guidance and wisdom on all organizations that protect endangered wildlife such as whales in the southern oceans, Lemurs in Madagascar and Birds of Paradise in Papua New Guinea."

"We acknowledge the Scripture that tells us you want your will to be done on Earth as it is in Heaven."

"And we ask all these things in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."