

# Advent 4 Prayers

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## REVIEW

Back to the Father.  
Formed and gifted.  
Sent as witnesses.  
Peace into everyday life.

Here is a review of what we talked about during Advent, focusing on the Holy Spirit. The Spirit points to the Father and reminds us we are not alone. He forms and gifts us, particularly to send us as a witness, sustaining us as we go in the world to bring peace into our everyday lives. Today we will “land the plane” and talk about one of our Village traditions, something we have been doing for 20 years.



Today I want to remind you that the Spirit is the One who intercedes through us: by the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.



Let's start with a search on the internet about what might happen in the future. “Uncertain” and “Expensive” are the two words that come up, both nationally and locally...and even in our neighborhoods and families. Today, AI is going crazy along with expensive housing, political and violent unrest, and inflation. These are the backdrop to your 20 prayers. The reality is that if any of these don't bother **you**, the people around you are affected by these.

### Romans 8:26

26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

It's good to be reminded of Rom 8:26. Note the word “weakness” in Greek means weakness of any kind, here referring to what to pray, how to say it! I've been doing 20 prayers for 20 years and I always come with uncertainty about what to pray. But know that the Holy Spirit is interceding through you!

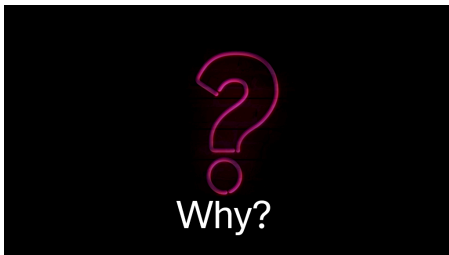
The 20 Prayers Practice is NOT:

- A Productivity Hack
- A Wish List
- A Spiritual Maturity Test

These prayers are not productivity hacks or wishes or resolutions or tests of spiritual maturity.

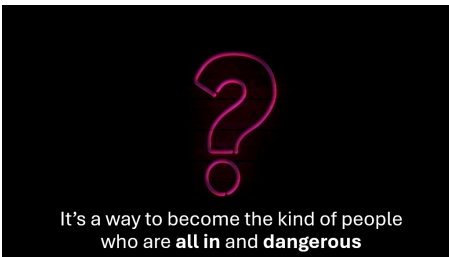
What are the 20 Prayers?

- 5 prayers for yourself
- 5 prayers for your family
- 5 prayers for your church
- 5 prayers for your neighborhood



Before 2026 starts, we write out 5 prayers in each of the following categories. **Neighborhood** could mean where you work or live: the concept of “neighborhood” can be big or small.

First, we do this because our leaders tell us to do it!



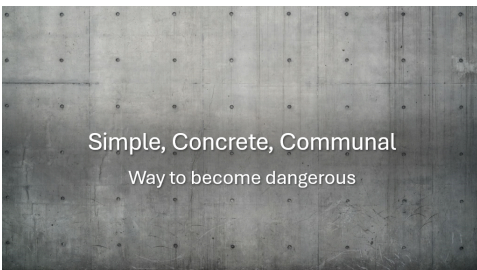
Second, this is also a way to become a people who is all in and dangerous.

### Becoming an “ALL” Kind of People

Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.



This means we become a people like Eph 6:18. These prayers are a monastic practice of disciplines that creates spiritual maturity. This doesn't mean we personally do all of these all the time but when done communally in our little corner of 140 people, someone is praying often. This requires a lifestyle of prayer, a community that is “all in.” Also, developing the 20 Prayers is a communal process: Don't do it by yourself. It's part of the puzzle piece of making us “all in.”



The 20 Prayers also make us dangerous. In Acts 4, John and Peter heal someone, are preaching, and are arrested with the warning to stop preaching about Jesus. The next time they are told something violent and bad would happen to them. I noticed the WAY they prayed made them dangerous in a good way.

Their first instinct is community, not isolation.



Acts 4:23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their **own people** and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.



If a dramatic event happens to me, I usually don't go to people. I need time alone to think and prepare what to do next. But it is not communal.

Their prayer is God-centered before it is request-centered.

Acts 4:24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "**Sovereign Lord**," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: *"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one."* 27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 **They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.**

These kinds of events should move us toward community like we see Peter and John do. When a crisis happens or I want a change, most of the time, this is NOT my prayer: "God you are sovereign." As you wrestle with what you want to pray about, what you want to be different, FIRST position yourself under the fact that God is the ruler of all things.

They didn't ask for the opposition to go away; they ask for faithfulness inside of it.

Now, Lord, consider their threats and **enable** your servants to **speak** your word with great **boldness**. 30 **Stretch out** your hand to **heal** and **perform signs and wonders** through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

The way Peter and John ask is also not what I commonly do. If I was with Peter and John, I would pray that all the rulers would die and be overruled. I would not say "Jesus, there is a threat, so enable me to be bold and speak your words." They wanted to be a dangerous people in the midst of conflict. I invite you to think about where the rule of darkness (or of men) is pushing in and how you might want God to change you so signs and wonders can happen around you.

The Spirit's filling leads to bold witness



31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were **all filled** with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Notice what happened to Peter and John after they did this.

These prayers are not a wish list: it's an invitation to God to bring his sovereign rule over our church, our families, our neighborhoods to see God's signs and wonders around us.



Here is the posture of writing these prayers: Make them honest, specific (measurable, not just "make me a nice person"), things that are God's will, things that can be revisited weekly (a list that you can create a rhythm for: Speaking out loud the whole list one day a week), and talk about these in your Pilgrim Groups.

Here are some ways to write these prayers:

**for yourself**

Jesus, form me into a person who \_\_\_\_\_.

**for your family**

Bless and protect \_\_\_\_\_. (watch over their health / keep them safe in travel / guard their friendships / help them sleep well)

**for your church**

Holy Spirit, strengthen and protect \_\_\_\_\_ (leader / volunteer / staff / Villager). Let them grow in \_\_\_\_\_ and give them help through \_\_\_\_\_. Names: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

**for your neighborhood (name streets, schools, coworkers)**

God, bless \_\_\_\_\_ (neighbor by name) with \_\_\_\_\_, and show me one concrete way to love them this week/Month/Year.

These are things you can follow up with, both with yourself and with others. You can watch how God is working.

I am going to give you a PDF in the newsletter so you can write these down and amend them.