



## 207: The Prayer of St. Francis

I'm Emily P. Freeman and welcome to The Next Right Thing. You're listening to episode 207.

This is a podcast about making decisions, but also about making a life. If you struggle with decision fatigue, chronic hesitation or if you just need a few minutes away from the constant stream of information and the sometimes delightful, but also distracting helm of entertainment, you're in the right place. We'll bring you a thoughtful story, a little prayer and a simple next right step.

One of the most helpful spiritual practices I've found in the last several years is borrowing the prayers of others when I can't find prayers of my own. Today, I'll share one of my favorites and maybe it will be a favorite of yours too. Listen, in.

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I've shared before that I didn't grow up in a church that recited prayers very much. We hardly even said the Lord's Prayer, at least not with any regularity and certainly not together or collectively. But in times of fear, confusion, loneliness, disappointment or decision fatigue, turning to familiar passages of scripture is a lifeline. And this turn or this pivot from my problem to the presence of God, that in itself is an act of worship. It's an act of faith eighth. And the words recited in the turning, those are words of prayer.

I used to think prayer only counted if you made it up as you went along, like somehow it wasn't true or real or authentic if you wrote it out, read it or, worst of all, copied the words from somebody else, but what I've realized as I've looked back on my life is when uncertainty permeates the moment, whether because of a devastating national tragedy or a personal season of doubt, a regular practice of praying familiar words not only counts, but could be a radical act of faith.

In Matthew 6, Jesus taught us to pray by saying, "This is how you should pray," and then he goes on to say these familiar lines, "Our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Father at Jesus showing us how to learn. Look at Jesus teaching us how to pray. That was the framework he modeled for his disciples, "Here, I'll pray something and then you can pray it too." In other words, it's okay to copy. It's actually encouraged.

One of my favorite prayers to borrow is prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. Now, it's worth mentioning that though this prayer is attributed to him, he probably didn't actually write it. He was born in the 12th century and this prayer, as we pray it now, really only became known after 1912. And while I guess it kind of matters, maybe it also kind of doesn't, at least not for our purposes, because here we are today on our

way into a new year, looking ahead and looking behind and looking down at our own two feet. If you're dreaming or moving, staying or seeking or reading in your own backyard, if you're rocking the baby, washing the dishes, shoveling the snow, cleaning the gutters, shopping for groceries, planning transitions, fighting for justice or matching the socks again, whether you're starting, finishing or carrying on, for anyone who to pray, but can't quite find the words, my best suggestion is to borrow the words from others and let them be your own.

Maybe today we could pray together the words attributed to St. Francis. If you don't know it, I invite you to listen and let the prayer be your own.

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me so love. Where there is an injury pardon. Where there's doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hop. Where there is darkness, light. And where there is sadness, joy. Oh, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive and it is in pardoning that we are pardoned and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.”

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Thanks for listening to episode 207 of The Next Right Thing. I hope this simple practice of borrowing a prayer can be just one more wrong on the trellis upon which your rhythm of life can continue to grow. Because while it's true, this is a podcast about making decisions. The bigger truth is our daily decisions are actually making our lives. As always, you can find me on Instagram at EmilyPFreeman or online at emilypfreeman.com, where you can also find a transcript of this and every episode of The Next Right Thing.

Now is a great time to get your copy of The Next Right Thing Guided Journal, available wherever books are sold. It's a low key, low commitment journal to help you keep aware and present in your own life. Minimal writing required.

Well in closing, here are a few more words attributed to St. Francis. “While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it more fully in your heart.” Thanks for listening and I'll see you next time.