Fearless

Praying

How focusing on God

changes your prayer life and your faith

Leslie Hudson

Dedicated to the girls in my Sunday school class.

You are always in my heart and mind as I write, pray, and meditate.

Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from the CSB (Christian Standard Bible), copyright 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers

Anything that has been **bolded** or *italicized* were my additions.

Contents

Introduction

**Part One: Elements of Prayer**

Praise

Confession

Thankfulness

Dependence

Intercession

Resolve

**Part Two: Scriptures and Prayer Journal Pages**

**Introduction**

I bet your prayer life is a reflection of your fears.

That’s a loaded statement, and you may be a little offended by it. You may think I’m wrong; you may want to assure me that your prayers are led by faith, and maybe you’re right.

Fear isn’t always a bad thing; when we consider that fear keeps us from picking up a rattlesnake or driving 100 miles an hour down the interstate, fear seems like an emotion that keeps us in check. Consider the following from Chip Dodd’s book *Voice of the Heart*:

“Fear brings us strength. It is the feeling that allows us to experience risk, trust, dependency, collaboration, and ultimately, wisdom because it helps us realize our need for help.”

“Fear can motivate you to reach out for help, risk your heart with your need and trust others for assistance. If you express fear truthfully, you can gain wisdom through the experience.”

Fear is two sides of the same coin; on one hand, if our fears make us more aware of our need and dependence on God, it’s making us wiser and humbler. But if instead it makes us more control-seeking or anxious, fear takes us away from faith and more fully into the realm of doubting—or thinking we don’t need—God.

No one wants to have a prayer life based on unhealthy fear, but it’s possible that you may have it without being aware. Here are a few of the characteristics:

• If you’re asking God to improve your circumstances according to what **you** deem to be the best situation

• If you’re seeking healing of a health issue, a situation, or a relationship because **you** can’t imagine life with that ongoing struggle

• If you’re certain that your life will be off track forever unless something in particular happens

• If the addition or subtraction of one person, relationship, situation, or emotion would make your life wholly good or wholly terrible

I’ve prayed these prayers. I was genuine, I was seeking God, and I was pouring out my heart to Him. But those types of prayers are guided by earthly, self-focused fears. When our focus is on the thing we fear, our prayers likewise become a reflection of the thing we deem most worthy of our time and attention.

For years, my prayers included a written list of items that I needed God to do for me. I now call this my “grocery list” prayer: keeping up with the things I need from God and handing it to Him every so often, usually when I’m at the end of my rope.

I’ll share some of my own grocery list prayers with you:

“Lord, please help my kids sleep.”

“Father, please help me get this job.”

“Jesus, please help him change his attitude.”

“Oh, Father, please heal her.”

Grocery-list prayers are self-focused and self-serving. They’re not evil or faith-less, but they are not God-focused. And they seem to be the exact type of prayers that most Christians offer to God.

But there’s another type of prayer: In 2 Kings 19, King Hezekiah found himself—and his nation, God’s people—in a desperate situation: the king of Assyria, Sennacherib, would be there soon to decimate Jerusalem and kill everyone in it. Sennacherib had just sent a letter detailing his brutal attack. (Yikes.)

Here’s what happened:

*Hezekiah took the letter from the messengers’ hands, read it, then went up to the Lord’s temple, and spread it out before the Lord. Then Hezekiah prayed before the Lord: “****LORD God of Israel****,* ***enthroned between the cherubim****,* ***you are God—you alone****—of all the kingdoms of the earth.* ***You made the heavens and the earth****. Listen closely, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see. Hear the words that Sennacherib has sent to mock the living God. LORD, it is true that the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but made by human hands—wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. Now,* ***LORD our God****, please save us from his power so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you,* ***LORD, are God—you alone****, (v. 14-19).*

Note, first, all the bold words; Hezekiah is focused on God’s identity. Before even making his request, the king reminded himself exactly who it was he was speaking to: LORD above. The one in charge. Creator. The only God.

Next, look at the requests made by King Hezekiah:

• Listen closely and hear

• Open your eyes and see

• Save us

No precise plan. No scripted answer. *In no way did Hezekiah tell God how to handle the situation; instead, he simply cried out for God to listen, see, and save*. This faithful king saw his situation clearly, saw God clearly, and laid the situation out for God to solve it.

Was Hezekiah afraid of the enemy? We have to think that he certainly was. Was he stressed? Yes; he was responsible for what would happen to an entire nation of people.

But Hezekiah didn’t try to seize control where he had none; instead, he believed that the One who knew all and had power over all could handle the situation better than King Hezekiah. So instead of handing God his grocery list, he simply stated the problem—without offering a solution—and entrusted it to the Lord.

We genuinely live out our faith when we believe that God can handle our issues, as Hezekiah did. Fear-based praying includes worrying, scripting God’s response, and lacking peace because we are powerless in that situation. Worrisome, me-focused praying isn’t praying to God; it’s self-centered, idolatrous meditation.

**But there is a different type of prayer: Fear-of-God praying**. The Hebrew word for “fear” sounds something like, “yah-RAY,” and it contains both the idea of being afraid, being fearful, and being reverent. The object of this adjective can be God or it can be other things; you are fearful of the thing you most revere. It appears in scripture dozens of times, but here is a sampling:

Genesis 22:12

Then he said, “Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you **fear** God, since you have not withheld your only son from me.”

Judges 7:3

Now announce to the troops, ‘Whoever is **fearful** and trembling may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’

2 Kings 17:41

They **feared** the Lord but also served their idols. Still today, their children and grandchildren continue doing as their ancestors did.

Job 1:1

There was a man in the country of Uz named Job. He was a man of complete integrity, who **feared** God and turned away from evil.

Psalm 103:17

But from eternity to eternity the Lord’s faithful love is toward those who **fear** him, and his righteousness toward the grandchildren

Malachi 3:16:

At that time those who feared the Lord spoke to one another. The Lord took notice and listened. So a book of remembrance was written before him for those who **feared** the Lord and had high regard for his name.

When we pray with our focus on fearing God, we look at Him as the emphasis of our lives and our prayers, seeing that He is bigger than our human fears and has the situation in His control. It takes into account each of His characteristics and prays to God as He reveals Himself in scripture: holy, omnipotent, omniscient, sovereign, and beyond all that we can comprehend.

*Fearful praying is focused on our struggles; Fear-of-God praying sets our focus on God Himself.*

When we pray in response to our earthly or human fear, our focus is on the thing we fear: sickness, death, a changing situation, an unchanging situation, loss, gain, etc. We look at that fearful thing and base our prayers on avoiding, hiding from, or leaping over our fear; never would we pray to face it.

***Fear-of-God prayer, on the other hand, focuses on God.*** We look Him square in the face, seeing clearly who He is and what He does and what He is like. We don’t ignore the request, but we also don’t script God’s answer. Instead, we simply choose to pray for the situation in response to who God is. **When we choose this fear-of-God praying, we let His identity shape not only how we see the situation but also how we pray for it.**

The Bible is full of fear-of-God prayers. I looked up as many of them as I could, copied them into my prayer journal, and started praying through them. I found fear-of-God prayers in the tabernacle (1 Kings 8), in a cave (Psalm 57 and 142), in the belly of a great fish (Jonah 2), in a garden (John 17), and on a mountainside (Matthew 6:9-15). Fear-of-God prayers came from the mouths of men and women, rich and poor, educated and common, young and old. As I looked carefully at these God-focused prayers, I consistently found the following features:

• Praise

• Confession

• Thankfulness

• Dependence

• Petition and Intercession

• Resolve

This notebook is based on fearing God in our prayers rather than being fearful of life. Each day, we’ll take one characteristic of God and pray through it in such a way that His identity shapes our prayers.

In choosing the Scriptures for God-focused praying, I asked myself, “Who does **God** say He is?” I looked up dozens of instances where God said, “I am…” and found that His description of Himself is powerful, honest, and exactly what we need. Each verse points to God’s revelation of who He is or what He does, whether He’s talking about God the Father, God the Son, or God the Spirit. Knowing that my prayers are based on who God declares Himself to be, I am confident I’m getting a clear view of God and a solid foundation for my prayers.

I started praying like this several months ago, and it has changed everything. I’m confident in my prayers because they are Spirit-led. I’m confident in God and His path for my life. I’m not afraid of laying out my prayers before the Lord—like Hezekiah did—and giving Him full authority. I don’t hand God my grocery-list prayers anymore because I instead entrust each day, each situation, and each step to Him. I’m fearless in my praying because I’m looking into the face of God Almighty before I even utter a word.

You can pray fearlessly, too. Come join me.

Part One

Elements of Prayer

**Element 1: Praise**

*Who is God?*

At its most basic element, praise is acknowledging who God is. It’s not what He does for me or what I need Him to do; it’s just who He is. I stop there and worship Him in light of His identity.

Scripture is our primary resource for knowing God, but we need not worry: it’s chock-full of descriptors and names. There are dozens—some resources list over 100—descriptions of God in the Bible. Here, though, I focused only on the ways God described Himself. Simply, I typed “I AM” into a Bible search software and wrote down every time it was God or Jesus speaking those words. And I found that God the Father and Son both had much to say about the Spirit, so in every situation we’re staring into *how God describes Himself.*

Praise is the first element of this prayer journal because it should be the first thing we do: look to God. We set aside our requests, our worries, and our daily activities and look into the face of the great I AM.

It may be the simplest prayer to pray: “God, You are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” But then the next step takes the discipline of solitude and stillness: stop and meditate. Take a minute (or two or ten) and consider what that really means. Don’t try to apply it, don’t make it useful to your life, and don’t consider who else needs to know this particular characteristic of God. Just tell Him who He is and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the depth and intensity of that characteristic as you’ve never considered.

**Element 2: Confession**

*How have I missed God’s identity?*

Some might define confession as “admitting to sin,” but it’s deeper than that: it also includes agreeing with God. The Greek word for “confess” means to agree, concede, or profess oneself as the worshiper of one. In this notebook, confession reflects praise: knowing the identity of God, where and how am I off?

Some questions that lead us to confession include: What’s gripping my heart or mind? Where do I see negative or rebellious attitude or a hard heart? Am I neglecting love, forgiveness, or mercy? What scriptures might I give lip service to but not truly live, believe, and speak? What sins am I excusing or ignoring? Confession and praise work together well because once we look into the perfect light of God and His Son Jesus, we can’t help but see ourselves as fallen, pitiful, and sinful. Praise should lead us straight to confession.

In some situations, confession starts like this: “I know God is \_\_\_\_ and He is the only one.” Idolatry is avoided when we praise and confess side-by-side because we are able to see clearly when we have given someone or something the identity that belongs only to God.

As with praise, confession involves stopping and allowing the Holy Spirit to move and speak to us. We ask Him to bring to mind a time when we disregarded this aspect of God. We ask Him to help us see where we spoke untruth about God’s identity or took a step of unbelief or fear.

**Element 3: Thanksgiving**

*How have I experienced this truth of God?*

Thanksgiving is grateful recognition of all God has done, is doing, and will do. It’s thanking God for the good, the blessings, the beautiful, and the special.

It’s also thanking God for the ugly, the boring, and the worst-case scenario that happens when you were so sure it wouldn’t. Often in scripture you’ll see the phrase, “thank offering,” in which something is sacrificed as we say our thankyous to God; in the Old Testament, a thank offering would have been something from the garden or the field.

We need to learn to sacrifice our plan, pride, personal rights, and control. Thanksgiving differs from praise in that it’s being thankful for God being the Lord of my life, acknowledging that I have experienced this aspect of His character personally. Sometimes it’s positive (“Lord, thank you that you are forgiving,”) and at other times it’s not something we would normally thank Him for (“Father, thank you that you are the great Judge and will one day call each of us to judgment.”)

So in this third element, we are thanking God for being exactly who He is, for revealing Himself to us, and for helping us see ourselves clearly in light of His character. Sometimes we thank God for things we didn’t seek and didn’t want; that’s okay. He’s God, and thankfulness includes saying, “Thank you” for the everyday, the unexpected, the bothersome, and even the taxing.

**Element 4: Dependence**

*How do I need God?*

We can’t walk in light of God’s identity unless we realize we need Him at every step.

Once we’ve praised Him for who He is, confessed we’ve not lived in the light of His truth, and thanked Him for being so consistently amazing, the next words out of our mouths should sound something like, “I need you, Lord. I need you to help me believe it, to help me speak it to my family and friends, and to help me reflect that you are this characteristic to everyone around me. I want to glorify you, but I can’t without your help.”

Some Christians find this type of prayer a little…well…demeaning. People (like yours truly) who have always been the go-getter, Type-A personality who can handle it ourselves, thank you very much, rarely take the time to voice their dependence.

But this prayer of dependence has been a game-changer for my faith, because in the past I would simply resolve to do better—and fail. With a prayer of dependence, I can admit that I have failed and I will fail, and that only when I depend totally on the Lord will I see victory.

Then there are some people who are hard on themselves. Dependence-praying takes our focus off our own faults and chooses instead to depend on God, who gives us everything we need for life and godliness. Dependence praying allows us to walk in freedom and confidence because we’re relying on God instead of ourselves.

Dependence sounds like confession, but it’s not the same. The focus is on our need of God to live in His presence (dependence) rather than admitting we have missed the mark (confession). Similar? Yes. Same? No. Both elevate God and help us see ourselves in a humble, yet fully-confident, honesty.

**Element 5: Petition and Intercession**

*How does God’s identity lead me to pray?*

For most praying people, this was the only aspect of your prayer life: the list. These are the things that bother you, rob you of your peace, annoy you, or make you anxious. Included on this list are sicknesses, people in need, and your own needs, financial distress, and the list that could go on and on. This is the time for your list to shine.

However, it’s here that all you’ve done so far—praise, confess, thank, and depend—culminate into shaping each item on your list. You resist the temptation to script God’s response and simply pray it in light of who He is. And because of who He is, you can pray powerfully for yourself (petition) and others (intercession).

Each prayer of intercession begins with, “Lord, because you are \_\_(quality of God)\_\_\_ I pray for \_\_\_\_(person, situation, etc)\_\_\_.” I’ll give you an example: each day I pray for my children. But I don’t want my prayers for them to reflect my earthly fears (“Lord protect them from…”) but instead I want my prayers to reflect my faith in God. So I may pray, “Lord, you are holy. And because you are holy, I pray for my kids to desire holiness in their own lives. I pray for holy friends and holy thoughts, and I trust that you will reveal your holiness to them and through them.”

It's so easy to fall back into a grocery list-type of prayer here. FIGHT THAT. Don’t tell God how to answer it. Instead, pray with confidence that HE IS AMAZING and that He’s got the best answer already in motion. If He removes the person or the situation, great! But if He doesn’t, and hardship comes, let prayers of intercession give you hope that this was part of His plan.

**Element 6: Resolve**

*How does this change me today?*

Resolve is the final, stand-and-fight stance that allows you to exit your focused time of prayer and enter your day with power. This is where the Scripture that instigated your praise, the song that popped into your mind, or the statement of faith you crafted will go with you for the day.

Perhaps you’ll sing a song that points you to God’s identity as you drive to work. Maybe you’ll write the scripture or the truth on an index card and keep it in your mirror. Or maybe you’ll put it in the notes of your phone and look at it each time you open up any app.

God’s revelation changes us: It makes us stronger, it helps us walk the straight and narrow path, it guides us, and it makes us confident. So, as you stand up from your time of prayer, you state your resolve: head held high, eyes fixed on the Lord.

Part Two

Scriptures and Prayer Journal

In the following pages you’ll find two sample prayers following this fear-of-God system. After that, you’ll find a blank page that you can print out over and over for your own personal use.

There is so much freedom here! You could write your answers or not. You could speak them aloud or not. You can pray these alone or with your family. I’m praying these prayers as a woman who’s followed Jesus for decades, but I’m also praying them with my just-baptized children. It’s for all ages and all levels of spiritual maturity.

I suggest either writing or speaking your prayers aloud in order to stay focused and actually complete the prayer element. If you simply read it silently, you’ll be tempted to not follow the prompts. I focus best if I’m walking alone and talking aloud to God. The motion of putting one foot in front of the other, coupled with the mindlessness of it, keeps me from being distracted but also encourages me to truly respond and converse with the Lord.

Begin by writing the scripture listed or at least the portion of scripture that contains God’s identity of Himself. Identify that characteristic and then keep that one thing in mind as you walk through the steps of praise, confession, thankfulness, dependence, petition and intercession, and resolve. We pray in the name of Jesus (John 14:14), understanding that He alone is our access to God.

There are no wrong answers. If you leave your prayer time each day knowing God more clearly and trusting Him with each item on your prayer list, you’ve accomplished the goal.

“*May they know that you alone—whose name is the Lord—are the Most High over the whole earth*,” (Psalm 83:18)

Genesis 9:12—God is…a covenant maker

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations.

Praise:

Lord, You are the source of every covenant between heaven and earth. You made covenants with Noah and Abraham and David, and through the blood of Jesus you made a covenant with all mankind. Your covenant is backed by Your authority and Your power; they are guaranteed to stand the test of eternity.

Confession:

Father, there are times when I doubt your covenants. Sometimes I don’t believe that You love me, that You are there, or that You have the best plan. Sometimes I fail to believe in the power of your covenants to go with me through my days. I also don’t reflect your faithfulness in my own covenants and promises to people. Help me point to You in faithful words.

Thankfulness:

Thank you, Lord, for making the covenants of the Old Testament. Thank You for the covenant of righteousness we have through Jesus. Thank you for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Every Old Testament covenant points to Your loving faithfulness; every New Testament covenant points to Jesus.

Dependence:

Lord, I need You to supply me with the faith to believe Your covenants and allow them to shape my faith. I can’t make promises that impact others without first recognizing how solid Your covenants are.

Petition and Intercession:

Father, today I pray for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. She’s struggling in her faith. She’s questioning if You are who you say you are and if she can really put her faith in You. Help her to see the faithfulness of Your covenants and the promise of salvation and eternity. I also pray for our family; Lord, where would you have us to make a covenant with You? How can we better point to Your faithfulness as we live and move in this world?

Resolve:

God has always been faithful to His covenants in the past, and He will be faithful to us even today.

Genesis 15:1—God is…my shield and rewarder

“Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great.”

Praise:

Just as you were Abram’s shield and told him not to be afraid, you say the same thing to me today. “Leslie, don’t be afraid. I am your shield; your reward will be very great.” The fact that You are my shield enables me to be unafraid; the fact that You are my reward allows me to walk fearlessly in whatever comes. As my shield, You protect me from anything that would harm me.

Confession:

When hard times, sickness, doubts, or threats come, I often feel unprotected. I forget You are my shield and I find myself surrounded by fear. I’m sorry, Father. Regardless of how I feel, I know You are my shield and my very great reward.

Thankfulness:

Thank you, Father, for always protecting me. Whether I realize it or not, and whether I remember or not, You are still my shield. Thank you for being my protector, my weapon, my confidence, and my help. I’m a sitting duck without You, Lord.

Dependence:

I’m reminded of Ephesians 6:16 here: “In every situation, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” Lord, the enemy is firing at me every day; only when I use the shield of faith—which is You!—will I know the protection and bravery I need.

Petition and Intercession:

Father, I need you to protect our family today. Please protect us from temptation, from sour attitudes, and from fear. Also Lord, Mary Ann comes to mind today; I know she is afraid. Help her remember the truth that You are her shield; use me to be the loving reminder if that’s what You would have me do today. Give her the freedom to know she doesn’t need to be brave or even confident; she needs only to know that You are her shield. Amen.

Resolve:

\*song lyrics: “I will not be moved, and I’ll say of the Lord You are my shield, my strength, my portion deliverer, my shelter, strong tower, my very present help in time of need.”

Exodus 3:15—God is…

Exodus 15:26—God is…

Exodus 22:27—God is…

Exodus 29:46—God is…

Exodus 34:10—God is…

Matthew 11:29—Jesus is…

Matthew 28:20—Jesus is…

Luke 11:13—The Spirit is…

Leviticus 11:44—God is…

Leviticus 20:8—God is…

Numbers 18:20—God is…

Deuteronomy 4:1—God is…

Job 42:7—God is…

Luke 22:27—Jesus is…

John 5:17—Jesus is…

John 3:5—The Spirit is…

Psalm 46:10—God is…

Psalm 75:3—God is…

Isaiah 27:3—God is…

Isaiah 41:4—God is…

Isaiah 41:13—God is…

John 6:35—Jesus is…

John 8:12—Jesus is…

John 4:23-24—The Spirit is…

Isaiah 42:8—God is…

Isaiah 43:11—God is…

Isaiah 43:13—God is…

Isaiah 43:15—God is…

Isaiah 43:19—God is…

John 8:23—Jesus is…

John 8:42—Jesus is…

John 6:63—The Spirit is…

Isaiah 44:24—God is…

Isaiah 45:3—God is…

Isaiah 45:7—God is…

Isaiah 46:13—God is…

Isaiah 48:17—God is…

John 8:58—Jesus is…

John 10:7—Jesus is…

John 14:17—The Spirit is…

Isaiah 49:23—God is…

Isaiah 51:12—God is…

Isaiah 51:15—God is…

Isaiah 52:6—God is…

Jeremiah 3:12—God is…

John 10:11, 14—Jesus is…

John 10:36—Jesus is…

John 14:26—The Spirit is…

Jeremiah 3:14—God is…

Jeremiah 9:7—God is…

Jeremiah 29:23—God is…

Jeremiah 50:31—God is…

Jeremiah 51:36—God is…

John 11:25—Jesus is…

John 13:13—God is…

John 16:13—The Spirit is…

Ezekiel 20:44—God is…

Ezekiel 20:27—God is…

Ezekiel 36:23—God is…

Ezekiel 37:6—God is…

Ezekiel 37:14—God is…

John 14:2—Jesus is…

John 14:6—Jesus is…

John 16:8-11—The Spirit is…

Ezekiel 38:23—God is…

Ezekiel 39:7—God is…

Hosea 11:9—God is…

Habakkuk 1:5—God is…

Habakkuk 2:6—God is…

John 14:10—Jesus is…

John 15:1—Jesus is…

Acts 1:8—The Spirit is…

Zechariah 10:6—God is…

Malachi 1:14—God is…

Revelation 1:8—Jesus is…

Revelation 1:17—Jesus is…

Revelation 1:18—Jesus is…

Revelation 2:23—Jesus is…

Revelation 21:5—Jesus is…

Revelation 22:7—Jesus is…

Haggai 2:5—The Spirit is…