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You Give Me The Sun


Biblical

Prayers

by

Teenagers

Edited by Carl Koch

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You Give Me the Sun

Biblical Prayers by Teenagers

Edited by Carl Koch



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The publishing team included Carl Koch, development editor; Laurie A. Berg, copy editor; James H. Gurley, production editor; Hollace Storkel, typesetter; Cären Yang, designer; Cindi Ramm, art director; Erica Rose Krauthamer, cover illustration; pre-press, printing, and binding by the graphics division of Saint Mary's Press.

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Preface

In 1991 Saint Mary's Press published *Dreams Alive: Prayers by Teenagers*. Because of the enthusiastic response to that book, we asked teenagers to send us prayers for *More Dreams Alive*, which came out in 1995. Again, the response to this new book of prayers by teenagers was overwhelmingly positive.

As part of the mission of Saint Mary's Press to spread the Good News by encouraging people to pray with the Scriptures, we decided to ask teenagers to send us their prayers and reflections based on favorite passages from the Bible. *You Give Me the Sun* is the result.

Each prayer in the book includes one quoted line from the Bible around which the prayer is written. The topics the teens choose to write about range from the humorous to the most serious. In all cases the prayers reflect honesty, authenticity, and an awareness of the real world of high-school-age people.

When teachers or catechists selected prayers for submission, the writers were given the opportunity to attach their full name, their initials, their first name, or to remain anonymous. All the prayers are identified by the school or parish from which they came.

Prayers and reflections poured in from all over: Massachusetts to Puerto Rico, Washington to Alabama. As with the previous two books of teen prayers, the sheer number, quality, and diversity dazzled me.

After an initial reading, sorting, and selecting, I asked six students to help with the final selection: Tim Singer-Towns and Beth Angst from Cotter High School; and Ryan Hinton, Alodia Verhage, Jackie Paul, and Matt Palkert from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, both located in Winona, Minnesota. The contribution of this team of students was indispensable and is greatly appreciated.

Using the Prayers

The prayers and reflections in this book are useful to teenagers individually, as well as in ministry settings and family gatherings. Following are some suggestions for their use:

Teenagers and adults who work in ministry settings—such as campus ministry—might consider using the prayers in these ways:

- to start or end a class
- to give focus to a prayer session
- as part of a retreat
- to trigger discussion about topics of importance to teens
- as part of a parent, sponsor, or staff meeting

This book would be a helpful gift to parents and to adults who work with teens in secular settings. The prayers can remind adults that teenagers are people of faith. Teenagers have a unique and lively perspective on faith, the world, relationships, and themselves.

The uses of *You Give Me the Sun* are limited only by one's creativity. If you find a unique way to use this book, we would love to hear about it. Write to us at Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320, or e-mail us at www.smp.org.

A Final Word of Thanks

A book like this would not be possible without the contributions and cooperation of many people:

- Thanks to the diocesan, parish, and school personnel who got the word out, gathered and submitted the prayers.
- Thanks to the parents, teachers, and catechists who nurture the faith of teenagers in families, schools, and parishes.
- Thanks to all the students who allowed their prayers and reflections to be submitted for consideration. I only wish that we could have published all of them.

You Give Me the Sun is a gift of teenagers to all of us. My wish is that every person who opens this book finds in it consolation, inspiration, and great hope.

Carl Koch
Editor



Thanks

I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.
(Hosea 11:4)


A quiet place where distractions are not
allowed is a perfect place to be.
When alone with Christ, I pray for
peace and victory.

A quiet time I sit and watch the
sun rise, as I watch the sweet days of
autumn swiftly pass by. The world is
soft and settled. There is still
time to hush my words.

Oh, Lord, make the moments count!
We have one life to live, so
guide us by your Holy Word.
Today's the day to give!

In a quiet place, I wonder if
love could ever be a golden rope that
links me to my mother's heart.
In a quiet place, I know that there is a
special feeling in my
father's touch; his strength is secure.
With all this love through this
golden rope, this is what helps me to endure.

Shantell C. Griffin
West Philadelphia Catholic High School
Philadelphia, PA



Running with my Savior,
“they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

I saw them running past my street
not yielding to the tremendous heat

at first I thought it was just a joke
or maybe just an elaborate hoax

but as the endless pack jogged by
I wanted to get up and join their cry

they have been running for a real long time
running to taste the fruit of the vine


the man they follow is winning the race
he runs at a most frightening pace

he leads the way for his people to go
but it is up to them to join the show

but joining is not the most important part
instead it is acting from the heart

and if you finish the race in stride
you will receive a hefty prize

Tim Trainor
Elder High School
Cincinnati, OH



Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.
(Psalm 106:1)

In the winter, the trees are asleep,
Ghosts of their former selves.

And the snow falls and softly
Blankets them with white.

And I thank you, God, for the
Quiet beauty of winter.

In the spring, the trees awaken
And shake off their white winter blanket.
New leaves appear,
And the winter, black and white,
Dissolves into the bright, cheerful noise
Of spring.

And I thank you, God, for the
New, emerging beauty of spring.

In the summer, the trees
Reach their leaves to the sky in praise.
They sway in gentle breezes
And shade the ground in shadows.


And I thank you, God, for the
Sparkling, sunlit beauty of summer.

In the autumn, the trees turn
Bright yellow and orange and scarlet.
The leaves say their good-byes in
Seas of color, then
Blanket the ground like the snow to come.

And I thank you, God, for the
Brilliant beauty of fall.

For all the seasons and all the days,
I thank you, God, in so many ways.

Sarah Cannon
Saint Gertrude High School
Richmond, VA



Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

(Exodus 15:21)

Thank you, God my creator, for giving me life.
Thank you, God my mother, for protecting me from harm.
Thank you, God my hope and strength, you give me new beginnings.
Thank you, God my provider, for giving me all that I need.
Thank you, God my father, for doing what's best for me.
Thank you, God my creator, mother, father, strength, hope, confessor,
and steadfast provider,
Thank you a thousand times!
And may I go to sleep each night grateful,
and each day begin with this prayer of thanks to you.

Mary-Frances Auner
Saint Augustine Academy
Lakewood, OH



Listen.
"SHH!"

Do not speak.
Do not breathe.
Do not move.
Listen carefully.

Do you hear?
Jesus is calling out to us in a whisper,
"Listen . . . and come to me;
listen, so that you may live" (Isaiah 55:2-3).

Listen carefully to the message of Jesus.
Jesus speaks.
Through a smile of a baby,
A laugh of a child,
A tear from a mother's eye,
A sigh of a father.

Through a thunderstorm that rips through the night,
A beautiful rose on a gravestone,
Jesus speaks.
Look around and you may find
Clues that show God is near.
Then you will know you have nothing to fear.

Alexis Diana Marie Christiansen
Saint Thomas More Academy
Magnolia, DE

Thanks for all the times you've helped when I've been in pain,
Thanks for all the times you've forgiven me when I used your name in
vain.
Thanks for all the comfort you've given me when I'm feeling blue,
but if I could sit across the porch from God,
I'd thank him most for lending me you.
Thank you for hearing my prayer,
thanks for putting up with me when I'm in your hair.
"The borrower is the slave of the lender" (Proverbs 22:7).
So I am but a servant to you, Jesus, because you gave me your life.

C. B.
Bishop Manogue Catholic High School
Reno, NV

Jesus said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).
A couple of days ago, I lived this statement. I was at the mall, and
right when I came in, a man was sitting in a wheelchair. He was all by
himself and looked lonely, so I smiled at him. He smiled back at me as if
no one had ever smiled at him before. Although it wasn't a big action, I
could see that I made a difference in that one moment in his life, which
made me feel very good. Smiles go a long way.

Laura Leviski
Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Ellicott City, MD



O, give thanks to the LORD.

(Psalm 136:1)

My mom is the greatest
She cares for me and she's smart
But I wouldn't even know her if it weren't for you
So thank you from the bottom of my heart

My dad's a great motivator
Sometimes my brother is a pest
But when it comes right down to it
My family is the best

My friends are always there for me
Day, afternoon, and night
And we always pull through it
If we get in a fight

There's a roof over my head
Clothes on my back
Food in my stomach
And so much love, it's hard to keep track

And God . . .
You've helped me through when times were tough
And I could sit here and thank you a million times
And that still wouldn't be enough.

Katherine Wieland
Bishop Manogue Catholic High School
Reno, NV

I thank you, God our creator, for this day and for all the precious gifts with which you have blessed me. I thank you for the many talents you have given me, and ask that you give me the strength and the wisdom to use those gifts and talents to glorify you in the best way that I am able.

I ask that you hold close to your heart all those in tough situations. Whether they are in an abusive situation or a situation of pressure from friends and family, I ask that you keep them close to your heart. I ask also that you help teenagers understand that you are there for them as much as for anyone else. I think that sometimes, God, teenagers get the feeling that you only love those who are perfect or those who are older, but I ask of you today that you show them your unconditional love and forgiveness that they may become closer to you. I ask this in your name: teach them to realize that through you we “can do all things” (Philippians 4:13). Amen.

Gretchen Schmaltz
Roncalli High School
Indianapolis, IN

The Bible says: “The time came for her [Mary] to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger” (Luke 2:6–7). This happened on Christmas day. Most people forget that this is the true meaning of the holiday. It isn’t about getting presents or candy. Those things are great, but Jesus’ birth is a million times greater. So come Christmastime, we ought to remember the true meaning of the special holiday. I know that I won’t forget.

Chris Hildreth
Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Ellicott City, MD

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

(1 Corinthians 10:16)

Dear God,
Thank you for the love I have with others.
For whatever we do, we are sharing in your love for others.
Thank you for your sacrifice, so that we can continue to carry on
as you intended.
Thank you for your love, that burns so bright, that shines over me
and guides me with your light.
Blessed are my foes; I do not think of them in spite, but rather do
I fight to guide them to their light.
As I look upon my life, I know that I've done wrong,
but I will pray that I'll always hear the sweetness of your song.
My thanks. Amen.

Ben Zyons
Bishop Hendricken High School
Warwick, RI

Every day of every week,
My guardian angel stands by my side.
Watching and listening to my every motion and my every sound,
She stands there protecting me.

On days when I'm feeling like I can't talk to anyone, she listens.
On days when I'm feeling like I don't know what to do,
She advises me in a way that I'm not really aware of.

No matter rain, shine, snow, or sleet,
She is always by my side,
Making sure the world is safe for me to walk around in,
Coming to help me whenever I need her.

I am thankful for her always being there
When I could only depend on her because no one else cared.
I am thankful to her for being the constant protector
Of my mind, body, and soul.

“For [God] will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways” (Psalm 91:11).

Sarah Binger
Bishop Manogue Catholic High School
Reno, NV

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set
before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you
and your descendants may live.

(Deuteronomy 30:19)

To gaze upon the stars of night
To smell the sweet scent of pale pink roses
To feel the morning dew upon your fingertips
To hear the wind blow through rustling leaves
To taste cool, crisp water on your parched tongue
To sing
To dance
To smile
To eat
To laugh
To read
To pray
To love
To live.

These are things we often take for granted. Jesus, thank you for
the precious gift of life. Thank you for each step we take. Thank you
for each morning we awake. Thank you for our parents who chose life.
Thank you for each breath we take. We ask you, Creator God, to make
us instruments of your love and stand up for life.

C. L. C.
McGill-Toolen High School
Mobile, AL

Surely everyone stands as a mere breath.

Surely everyone goes about like a shadow.

(Psalm 39:5–6)

But God, never let me underestimate a breath.

Both life and death start with breath.

It can be felt as the soft whisper of a child against the ear,

Or as soothing breath on the sting of a cut.

It can carry impassioned cries or sweet lullabies.

It can be suspended and cut into mournful staccato.

A breath can be full of laughter, or regret, or relief.

God, with each breath help me remember

the transient beauty of life.

Jean Gismervik

Saint John the Baptist High School

West Islip, NY

Answer me when I call, O God of my right!

You gave me room when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

(Psalm 4:1)

God,

When I need refuge,

I call you.

When I need someone to talk to,

I call you.

When I feel the world is closing around me,

I call you.

When things aren't so great,

I call you.

When I'm unhappy,

I call you.

When I'm so stressed,

I call you.

When I feel no one likes me,

I call you.

When I'm in trouble at home,
I call you.
When I need a prayer,
I call you.
When I need someone who understands me,
I call you.
When I need an immediate friend,
I call you.
When I want to get away from evil,
I call you.
When I want to see things positively,
I call you.
When I need forgiveness,
I call you.
When I need you, God,
I call you.
In thanksgiving for all your help,
I call you.

Leilani
Notre Dame High School for Girls
Chicago, IL

Dear God,

As I finish my senior year in high school, watch over me. Be with me as I go out in the real world to find myself. Give me the strength I need to stick with my education and not give up when it gets hard. I can be described as the Proverb, "Like a bird that strays from its nest is one who strays from home" (27:8). It will be hard being away, but you will always be next to me—always. When I am like the bird spreading its wings to fly, you will be the wind beneath me, holding me up. Thank you. Amen.

Michael Zurkuhlen
Saint Xavier High School
Louisville, KY


I am a firm believer that in my life, a miracle takes place each time I make it safely through a day. Being a teenager, there are many things trying to step in my way. I have to deal with relationships, schoolwork, drugs, alcohol, and all the extracurricular activities that I take part in. That is why I consider making it through a day, a miracle. To receive this miracle each day, I need to have faith. Jesus says, "Your faith has saved you" (Luke 7:50). By having faith I allow Jesus to be my salvation. I don't need anything but faith to make it through each day.

Eric M. Tepe
Elder High School
Cincinnati, OH

Out of my distress I called on the LORD;
the LORD answered me and set me in a broad place.
(Psalm 118:5)

God, we all go through some hard times.
Help us have the courage to ask for guidance.
You alone can help me most
When I feel desolate and alone.
For as sure as disasters come,
Your love shines through and lights the way.
I know you are always with me,
And I will try not to be afraid.
For it is you who will help me,
Even when I falsely accuse you of abandonment.
So I praise you now, God, because you hear me
And answer my prayers with love.

Susanna
Christian Brothers Academy
Syracuse, NY




My tongue shall tell of your righteousness
and of your praise all day long.

(Psalm 35:28)

Forever may you reign in my life and soul,
Where you belong.
In such a divine way, you make me feel so whole,
For the sorrow and pain soon no more I shall know.
While in search for a better way, I try to avoid doing wrong.
I know that one bright day I will be strong.
As evil deceitfully stares me in the eyes
And secretly says hello,
I quickly turn away from those evil lies,
And in the wind, away it shall blow;
For I will not turn my back on you, my Lord.
That would be the biggest mistake, just plain wrong;
For you are my salvation, and thank you for the help all along.

Genesha Gutierrez
Mother Theodore Guerin High School
River Grove, IL



My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

(Psalm 22:1)

O cross, more honest than any knight,
Prayed strong by every night,
More sacred than any rose,
So holy in thy sight alone,
Only you could hold proud,
the King of all men!

Michael Lawrence
Loyola Blakefield High School
Towson, MD



The heavens are telling the glory of God.

(Psalm 19:1)

Waves crash
they twirl swirl
upon the ripped sand
send an honor of peace
a shell lays in watch
hoping to learn
the mysteries within
yearning for nature
a systematic beauty
the earth-toned trees
reach their heavenly branches
up into the sky
pulling down the heavens of old
the untold mysteries lie within
the emerald green branches
bending, tangling, fighting
each other to become a spot
a spot of bliss
the branches house untold places to
yearn
to burn the soul
serenity making each tree see
the branch it houses
life untold places to yearn
to burn the soul
serenity making each tree see the branch
it houses a fair young pearl dove to seek
a new beginning
the dove soars from
tree to tree
through air carelessly free
uninhibited by material things
free of spins
always ongoing
dove, peace-loving friend
soars the deep blue green

unrelenting sea
watches and sees
the waves crash
they splash
upon golden brown sand
trod upon before by many
unthinking many
taken for granted
what the sand sees
the sand watches the glittering stars
above
as clouds roll in and out
the sand is there
nature is there
the constantly changing
nature
where peace, happiness, and content
dwell.

Dan Leake
University of San Diego High School
San Diego, CA

Dear God, I want to thank you for making my life comfortable and secure. I also want to thank you for blessing me with a wonderful family and many good friends. I know that I am blessed with much more than I need. But I know there are many who are not as fortunate.

So, dear God, I pray that you will help me to be friendly to those who have no friends, to reach out a helping hand to the needy, to give interest to those who get no attention, and to every now and then have a conversation with someone who has no one to talk to. May I always remember that "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God" (1 John 4:16).

Katie Boccuti
Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls
Philadelphia, PA