

HONEST  
PRAYERS  
FOR  
*Mama  
Bears*



HILLARY MORGAN FERRER  
WITH JULIE LOOS



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
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### **Honest Prayers for Mama Bears**

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## An Honest Introduction

*Hillary Morgan Ferrer*

I grew up in the church and was always interested in the things of God. I knew I was supposed to pray, but I wasn't quite sure how. To this day, I have notebooks full of prayer lists that I made in junior high and high school. (I wrote my prayers out because my mind would wander if I tried to pray silently.) There is nothing profound in those prayers. I'm embarrassed to admit that I mostly prayed for popularity and for boys to like me. (Give me a break! I was in junior high. That's what junior high girls think about!) Even in those meager attempts to follow God, the Lord developed in me the habit of coming to Him with my uncensored thoughts—praying what was actually on my mind, not what I thought *should* be on my mind. The shamelessness of those prayers cultivated an honesty in talking to God. And that honesty led me to pray a prayer that essentially changed my life.

I was in the ninth grade, and our Bible study leader started a New Year's tradition where we wrote letters to ourselves documenting the past year and making projections for the future. We had places to list our closest friends, what the best and worst parts of the year had been, and where we saw ourselves in one year, five years, and ten years. Then, at the end, we wrote out a prayer. The prayer I wrote in December 1993 became the model for my prayer life from that point forward:

***Lord, I don't really want You...but I want to want You.***

Talk about honest! Who straight-up tells God that she has no interest in Him, but that she kinda wants to? Me, that's who. By this time, I knew what prayers "should" sound like, but I had practiced being honest with the Lord for so many years that when I matured enough to pray for something that really mattered, I didn't feel pressured to

sugarcoat it. The Lord knew my heart. He knew if I desired Him or not. Why pretend to be anything other than what I was? It's not like I had lost my interest in following God. I wasn't in any kind of rebellion. However, I heard people talking about having a desire and yearning for the Lord, and I knew that—emotionally—I didn't have that. But I really wanted to! Starting that ninth-grade year, I saw the Lord faithfully answer that prayer, slowly changing me from a “good Christian girl” into an avid disciple.

That one simple prayer served as the “aha moment” for the rest of my life. And an aha moment is my hope for you and the prayers in this book. Often, we are so consumed with what we think our prayers *should* sound like that we neglect to say what we are actually thinking. God knows our thoughts! He's not going to be surprised that we're not more “spiritual sounding.” There's nothing in Scripture about Him valuing elegant prayers more than simple ones. (Just the opposite, really.) So why not come to Him *as we are* since He already knows? Picture your kids coming to you like, “Oh, thou art my wholesome parental unit! Wilt thou doth grant me this sugary confection that delighteth my eyes and bringeth joy to mine heart?” rather than “I want a cookie.” If it's right before dinner, the answer is no either way. And if we're at a carnival, it's probably yes either way!

## HONEST VERSUS SHALLOW

Now, there is a difference between shallow prayers and honest prayers. Shallow prayers are honest, but they aren't always effective (like my old junior high prayers). I'd liken a shallow prayer to a list of things we just want, as if we are a child making our Christmas wish list for Santa Claus. There's nothing wrong with asking for the things we want, but those aren't always the most effective prayers—because, as James 4:3 says, “When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

An honest prayer is one in which you are willing to sound stupid, say the wrong thing, or admit things out loud that might be embarrassing for someone to hear. When we try and dress up our prayers, we aren't fooling God. More often than not, we are fooling ourselves.

## THE GOALS OF THIS BOOK

Julie and I have a few different goals for this book. One goal is for these prayers to give you *permission* to say things to God that you haven't said before. Many prayers were intentionally crafted to express the raw emotion that can accompany motherhood.

But raw emotion alone is not always helpful. If we end there, we haven't done our job! Our other goal in crafting honest prayers is to model what it looks like to renew our minds (Romans 12:2), especially by focusing on gratitude. What I've discovered in my years of walking with the Lord is that something profound happens when I can get out all the yuck (the honest part), and then refocus my thoughts on biblical truth (the renewing part). It's a great recipe for a heart that God can mold.

Our third goal was to make this book a truly communal experience. While Julie and I wrote many of the prayers, we have contributions from Mama Bears from all walks of life and stages of motherhood. We have prayers in here from official Mama Bears, Mama Bears who were on our launch team, and even friends and family who made unique contributions. We have prayers from single Mama Bears, adoptive Mama Bears, blended-family Mama Bears, and Grandmama Bears. I wanted the prayers to be anonymous so each person would have the freedom to be personal and specific without having to worry who would read the prayer. And though Julie and I edited the prayers to have a cohesive tone, the voices behind them are many. Because we are better together!

Finally, while I love that people are reading this book and praying through these prayers, I have a more profound goal: that, one day, you will not need this book anymore! As you read these prayers, my hope is that you will learn how to craft honest prayers for yourself, learning how to speak authentically about where you are and then intentionally about how you'd like to see God move—specifically and according to His will and character. It's okay if you're not some prayer guru! Everyone struggles with prayer. It's when we give ourselves permission to struggle—and even to fail—that we also find the strength to get back up and try again.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SECTIONS

Section 1 is near and dear to my heart because it addresses the misconception that it is selfish to pray for ourselves. When women pray, it's often for other people. We pray for our husbands, for our children, for our friends and family. But what about praying for ourselves? Does this make you feel a little uncomfortable? If so, you're not alone, and your reasons are most likely very noble. But I would like to make the argument that praying for ourselves is one of the *most important things we can do as Mama Bears*.

I suspect we believe that praying for ourselves is selfish because we don't know what we should be praying for. When we pray for others, our words often revolve around comfort, peace, success, and health. It feels right to pray this way for others, but asking for our own comfort and prosperity? Well, that just feels a bit gross.

Truth is, these aren't necessarily bad things to ask God for. He is a good Father who delights in giving good gifts to His children (Matthew 7:11). But I wonder if praying for ourselves might become more natural if we looked a little further upstream, so to speak. Rather than asking for outcomes (such as health, prosperity, and comfort), what if we prayed for righteous *desires*? It's the "give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime" principle. Pray for the desired outcome, and you may get it once. Ask the Lord to change your desires, cravings, habits, and heart, and you will affect a thousand outcomes in the future. (Now, praying this prayer doesn't give us permission *not* to act if we don't "feel" like it. But man, isn't it easier to obey when you truly want to?)

When we begin to pray for the right *desires*, we're not just praying for outcomes; we're praying for faithfulness through the process. And when we grow in faithfulness, our character, patience, struggles, repentance, victories, and yes, even our failures, serve as valuable discipleship opportunities for our children. Walking the Christian life is hard! Sanctification (the process of ridding ourselves of sin and replacing it with obedience) is hard. It's a slow, steady process of disciplining our wills—and then allowing our hearts to follow. Praying to crave the Word, to

desire the things of God, to cultivate healthy habits, and for the Lord to gently remove the chaff from our lives is the *opposite* of selfish. As with all the prayers in this book, it is our Mama Bear hope that you would use them as a launching point to find words specifically tailored to you and your own struggles.

Section 2 is centered around spiritual warfare as a necessary discipline. I realize the discussion on spiritual warfare can be complicated and even controversial in the church. There is some “in-house” debate on what spiritual warfare is and how we should pray warfare prayers without slipping into occult fascination. With all that in mind, we tend to agree with C.S. Lewis in the preface of *The Screwtape Letters*: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

We Mama Bears have personally experienced these two unhealthy extremes in our Christian communities. Some people think a malevolent spirit is behind *everything* that must be discerned, named, and rebuked before anyone moves another inch. And then there’s the “devil made me do it” crowd. Um...no. The devil didn’t *make you* do anything. You done-did-it because your heart was like, “That sounds super satisfying! I’m totally in!” Friends, we don’t need the devil to make us do anything. Our sinful desires are entirely sufficient (James 1:14).

That being said, neither should we ignore or forget that harmful spirits exist, and they love to sow seeds of jealousy, bitterness, lust, etc. They do it very, very well. And they *luuuurve* when we are completely oblivious to their schemes.

So these prayers are for praying over the various rooms of your house or the other places where you or your family spend time. I recommend praying over your home spaces regularly. We don’t need to over spiritualize, but neither should we ignore the authority we have to dedicate our homes to Christ.

Section 3 is meant to take the Mama Bear through her day. We encourage you to type these up and post them around your house, or

(if you're feeling feisty) to memorize them! There is something comforting about quieting your soul with a quick liturgy as you go about your day, from the moment your alarm goes off (*Bzzzz!*) to the moment you finally drift off to sleep (*Zzzz...*).

In section 4, we zoom out a bit—focusing on the needs and concerns of various phases we Mama Bears might go through. Our parental role changes over time as we respond to each developmental stage of our children—from the moment we first see our little bean on the sonogram, to when our grown-up bean posts a sonogram of their own little bean! Each stage is its own kind of beautiful and its own kind of hard—and both will pass in God's timing (which, according to empty nesters, is in the blink of an eye).

Sections 5 and 6 are dedicated to our cubs—the regular prayers that everyone needs for spiritual formation and the specific prayers our kids need for the world in which they are growing up.

Sections 7 through 10 are focused more on things Mama Bears have to deal with, from interpersonal conflicts (section seven) to the exhaustion of motherhood in this crazy culture (chapter nine).

Sections 11 and 12 are self-explanatory.

## A FEW MORE THINGS YOU'LL WANT TO KNOW...

We at Mama Bear Apologetics have always been about practicality, so we couldn't just leave you with prayers! Pay attention to the additional activities, ideas, encouragements, or journaling exercises that are included with some of the prayers.

Furthermore, we tried to create a template for you to personalize these prayers as much as possible. Anytime you see [brackets], take them as a cue to insert your own information. Mostly it is a cue for you to insert your child's specific name. Occasionally, we include instructions for things to add to the prayer that will make it more personal, almost like Mad Libs.

How you read the book is up to you. Find the prayer(s) you need for the day and read according to need. Or, read the book straight through—almost as a devotional or tutorial on how to begin praying honestly with God about the things you have faced or will face as



a mom. When those subjects arise, you will know you can go back to this book for help in praying over that issue. Praying through the book can also grow your compassion for fellow moms who may be going through something you currently are not. Share the prayer with them or pray it on their behalf. Julie and I pray this book will bless you and deepen your relationship with the Lord, and that it is as much of a blessing for you to read as it was for us to write.



## Raising Dragon Slayers in an Era of Dragons

*Jennifer DeFrates*

Dear Lord, I am not sure I'm prepared to parent children in today's world. Sometimes just keeping my kids alive feels like an insurmountable hurdle, and I don't always feel confident in my ability to guide, protect, and nurture them well in this political and religious climate. I remember it was hard enough to be a Christian when the predominant culture was Christian. Especially as a teenager and young adult, it's incredibly hard to avoid sin, even when surrounded by fellow believers who are encouraging and supportive. Right now, I am scared for my children growing up in a world that blatantly celebrates sinfulness in so many ways and bombards them from every direction with flawed and deceptive definitions of love, identity, and truth.

Lord, I need You to strengthen me as a parent and believer. Open my mind to solid theology and doctrine as I study Your Word each day. Grant me wisdom so I may raise my children to think biblically and rationally through every issue they will face. Give me the courage to gently speak truth when our world distorts what Your Word says about our bodies, minds, behaviors, and beliefs. Help me be an example of living my beliefs boldly, even though I may be condemned as a bigot or worse. Sometimes upholding biblical truth is terrifying in this post-Christian culture. Make me wise enough to know when to be silent and brave enough to know when to speak. And may it all be wrapped in Your love and kindness.

As a parent, show me how to raise my children to see the image of God in all people first and to treat them as immortal souls whom God has designed and created for a purpose. Let the Holy Spirit work through me to demonstrate Your perfect grace and mercy in the way I

treat everyone so that my children see what it looks like to love others well. Open doors for me to share the gospel often in front of my children. I don't want to be a Christian in name only.

Help us wisely choose the entertainment we enjoy as a family; may it be honoring and glorifying to You. Help me protect and nurture my children's hearts and minds while inoculating them against culture's lies.

Lastly, Lord, I beg You to work within my children. Create a strong faith in them. Help them to know You personally and have their own faith and convictions. I don't want them to just parrot my beliefs and never know You for themselves. Forgive me for the times I feel overwhelmed by fear and anxiety about the persecution my children might face if they stand firm in their convictions as believers. Give me peace knowing that You will carry them through anything if they lean into deep fellowship with You. Even things that can bring physical suffering or destruction are not to be feared when they trust in You.

Help me remember that You appointed them to be born in such a time as this, and that You have prepared good works for them to do (Ephesians 2:10). In an era of dragons, You are raising up dragon slayers. Thank You for the strengths I see in my children. May they be mighty warriors in and for Your kingdom. In Your name I pray, amen.

## Section 1



# SELFLESS PRAYERS FOR SELF

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## Craving for the Word

**L**ord Jesus, You *are* the Word of God. When I crave the Word, I crave You. I pray that You would give me an insatiable desire for the Word, and for it to stay in my memory. I pray that when I am seeking guidance, You would turn my heart toward reading Your eternal truths.

I pray that when I miss my quiet time, You would give me discomfort, like when I'm hungry or thirsty. And when I feel like I can't retain information, please help me to remember Your words. When I sit and pray, when I love, when I discipline, or when I'm just going about my duties for the day, may Your words be ever present in my mind.

I pray for a godly pleasure as I study, that reading Your words would fill me with joy. Please bring others into my path who will study with me. I pray that You would highlight the resources that will help me understand Your Word better.

Oh God, Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path (Psalm 119:105). Help me to faithfully seek Your words even when reading feels like a chore. I trust You, Lord, to mold me into the image of Your only begotten Son. May every cell in my being crave the knowledge that comes from Your Word.



## Eternal Perspective

**G**od, I want to invest in what will last into eternity, but the petty things of the world keep taking my attention. I know this world is temporary and that all things here will eventually pass away, so please reform my perspective and help me prioritize what matters most. I pray that You would give me the spiritual eyes to see the things that will have eternal weight, no matter how mundane they may feel in the here and now. Lord, I know there are some battles that need to be fought, and other battles are just distractions. Please give me the wisdom to tell the difference. If there is anything I am fixating upon that's keeping me from eternal things, please reveal it to me.

You have put so many good things in my path, but they are not my ultimate things. Some good things may not be my responsibility. My primary tasks are being Your daughter, nurturing my marriage, and shepherding my children. Lord, may I be faithful to that which You have given me, knowing the fruits of my obedience will last after I am gone. I praise You that I have more than just this life to live for. Help me to live it well, knowing that faithfulness in even the smallest of callings will echo long into eternity.

### *Honest* JOURNALING

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Read through Colossians 3:1-17 and meditate on it.  
In your journal, make a list of time-suckers in your life.

Which of these things don't really bring you  
refreshment or aren't of eternal importance?

Which one can you cut down on each day or week?



## Wise Use of Money

Lord, You say so much about money in the Bible because You know how big of a stronghold money issues can become. I do not want You to ever have to compete for my heart. Keep my security in You, not in our bank account. Everything that is done in secret will be brought to light (Luke 8:17), so I pray that our family manages our resources in such a way that we'd have no shame if the whole world were to see how we earn, spend, and give.

God, I pray for holy conviction regarding how our family makes money. May we bring a ministry mindset into whatever our hands find to do (1 Corinthians 10:31), conducting ourselves with integrity, even if it costs us financially. I pray for enough godly ambition to provide amply for our family's present needs without indulging, and for wisdom to prepare for the future without hoarding. Convict my heart if I am ever given over to greedy accumulation.

I pray for unity in our family. Let how we spend money be a conscious decision rather than an unguided habit. Lord, prompt me to be a cheerful giver, sharing financially wherever I see You working. I pray that money would not just be a piece of paper, but that I would regard both my time and my resources as ways to support Your work here on earth.



## Give Me a Moldable Heart

Lord God, I pray for a moldable heart that is receptive to Your leading, Your teaching, and Your loving rebuke. You say in Your Word that a broken and contrite heart You will not despise (Psalm 51:17). There is a lot I have control over, but my heart is not one of those things. Only You can change my heart, so I ask for a heart that can hear Your reproof. God, criticism is never fun, but when I hear it, I pray for the strength of character to evaluate if what is said about me is true. May I never discount good counsel just because of who says it.

Lord, I pray for a heart that is growing daily in delight for the things that please You. And I pray to be resensitized to the things that grieve You; if something is contemptible to You, let it also be repulsive to me. Lord, if I have grown complacent toward the sin in the world, the themes in my TV shows and movies, may You return to me a godly sense of shock and displeasure at unrighteousness. Help me surround myself with things that uplift truth, purity, goodness, and all that is excellent and praiseworthy.

I pray You would reveal to me when I am participating in anything that increases hardness or numbness in my heart. May I have the boldness to remove those influences from my life. God, with every breath, I place myself back in submission to You, seeking to walk in a way that brings glory to Your name. Guide the decisions I make each day. I pray against any kind of pride that would puff me up, and may I see myself humbly and with sober judgment (Romans 12:3). Grant me, God, a heart that responds willingly to the hands of the Potter.

### *Honest* STEP

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Pay attention to the media you consume. Do you ever find yourself rooting for (or unbothered by) things that would



grieve God's heart (such as wanting two characters who are married to other people to finally "get together")? Make it a litmus test for yourself: When you are unbothered by a display of sin in a television show, you should probably turn it off for the time being (or permanently). You may be surprised at what you are *unable* to stomach anymore once you remove it from your life or regular viewing.