

# **FOUR PRAYERS**

THAT SHAPED AMERICA

A DEVOTIONAL RESOURCE DESIGNED TO HELP CHRISTIANS  
**THINK, PRAY, AND VOTE**

**MYFAITHVOTES<sup>®</sup>**

# **FOUR PRAYERS**

THAT SHAPED AMERICA

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## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

We're so glad you downloaded this resource guide! It is designed with you in mind. Churches and Christians just like you are using this resource in small group settings, at home with their families, and even as a self-directed devotional experience. There is nothing for you to prepare other than bring a willingness to pray, an openness to hear God's voice, and a willingness to act as He prompts you.

You'll read a key prayer from our nation's history adapted from Robert J. Morgan's book, 100 Bible Verses That Made America (Thomas Nelson, 2020). Following that excerpt, you'll find some discussion questions along with a prayer guide to help you reflect and pray individually and as a small group.

Feel free to share this resource with others in your church, your family, and your friends who might also benefit from a prayerful approach to any election.

### **100 Bible Verses That Made America**

To help you and your church understand the Christian foundation as you pray for our Nation, check out 100 Bible Verses That Made America. Robert J. Morgan takes you on a Biblical tour through American history, and teaches you about the Bible's role in defining moments and the impact on America – reminding us of the beauty at the intersection of faith and our Nation. [www.robertjmorgan.com](http://www.robertjmorgan.com).

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## WHY WE MUST PRAY

Prayer is central to the **Christian life**. As you'll read in this resource, prayer also played an important role in the founding of American and its subsequent success.

Today is no different. The most important thing we can do as believers is to get on our knees, pray, and ask God for His will to be accomplished in all things.

Faith only appears in the Greek New Testament as a verb. So, it would only make sense that our faith requires action. And there is nothing more effective a Christian can do than pray.

But it's vital our prayers lead to action. And the most important decision you can make to champion your faith in the public square is to follow through on the right and responsibility of all Christians to vote as God directs them.

We're not advocating for a particular political party or platform. But we are asking Churches and Christians everywhere to seek God, do good, and go vote.

**Together, we pray. And together, we vote.**

# **PRAYER ONE:**

## THE PRAYER THAT SUNK A NAVY



**Key Verse:** "What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)



**Key Idea:** When we trust God, we are willing to act in faith. And when we act in faith, that's when God is able to work through us to accomplish impossible things.

### **Read:**

In the 1740s, the American Colonies became a rope in the tug-of-war between Britain and France. One of the harshest periods of conflict, King George's War, raged from 1744 to 1748, some thirty years before the Declaration of Independence.

In the midst of the conflict, in October 1746, Bostonians heard with alarm that the French admiral duc d'Anville was preparing to sail his fleet from Nova Scotia to Boston Harbor to attack the city and ravage New England. It was the largest naval armada to have threatened the American coastline.

The governor of the Massachusetts colony had no adequate way to protect Boston, the jewel of American cities, or its fifteen thousand inhabitants. The French were coming to burn the city to the ground.

Sunday, October 16, 1746, was appointed a citywide day of prayer and fasting. Panicked citizens gathered into the city's churches, with hundreds of them crowding into the historic Old South Meeting House. The only thing pleasant that day was the weather, which was peaceful and calm. Not a breeze ruffled the waters in the bay, and no threatening clouds drifted through the skies.

The pastor of Old South Church was Rev. Thomas Prince, a powerful force in the Great Awakening, a friend of George Whitefield, and a man of prayer. Climbing into the high pulpit, Rev. Prince earnestly interceded on behalf of the Colonies. "*Deliver us from our enemy,*" he reportedly prayed. "*Send Thy tempest, Lord, upon the waters to the eastward! Raise Thy right hand. Scatter the ships of our tormentors and drive them thence.*"

Suddenly a powerful gust of wind struck the church so hard the shutters banged, startling the congregation.

Rev. Prince paused and looked up in surprise. Sunlight no longer streamed through the windows, and the room reflected the ominous darkness of the sky. Gathering his thoughts, Rev. Prince continued with greater earnestness, saying, *"Sink their proud frigates beneath the power of Thy winds."*

*Gusts of wind caused the church bell to chime "a wild and uneven sound . . . though no man was in the steeple."*

Raising his hands toward heaven, Rev. Prince bellowed, *"We hear Thy voice, O Lord! We hear it! Thy breath is upon the waters to the eastward, even upon the deep. Thy bell tolls for the death of our enemies!"*

Overcome by emotion, he paused as tears ran down his cheeks, then he ended his prayer saying, *"Thine be the glory, Lord. Amen and amen!"*

That day a storm of hurricane force struck the French ships. The greater part of the fleet was wrecked, and the duc d'Anville either took his own life or died from a stroke. Only a few sailors survived.

In his book Anatomy of a Naval Disaster: The 1746 French Expedition to North America, Professor James Pritchard wrote, *"Not a single French military objective had been achieved. Thousands of soldiers and sailors were dead. . . . No one knows how many men died during the expedition; some estimates range as high as 8,000. So great was the calamity that naval authorities hastened to wind up its affairs and bury quickly and effectively the memory of its existence."*

Back in Boston, the governor set aside a day of thanksgiving, and according to historian Catherine Drinker Bowen, *"There was no end to the joyful quotation: If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

Somehow that verse came to people's minds, reminding them that when God is our advocate, no enemy—not even an entire navy—can overcome us.

This verse comes from the majestic song of Paul at the end of Romans 8, in which he exalts in the grace of the God whose love for us is unending. *"What then shall we say to these things?" asked Paul. "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8: 31–32).*

In nearby Braintree on that never-to-be forgotten day, a child named John Adams knelt with his family as his father thanked God “for this most timely evidence of His favor.”

A century later Henry Wadsworth Longfellow immortalized the event in his poem “A Ballad of the French Fleet,” written in the voice of Rev. Prince, who said, in part:

There were rumors in the street,  
In the houses there was fear  
Of the coming of the fleet,  
And the danger hovering near,  
And while from mouth to mouth  
Spread the tidings of dismay,  
I stood in the Old South Church,  
Saying humbly, “Let us pray!”

#### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:**

- What keeps you from trusting God at times?
- Do faith and action go together?
- What is faith without action, and what is action without faith?
- Why is it important for Christians to vote?
- Many times, people choose not to vote because they don’t believe their vote will make a difference. How does Romans 8:31 change our thinking about what’s possible when we trust God?

#### Pray:

*God, give me the courage to trust you in all things. And give me the wisdom and willingness to turn my faith into action, especially when it comes to voting. Help me remember that when Christians come together and take action, in faith, Your will can be accomplished through me. Amen.*

# **PRAYER TWO:**

## THE FIRST PRAYER OF THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS



**Key Verse:** "Please my cause, O Lord, with those who strive with me. Fight against those who fight against me." (Psalm 35:1,4)



**Key Idea:** When we live in alignment with God's plan, we experience His protection and provision, especially when we face seemingly insurmountable odds.

### **Read:**

Amid fear and rising tensions, delegates from across the Colonies arrived in Philadelphia on September 4, 1774, to convene the First Continental Congress. Before tackling the weighty issues of the day, they acted on a motion by Thomas Cushing from Massachusetts to begin their business with prayer.

Some opposed the motion because of the diversity of denominations represented by the delegates. But Samuel Adams, the fire-brand of the Revolution and a devout member of the Congregational Church, rose and "asserted that he was no bigot, and could hear a prayer from any gentleman of piety and virtue, who was at the same time a friend to his country."

Adams nominated a local Anglican pastor, Jacob Duché, to lead in prayer, and the delegates agreed.

About the same time, a rumor swept through Philadelphia, which later proved untrue, that Boston was being shelled by British cannons. So the next morning when the delegates assembled in Carpenter's Hall for the agreed-upon prayer, they were tense and confused.

In that room were such icons as George Washington, John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Patrick Henry.

Duché opened his Anglican prayer book to the prescribed reading for the day, and the delegates instantly sensed the selection of scripture was providential—Psalm 35: "Plead my cause, O LORD, with those who strive with me; fight against those who fight against me. . . . Let those be put to shame and brought to dishonor who seek after my life; let those be turned back and brought to confusion who plot my hurt" (vv. 1, 4).

Duché then led in a powerful prayer, lasting about ten minutes, which has been called "the most famous prayer of the American Revolution."

He said, in part:

*O Lord our Heavenly Father, high and mighty King of kings and Lord of lords, who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers on earth and reignest with power supreme and uncontrolled over all the Kingdoms, Empires, and Governments; look down in mercy, we beseech Thee, on these our American States, who have fled to Thee from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee . . .*

*Be Thou present, O God of wisdom, and direct the councils of this honorable assembly; enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation that the scene of blood may be speedily closed; that order, harmony and peace may be effectually restored; and truth and justice, religion and piety prevail and flourish amongst the people. Preserve the health of their bodies and the vigor of their minds; shower down on them and the millions they represent, such temporal blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world and crown them with everlasting glory in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Savior.*

Afterward, John Adams described the event in a letter to his wife, Abigail: "Mr. Duché read several prayers in the stablished form, and then read the Collect for the seventh day of September, which was the Thirty-fifth Psalm. You must remember this was the next morning after we heard the horrible rumor of the cannonade of Boston. I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read on that morning."

*"After this Mr. Duché, unexpectedly to everybody, struck out into an extemporary prayer, which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess I never heard a better prayer or one so well pronounced . . . such fervor, such ardor, such earnestness and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime, for America, for the Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially for the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon everybody here."*

According to other accounts, many of the delegates were in tears, and some were on their knees. It was as though the Lord Himself had come down into the room to receive the prayers of the frightened but determined revolutionaries.

Duché's prayer so braced the Continental Congress that he henceforth started each day's session in prayer, becoming, in effect, America's first Congressional chaplain.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:**

- When you pray in agreement with God about anything, what happens?
- How does your prayer life change when you face obstacles and challenges?
- Think about a time when you faced difficulty and prayed through it. What happened? How did you grow as a result of that experience?
- Should Christians pray about upcoming elections? What about churches? Why or why not?
- What would change about your voting habits, if you prayed and asked God to use your vote to bring about His will in America?

**Pray:** *God, help me to live in agreement with Your will. I pray for the future of America. Please hear my prayer, heal our nation, and put people in positions of power and influence who love and respect You, the Bible, and live from a biblical worldview. Amen.*

# **PRAYER THREE:**

THE PRAYER THAT SAVED THE CONSTITUTION



**Key Verse:** "Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it."  
(Psalm 127:1)



**Key Idea:** When we live in alignment with God's plan, we experience His protection and provision, especially when we face seemingly insurmountable odds.

### **Read:**

After the British surrender, the American Colonies had a nation but needed a constitution. The old Articles of Confederation were inadequate. In May 1787, delegates gathered in Philadelphia for a convention to draft a constitution that would establish an effective federal government. They appointed George Washington as chair, but that's about all they agreed on.

From the beginning, the delegates quarreled over deeply held disagreements as to the extent and form of the new government.

That's when venerable Benjamin Franklin, eighty-one, rose to make a motion:

In this situation of this assembly, groping, as it were, in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings?

In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard—and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity.

And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? . . . I have lived, sir, a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of men! And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

Ben Franklin was quoting here from Psalm 127. His entire remarkable speech, short as it was, was filled with biblical quotations and allusions, but this psalm was at the heart of what he wanted to say. Unless the Lord is in any enterprise, it has a limited future. Even building a house without His aid is perilous. Raising a family or a home without His strength is hazardous. Guarding a city without His blessings is futile. Working hard to gain wealth without putting Him first is vain. How much more the establishing of a new nation, one unlike any ever seen on the earth. Surely such an undertaking

Franklin continued:

I firmly believe this; and I also believe, that without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel: we shall be divided by our little partial local interests, our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach I therefore beg leave to move, that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business; and that one or more of the clergy of the city be requested to officiate in that service

Even this motion failed because, perhaps, the convention had no money to hire a chaplain. But a few days later, on July 4, 1787, General Washington led the delegates to a prayer service at Philadelphia's Reformed Calvinist Lutheran Church, where Rev. William Rogers offered these words:

*As this is a period, O Lord, big with events, impenetrable by any human scrutiny, we fervently recommend to Thy Fatherly notice that august Body, assembled in this city, who compose our Federal Convention; will it please Thee, O Thou Eternal I AM, to favor them from day to day with Thy immediate presence; be Thou their wisdom and their strength! Enable them to devise such measures as may prove happily instrumental for healing all divisions and promoting the good of the great whole ... that the United States of America may furnish the world with one example of a free and permanent government, which shall be the result of human and mutual deliberation, and which shall not, like all other governments, whether ancient or modern, spring out of mere chance or be established by force. . . . We close this, our solemn address, by saying, as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ hath taught us—Our Father, who art in Heaven . . .*

The delegates joined in the Lord's Prayer, then went back to work. Soon they had a document that began: "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union...."

James Madison, writing about the event later, said, “It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it a finger of that Almighty Hand, which has been so frequently and signally extended to our relief in the critical states of the revolution.”

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:**

- Describe a time when you experienced success. How did God show up through that experience?
- Why does stress take you away from prayer and distract you from trusting God?
- When everything is on the line, is it the right time to pray? Why or why not?
- How are you praying for the future of America today? What about the up-coming election?
- If God blessed America through the courageous prayers of its founders, why would God do the same thing today through your prayers?

**Pray:** *God, you worked through accomplished leaders who were humble enough to pray intentionally and consistently about the future. Through their prayers, You used them to bring blessing and favor upon America for generations. Do it again, Lord. Do it again. Amen.*

## **PRAYER FOUR:**

### PATTON'S PRAYER FOR CLEAR SKIES



**Key Verse:** "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."  
(Matthew 6:33)



**Key Idea:** When you pray and believe in faith, God will always bring about His will in your life and the life of the people around you.

### **Read:**

James O'Neill, chief chaplain of the Third Army, answered the phone on Friday, December 8, 1944, at the Third Army headquarters in the Lorraine region of France. "This is General Patton," said the voice. "Do you have a good prayer for weather? We must do something about those rains if we are to win the war."

O'Neill, looking out his window at the rain that had bogged down the army, promised to find an appropriate prayer. Presently he typed these words on a 3 x 5 card:

*Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish Thy justice among men and nations.*

O'Neill was curious as to how Patton would use the prayer. Was he wanting it for his own private devotions, or did he intend to distribute it among the chaplains?

Donning his trench coat, the chaplain crossed the quadrangle toward the general's office. Patton read the prayer and said, "Have 250,000 copies printed and see to it that every man in the Third Army gets one."

O'Neill, shocked, simply said, "Very well, sir."

"Chaplain," said Patton, "sit down for a moment; I want to talk to you about this business of prayer." I am a strong believer in prayer. There are three ways that men get what they want; by planning, by working, and by praying. Any great military operation takes careful planning, or thinking. Then you must have well-trained troops.

"Some people call that getting the breaks; I call it God. . . .That's where prayer comes in. Up to now, in the Third Army, God has been very good to us. We have never retreated; we have suffered no defeats, no famine, no epidemics. This is because a lot of people back home are praying for us. . . .But we have to pray for ourselves too."

Then Patton brought up the biblical character of Gideon and asked O'Neill to put out a training letter on prayer to all the chaplains. "Write about nothing else," he said, "just the importance of prayer . . . We must ask God to stop these rains."

O'Neill returned to his office and prepared Training Letter No. 5, which Patton approved. It was published December 14, 1944, calling the Third Army to prayer.

As chaplains it is our business to pray. We preach its importance. We urge its practice. But the time is now to intensify our faith in prayer, not alone with ourselves, but with every believing man. . . . Those who pray do more for the world than those who fight; and if the world goes from bad to worse, it is because there are more battles than prayers Gideon of Bible fame was least in his father's house. He came from Israel's smallest tribe. But he was a mighty man of valor. His strength lay not in his military might, but in his recognition of God's proper claims upon his life. . . . Urge all your men to pray. . . . Pray when driving. Pray when fighting. Pray alone. Pray with others. Pray by night and pray by day. Pray for the cessation of immoderate rains. . . . This army needs the assurance and the faith that God is with us. With prayer, we cannot fail.

O'Neill's training letter harkened back to Judges 6 and the story of Gideon, who was one of the Bible's greatest military strategists. His prowess came from the God who empowered him in battle. He thought himself ill-equipped for leadership, but the angel of the Lord said to him, "The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!"

That has become the motto of many soldiers.

Soon 250,000 soldiers had Patton's prayer in their hands, and thousands of copies of Training Letter No. 5 were distributed to chaplains and organization commanders down to the regimental level.

O'Neill later wrote, "On December 20, to the consternation of the Germans and the delight of American forecasters who were equally surprised at the turnabout—the rains and the fogs ceased. For the better part of a week came bright clear skies and perfect flying weather....General Patton prayed for fair weather for Battle. He got it."

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:**

- When you pray, do you believe that God will honor your requests?
- Describe a time when you prayed for something and it came true. What happened? How did this experience grow your faith?
- Why is it the more you pray, the more likely you are to pray?
- How will you pray for the current and future leaders of America?
- How will you pray for Christians and Churches, so they will put their faith in action and vote?

**Pray:** *God, you can make anything happen. I ask you to capture the heart of every Christian and show them how You can use their vote to bring about Your will in this world. If there is any Christian who isn't planning to vote, please change their mind. And, in all things, let Your will be done. Amen.*

## WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

**THANK YOU** so much for prayerfully working through this resource. We hope it helps you grow in some new ways. And we believe that God will honor your desire to be used by Him through your vote in every election.

Here are some next steps to consider:

- If you haven't already, register to vote. It's absolutely free and will ensure you have the opportunity to turn your faith into action through voting when the time comes.
- Let your pastor know about My Faith Votes. We are a non-partisan ministry and our desire to resource churches to engage, educate, and equip Christians to vote. In fact, you can find free resources specifically designed for your church at [www.OurChurchVotes.org](http://www.OurChurchVotes.org).
- Share this resource with others. Send it as an email. Print it out and distribute it in your church. The more Christians who pray about voting, the more likely those same Christians will vote in the next election.
- Sign up to stay connected at [\*\*MyFaithVotes.org\*\*](http://MyFaithVotes.org). We'll let you know as new resources are available for use in your small group, family, and personal reflection times.
- Pray. Pray like you never have before. Our country needs your prayers right now. And when Christians gather to pray and see God, He will honor our requests. Be an example to others about what it means to pray, do good, and vote.