



What drives the Prayers of Intention is what Paul tells us in Romans 6:13, “present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.” Likewise, and similarly, Paul goes on to tell them, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1). **Notice the focus on our need to intend to present oneself to God (Devote the parts of your body to God as tools for justice and goodness in the world).**

NOTE: Romans 6:13 *Voice Paraphrased, “13 Don’t offer your bodily members to sin’s service as tools of wickedness; instead, offer your body to God as those who are alive from the dead, and devote the parts of your body to God as tools for justice and goodness in this world.”* **Romans 12:1** *Voice Paraphrased, “12 Brothers and sisters, in light of all I have shared with you about God’s mercies, I urge you to offer your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice to God, a sacred offering that brings Him pleasure; this is your reasonable, essential worship.*

In Prayers of Intention, we are making an explicit effort to bring ourselves to God (*the experience of coming before God*). Thus, **Prayers of Intention** are various ways of presenting ourselves to God and, in that presenting, making an intention to live life with Him throughout the day. In that sense, a Prayer of Intention is a kind of **“prayer of presenting” ourselves to God each day**. *As Christians we have intentions embedded deep in our hearts, but, at times, it is commandeered by contrary habits that cultivate intentions of life, heart, and body to lead us elsewhere, away from our Source.* Thus, it is important to be explicit about this intending.

NOTE: Commandeer, *“officially take possession or control of (something), especially for military purposes.”*

This leads us to bringing down what our heart grabs onto when we wake, and instead intentionally pray a “Prayer of Intention” to God, a prayer of presenting yourself to the Lord: **“Lord, I am here, I present myself to you. Here I am. Before I do anything else, I first want to be with you.”** This first move is not finding a solution to our worries. Rather, the **first thing we need is “intend” to be with God**. That means we intend to actually show up in His presence, and not just try to use God to get life on our terms. We want to be with God regardless of what He has for us. There is nothing simpler and more possible than this...a gift and relief for our souls.

Now, we may not be able to sustain this intention long through the day. *Our character has been trained in fleshly ways of intending over decades, so when confronted with the troubles of the day our hearts can move into old habits of worry and fleshly control.* However, what we can choose, throughout our day, is to present ourselves to the Lord with another new intention – **“Stop [your name], this is not the way. Lord, I again present myself to you. Here I am. Let’s talk about this.”** Again, and again, the Christian can find joy in being with the Lord in the midst of brokenness and rebellion, amidst confusion and pandemic, knowing the Lord’s shepherding heart is within those places of our weakness.

As we present ourselves in truth to God, to be with God, we present the truth of what is going on in the heart. *“O God, I present myself to you. God, above all, I want you, and I want to be faithful to you whatever you have for me, wherever you lead me.”*

Prayer of Intention Practice

Once you wake up, as soon as you open your eyes, give yourself about three minutes each for these **5 Prayers of Intentions**. If possible, do these before you begin your morning regimen.

1. **PRAYER OF HONESTY** (Ps. 15:1-2, Ps. 139:23-24) 3 minutes

In this spiritual practice, we open to God and ourselves in what is truly going on in our hearts in order for truth-telling to take place in our relationships and life in general.

As soon as you open your eyes, attend for a minute or less to where your soul wants to go. Where does your heart want to lead you? What surfaces/bubbles up from your heart? What worries, anxieties, fears, joys, and loves reveal about themselves? Be with God in this. *“Lord, what is going on in my heart right now with You, with others, with my life, my situations? Search me, O God, and know my heart. Open my heart to You today in truth, lest I deceive myself.”*

Take a moment, just a brief one, try not to linger too long in this space, lest you get caught up in this. Instead, turn your gaze inward. Notice what you are feeling and think on it in the presence of God. These feelings, these thoughts; they are the treasures of your heart, worthy of acknowledgment before something greater. This is honesty and good to know, for this honesty is a gift to be cherished in the presence of God.

2. **PRAYER OF PRESENTING ONESELF** (Rom. 12:1-2) 3 minutes

Every morning, let this be your gentle awakening—to recognize the presence of God and His unique will for each of us.

Take a moment to transition, and purposefully dedicate a minute to presenting yourself before the Lord: *“Lord, I am here, I present myself to you. Before I present myself to my concerns or worries, I present myself to You: Today, above all else, I desire to be with You, to prioritize Your presence over all other treasures of my soul.”*

Allow yourself to simply be with God, letting Him take precedence in your heart. Sometimes, you'll naturally find joy in His presence, and that's truly beautiful. **Other times your soul may betray you with its old habits and distractions:** You might not feel inclined to offer yourself to God; you might feel disconnected, “out of it,” or you want to go back to the first movement of your heart upon waking. In those moments, don't suppress those feelings, try not to hide them. Instead, share them openly with God. Tell God, *“Yes, God, I'm struggling. I don't feel like being here with You. I feel [describe your feelings].”* Be honest about where you are, and maybe reaffirm your desire to be present. You could say, *“This is my truth right now, Lord, but I'm still here, presenting myself to You. Please, have mercy on me; here I am.”*

3. **PRAYER OF IDENTITY** (Phil. 3:7-9) 3 minutes

Engage in the spiritual practice of anchoring yourself in your true identity in Christ—fully pardoned, fully accepted—and acknowledging the presence of “Christ in me,” reassuring you that you are never alone.

Remind your soul for one minute in the presence of God of who you are in Christ before you take on the cares of the day *“Lord, at my core, I am not defined by worry or the desire for control or success. At my core, I am crucified with You, Jesus. You are my life. In You, I am completely forgiven, fully accepted in Your love. Whatever I do today I want to do it with and in You. That is my genuine identity. And when I fail in this, remind me again, Oh God, that I remain Your beloved.”*

This reminder helps guard your heart from temptation to do life apart from your true identity in God. This protects you from over-attaching to identities, roles, your own perceived goodness (moralism). It prevents you from making decisions from guilt or shame in some effort to atone for yourself rather than daily embracing Christ's atonement and forgiveness anew.

4. **PRAYER OF CONCERNS** (Psalm 138:7-8, I Pet. 5:7, Phil 4:6) 3 minutes

This prayer offers a tender embrace for your worries and anxieties. When the weight of deep concerns burdens your heart, it beckons you to entrust them to God, responding with trust in the One who offers help.

Now, take another moment or two to ponder what lies ahead for you today—meetings, plans, anticipated troubles. Offer them to God in a straightforward manner, laying bare what weighs on your heart. Say, "Lord, here is what weighs on my soul... Take them, for they belong to You. Lord, I belong to You. Help me to be present with You in these matters. Guide me to abide in You amidst the challenges of this day. I choose faithfulness to Your calling. Here I am, and here are my concerns. Amen."

Reflect on the entrusting care of God. How He desires to tend to your deepest worries and pains. Recognize His genuine concern for your well-being. You possibly pray, "Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to discern the difference. Amen (*Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)*)."

5. **PRAYER OF DISCERNMENT** (Eccles. 7:13-14, Phil. 2:12-13, Heb 4:12) 3 minutes

In this spiritual practice, you're invited to observe the movements of the Spirit within you, rather than solely focusing on your own actions. It's about tuning in to "the work of God," discerning His will amidst the noise of your own desires and the adversary's influences, so you can align yourself more closely with His intentions.

Here you learn to wait on God and watch His work in and through you so that you might cooperate with His discernment. "Lord I am listening. What are you doing and what is it that you want me to become and do if I am to do your will? What wisdom has your Spirit been bringing to my attention lately, that I might respond to them? What is it that You require of me? (Micah 6:8) I want to respond and cooperate with You, Holy Spirit."

Here you seek wisdom on how to respond to His work that is ongoing within us. This keeps you in the practice of listening for how the Spirit may be calling you; whether it comes through the Word, through moments of insight, or the whispers of Wisdom.

You may find over time a new joy emerges in this, a brief relief or retrieve from our knee-jerk reactions upon awakening. Try it. Over many years this Prayer of Intentions has been used by God to change lives. It is within our power or choice to open our eyes each day, first to the Lord. *Pray without Ceasing, I Thess. 5:17.*