



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

Introduction to the 40-Day Prayer Guide

Synod 2023 is coming quickly and looks to be another challenging year for us together. As we look ahead to Synod 2023, you are invited to participate by joining others across North America in prayer. These prayers will reflect the theme of Philippians 2:1-11, summarized by verse 5: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

These prayers are written by CRC members, missionaries, pastors, and staff. They are written by young and old. They are written in many languages, with English translations for all, reflecting the beautiful diversity of the CRC.

The authors of these prayers hope that you find in them a perspective of grace, generosity, love, and longing, encouraging us all to have a Christlike mindset in our relationships with one another.

—Jon Hoekema

SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2023 - DAY 1

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Same Attitude as Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Ephesians 3:17-21

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Prayer

By Jon Hoekema, CRC prayer shepherd and pastor of Horizon Community Church, Downers Grove, Illinois

Dear Father in heaven,
In your great love, you demonstrated your humility to us by sending Jesus to become one of us. Your love is beyond what our created minds can understand.

God, we praise you for your extravagant love.
We praise you for a love that we don't deserve.
We praise you for a love so freely given.

Lord Jesus, we praise you for your humility, that you left the glory of heaven to bring us the good news of God's grace. We praise you that the creator became the created.

Lord, we know that this truth should completely transform our relationships with others as you have transformed our relationship with you. But we confess that we don't demonstrate the love and humility and grace you have for us to one another. We like to be heard, we like to get our way, we like to be important, and we like to look out for our own interests rather than the interests of others.

Forgive us, Father, for not having the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.

Continue to work in us the transforming power of your Holy Spirit to make us more and more like Christ. May we grow in being gracious, generous, and loving toward one another as we long to be more like Christ.

Father, you're able to do more than we can ask or imagine through the power of the Spirit who is at work within us. May you receive all glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever!

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What aspect of Jesus' astounding act of humility causes you to praise God?

To whom in your life do you need to demonstrate the same humility that Jesus demonstrates to you? Lord Jesus, we praise you for your humility, that you left the glory of heaven to bring us the good news of God's grace. We praise you that the creator became the created.



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MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023 - DAY 2

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Same Attitude as Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 5:8-10

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Prayer (in Ukrainian)

By George de Vuyst, Resonate missionary, Kyiv, Ukraine

Небесний Батьку, Бог примиритель, Цар народів, ми приходимо до тебе з серцями,

сповненими вдячності за все, що ти зробив для нас у Христі Ісусі. Дякуємо, що ти даєш все необхідне для нашого примирення з тобою та один з одним через Ісуса.

Оскільки ми зібралися маленькою частиною твоєї церкви, ми молимо, щоб ти наповнив наші серця бажанням зцілення і примирення усіх наших стосунків. Ми визнаємо, що ми швидкі, щоб поранити інших, і повільні, щоб просити пробачення. Наші намагання поєднати істину і благодать дуже часто далекі від того, чого ми бажаємо, не кажучи про те, чого бажаєш ти. Господь, прости нас знову, ми молимо.

Коли ми ще були твоїми ворогами, ти дав нам прощення і примирення. Нам також важко це зрозуміти. Даруй нам сил бути твоїми агентами примирення. Ми молимося за мир і примирення всюди у твоєму світі, де є розділення і війна. І ми визнаємо, що ми – церква - також потребуємо твого миру і примирення один з одним. Ти хотів, щоб ми жили в єдності і раділи нашій різноманітності. Натомість ми створили розділення і сприймаємо тих, хто відрізняється від нас, як загрозу, замість того, щоб бачити в них потенційне джерело благословінь. Допоможи нам побачити один одного з твоєї точки зору, шанувати і цінувати інших більше, ніж себе.

Дякуємо тобі за дар твоєї церкви. Пробач нам те, що ми не живемо за покликанням, яке ти нам дав. Зціли нас. Примири нас. Віднови нас. Направляй нас, щоб ми були вірним тілом Христа, чого ти завжди хотів для нас, щоб твоє Ім'я було возвеличено, прославлено і було великим серед народів.

В ім'я Ісуса

Амінь.

English translation:

Heavenly Father, reconciling God, King of the nations,

We come to you with hearts filled with gratitude for all you have done for us in Christ Jesus. Thank you for providing all that is needed for our reconciliation to you and to each other through Jesus.

As we gather as a small part of your church, we pray that you will fill our hearts with a longing for the healing of all our relationships. We confess that we are quick to wound others and slow to ask forgiveness. Our attempts to combine truth and grace so often fall far short of what we desire—not to speak of what you desire. Lord, forgive us again, we pray.

While we were still your enemies, you reconciled us to yourself through Jesus. That is so hard for us to comprehend. Grant us the strength to be your Christlike agents of reconciliation. We pray for peace and reconciliation everywhere in your world where there are divisions and war. And we confess that we, the church, also need your peace and to be reconciled to each other. You desired for us to live in unity and to celebrate our diversity. But we have created divisions and tend to see those who are different from us as threats instead of potential sources of blessing. Help us to see each other from your perspective, and to honor and value others above ourselves.

Thank you for the gift of your church. Forgive us for the ways that we have not lived up to the calling you have given us. Heal us. Reconcile us. Restore us. Guide us into being the faithful body of Christ that you have always intended for us, that your name may be honored, glorified, and made great among the nations.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

With whom might God be prompting you to be reconciled? What is one step you might take to make reconciliation with that person possible?

How does the statement "While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him" transform your attitude and heart toward others?



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TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2023 - DAY 3

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: United with Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Luke 9:23

[Jesus] said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Prayer

By Al Postma, transitional executive director-Canada; Brantford, Ontario

Loving God,

When Jesus first instructed his disciples to “take up their cross daily,” how much they must have shuddered. When we look ahead to our own deaths, we yearn to die in peace and comfort. We certainly do not hope for a violent and painful death. We do not want to take up a cross.

When we reflect on all the ways you ask us to take up our cross daily, we know how resistant we are to it. We see how the depth of our own brokenness is anything but clean and comfortable. Whatever the cross is that we carry, dying to ourselves is vulnerable, challenging, and painful. We lament the energy we give to avoiding our own cross, seeking instead the safety we have become accustomed to within our own brokenness.

Particularly in these moments of resistance, we ask that you give us the reminder of your own willingness to take up your cross. Remind us that you are not asking us to do anything you were not willing to do. And remind us that we are united in taking up our crosses. The pain of dying to ourselves is a call you give not just to me but to us all. We die with you. We die together.

So we pray for ourselves, asking you to work in us the capacity to submit to dying with you. We pray for our communities, asking that we can be places where we feel your support and love in dying together. We pray that we may experience our unity with you and with one another as together we deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow you.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What are you holding on to in your life that you need to let go of in order to take up your cross?

Our union with Jesus Christ is both a gift (something we receive from God) and a daily practice (something we are learning to live into with the Spirit). What are one or two ways in which your friends, family, or small group can encourage each other to receive and practice our union with Jesus Christ?



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WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2023 - DAY 4

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: United with Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 6:5-14

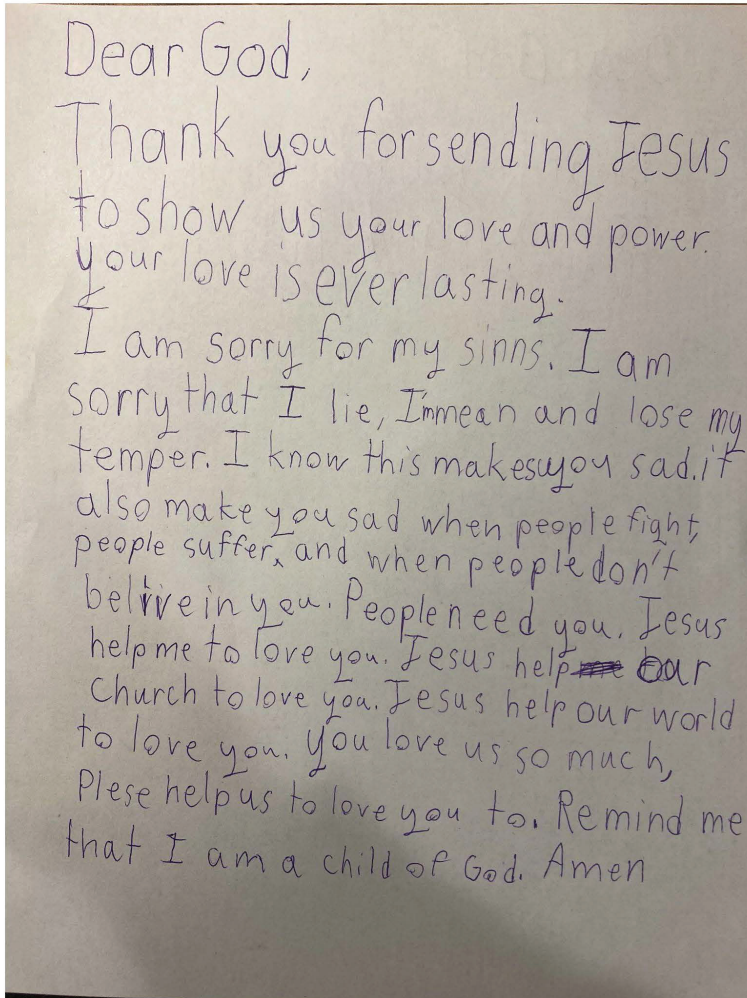
If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Prayer

By Mia Roelofs (9 years old), violin player, Washington DC CRC



Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where do you need Jesus in your life to help you to love him?

What is one way you can remind someone else that they are a child of God? And what is one way someone else could remind you that you are a child of God?



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THURSDAY, MAY 4, 2023 - DAY 5

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: United with Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: John 15:1-4

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

Prayer (in Navajo)

By Sharon Jim, Sunday school teacher at Window Rock (Ariz.) CRC

Nihi Diyin nihik'ijídljinií,

T'áá 'aníinii bee nanihinítin, ayoo ch'íid bits'áaji' nihaa'áhólyá.

Nizaad éí baa dadzíínlí. Nida'íínlíigo binahji' ni'bikáá honiídló áádóó nihe'oodlą' danęęsé, ílástsii' dadíníitsééhígi át'éego. Nihe'oodlą' éí nizaad t'áá aníinii binahji' danęęsé. Nizaad, t'áá ákwííj bik'ehgo dahinii'náa le', nináhágháá biyi'góó. Na'áłchíní daniídljinií Diyin k'ehgo dahinii'náanii nihe'oodlą' da'ahólzha'go bee naadahwii'niih. Yá'ąąshiidi yah anáhiikaigo nihe'oodlą' bee naadahwii'niih doo. Nízhí' binahji' t'áá 'ákót'ée doo. Amen

English translation:

Our blessed Lord,

You have taught us truth from lies. You have taught us. You are truth. So we trust your words of truth. We have learned to trust you to be our source of existence, to become the fertile seeds of growth. Our growth comes from being supported by your holy words.

May we be in accordance with your written words to us with every rotation of the earth, with every change of the seasons, and throughout every course of a year. May the Christlike livelihoods of our brothers and sisters' intertwining vines together bring you glory until we are united with you at the feasting table to share our fruits in heaven.

We pray these things in your holy name.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Though fruit comes in particular seasons, branches remain connected to the vine year-round. What practices have you found helpful for remaining connected to Jesus throughout the year?

What fruit from remaining in the vine in your life will be for God's glory?



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FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2023 - DAY 6

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: United with Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Prayer

By Andy Sytsma, pastor at New Life CRC in Spring, Texas

Lord, what an amazing gift you give—a new identity in Christ! I confess I have struggled in the past. Other experiences and challenges have caused me to look elsewhere. Yet it is you who remind and assure me: I belong to Jesus. I am not my own. My life is now hidden “in Christ.” What a gift to know that I’m not alone, that I am not defined by my past or circumstances. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me from my sin. Now I am free to live for you and in your love. Give me eyes of faith to see this truth.

Thank you that I can rest in this comfort. I don’t need to pretend my sins aren’t that bad. You remind me: “I have been crucified with Christ.” My sins are no more. You have removed them from me, as far as the east is from the west. And thank you for the comfort that I don’t need to perform to gain approval from others: “Christ lives in me.” Jesus, you are my righteousness. Help me rest in this new identity.

Lord, I confess that at times my pretending and performing have left me spiritually exhausted. I have been striving to avoid or attain something I am not. Thank you for this reassurance that I can live into what already is—your finished work on the cross applied to my life, here today. Give each of us eyes of faith to see our new identity “in Christ.” Help us to rest “in Christ.” Remind us of who we belong to. Help us to

know your love. Encourage our hearts so that we can encourage others. You are enough, Lord.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In what areas of your life do you need to be reminded to live into your identity in Christ?

What is one tangible way you can help someone else to experience God's love for them in Jesus Christ?



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SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023 - DAY 7

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Comfort from his love

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Prayer

By Benet EB Dogonyaro, Calvin Theological Seminary Th.M. student; pastor in the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria

A story was told of a wealthy man and two of his workers. One took care of the garden and the flowers, while the other took care of the washing. The wealthy man had two geese that he loved dearly. One day, the gardener was trying his new catapult and accidentally killed one of the geese. Then he secretly buried it. But the other worker saw him do that and always used it against him. The washerman would threaten the gardener, forcing him to do the washing as well as the gardening—otherwise, he said, he would tell their master that the gardener had killed the goose. The gardener suffered under this fellow for a long time until one day he decided to confess his sin and tell his master everything. The master forgave him. But the other worker did not know that his colleague had confessed and had been forgiven. So the next time the washerman threatened him, he told the man that he should go and tell their master. What a comfort the gardener found in acknowledging and confessing his sin!

This sounds like me whenever I am holding on to an unconfessed sin. Real joy and comfort come from Christ alone, when we acknowledge and confess our sins.

Dear Lord,

You know me inside and out. I am before you just as I am, with my filthiness. I know that I have sinned in many ways, knowingly and unknowingly, with sins of commission and sins of omission. Help me, by your grace, to confess my sins in your presence and to find comfort that comes from you alone.

My Lord and my Father, hold my hand and lead me through this life so that I will be true to you and not fall back again.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What have you been holding on to that you need to confess to God?

How would you complete this sentence: "Forgiveness of sin is like . . ."