

# WORLDWIDE WORSHIP





WORLDWIDE  
WORSHIP

prayers, songs, and poetry

*Edited by*  
John Marks Templeton

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# Worldwide Worship

*Prayers, Songs, and Poetry*



## INTRODUCTION

One of the main guidelines of the programs of the John Templeton Foundation can be described as the “theology of humility.” The theology of humility is not man-centered but God-centered. It proposes that the infinite God may not even be adequately describable in human words and concepts and may not be restricted by human rationality. Perhaps God is not limited by our senses or by our perceptions of three dimensions in space or one dimension in time. Perhaps there was no absolute beginning and there will be no absolute end, but only everlasting change and variety in the unlimited purposes, freedom, and creativity of God.

Humility can be a key to progress. We know so little and need to learn so much. Inasmuch as every person’s concept of God is too small, through humility and a sincere desire to learn we can begin to realize the infinity of God. We can also become more understanding and loving of ourselves and of our fellow human beings on life’s educational journey.

My purpose in assembling this collection of poems, prayers, prose, and hymns from various world cultures and religions is to share some of the works of inspiration that I find especially beautiful or affecting that can assist us in learning various lessons of life. Human nature seems to be such that both children and adults can better remember when worshipful concepts are expressed in these avenues. Many of these selections express the vastly larger concepts of God suggested by humility in theology.

One may wonder, what profit is found in studying the wisdom passed along to us? Why not simply live from day to day, taking things as they come? One answer is that our stay on planet Earth

is a brief one and the time we are given to educate ourselves is all too short. For each person to grow spiritually, it is important to learn from others who may be wiser than we are. From excellent writers we can come to realize the impact of even a small gesture, word, or action upon our self or another person, upon our community, and, yes, even upon our world.

There can also be comfort in reading inspired thoughts from the great thinkers and writers from various cultures and religious perspectives. These timeless formulas can form a bridge of enlightenment and enhanced awareness between today's reader and those faithful souls who literally "put their hearts on paper"!

Many passages selected for this book have numerous applications for thoughts for daily living. The words that can provide us with hope, inspiration, courage, consolation, consideration, joy, happiness, and perhaps a greater awareness of love come from all faiths and represent writers from various periods of history. In a variety of ways these writers present a message that God is love, always ready to radiate that love and wisdom throughout all of Creation. At this present moment, the human race, even after thousands of years, is still at the dawn of new creation. This is both tremendously exciting and an awe-inspiring responsibility! It is my hope that you, the reader, may draw inspiration and enthusiasm from these words and that perhaps some special passage may point the way toward a brighter, more useful, and meaningful future for you and others worldwide.

One thing we can learn from these wise writings is the power of prayers. One meaning of the term prayer is "to trap a thought." As one holds a thought it can become a state of mind or a generally held attitude. A personal, cultural, or spiritual approach to prayer relates to a concept of God and God's creative process. Regardless of what you do in life—enrolling in college, starting a business, buying stock, preparing a tax return, buying a home, having a tooth extracted, getting a job—you can do it better if you start with prayer. And let your prayer be that God will use you as a conduit for His love and wisdom. Let the words you

speak and the actions you take be in harmony with God's purpose. Prayer can assist in creating an attitude from which true faith and conviction can grow. Many traditions have taught men and women to go beyond words into "the Silence"—a place of spiritual communion much deeper and more delicate to the soul than mere words.

Poetry has always held a proud place in the great pantheon of literature. Through the writings of the poet, the voices from all aspects of life ring loud and clear. In some instances, the sonorous meter, the proliferation of descriptive imagery, and the gentle didactic tones seemingly bespeak an uncomplicated muse. Poems are important because they push beyond the simplifications we use every day. One person can say to another, "I love you." And what is really meant by the words? One simple phrase is being used to label a thousand different sensations! One poem that I enjoy and included in this volume is "A Psalm of Life" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. It is subtitled, "What the heart of the young man said to the Psalmist." Food for thought! Down through the ages the poet spoke . . . and the people listened. They are listening still!

Hymns from the world religions are filled with inspirational literature. One of my favorites is "Take Time to Be Holy." The soothing melody and gentle words of this beautiful hymn can be a precious reminder of the importance of "putting first things first" in our lives. Some hymns are so powerful and touch us in such a way that even the most mundane detail of our lives can become an encounter with the ultimate. They can be tremendous teaching aids as well as a source of pleasure and solace. Although the words of the hymns presented in this book are memorable, combining them in context with their music lends an even greater meaning to their message.

When the written word is expressed without bias, it can often paint a magnificent panorama of aspirations, inspirations, and, perhaps, universal guidance. Ideas of giving and receiving, understanding the power of the mind, experiencing the richness of

living the spiritual life through prayer and praise, developing a humble attitude—all these things, and more, can be powerful building blocks in the foundation of a fulfilled and productive existence on earth. And being open to learning about the cultural and religious traditions of people whose beliefs may differ from ours can help us see that there are many valid paths to the Divine. So let us lead a compassionate life by transcending the demands of the clamorous ego and recognizing the sacredness in others and in all of life.

At the end of the book is a first-line index, a key-word index, an author index, and an acknowledgment of sources.

Poems, prayers, prose, and hymns! Take your time with this book—assimilate its words, ideas, and messages into your heart, soul, mind, and body; into your rest, relaxation, and meditation; into your worship ceremonies; into your relationships; into your ambitions, work, and play. Let the meaning of the words presented here flow over your soul, opening perhaps new avenues of awareness as you attune your mind to the rhythm of the cosmos. In doing this, you can be moved into a healthier, happier, richer, and more adventurous and purposeful way of living. And may you know that . . . God loves you, and I do, too!

*John Marks Templeton*

# part 1

## A GATHERING OF PRAYERS

**P**rayer is a wondrous avenue for touching God and for experiencing what some may call “the attributes of God.” The words of a deeply meaningful prayer may seem to literally vibrate with an energy that can stir the depths of the soul.

Over the years, it has become increasingly clear to me that every thought, feeling, and action is actually some kind of prayer. As we become more aware of this uplifting in consciousness, a kind of “divine intervention” may occur that provides us with more space to be silent and still. This can be a place where we bridge the gaps between fears and doubts—with love and serenity—where silent communion with God exists.

Prayer provides many blessings. It can offer a simple opportunity for a person to take another step forward. It can be a seemingly fleeting and tender awareness in one aspect of our life. Or it can be the thundering language of the soul, awakening our consciousness to some great spiritual truth. Prayer can provide an element of acceptance and surrender to the experiences in the journey of life in a powerful, transformational way. Prayer can also inspire us with enthusiasm to become helpers in God’s accelerating creativity.

In whatever manner a person prays, prayer is a direct link with the Universal, the Total, the Absolute, God. Prayer can connect us with life as God, regardless of religious persuasion. From Africa, Australia, America, the Far East, India, and all the countries of the world, prayer provides an avenue in which men and women can experience the simple, sublime, and profoundly beautiful sense of connection to God and His purposes and to one another.

*In the Beginning Was God*

In the beginning was God,  
Today is God,  
Tomorrow will be God.  
Who can make an image of God?  
He has no body.  
He is a word which comes out of your mouth.  
That word! It is no more,  
It is past, and it still lives!  
So is God.

The Pygmies of the Congo recite this prayer,  
which describes God as an eternal Spirit.



## *Prayer for Mankind*

O Thou kind Lord! O Thou Who art generous and merciful! We are the servants of Thy threshold and are gathered beneath the sheltering shadow of Thy divine unity. The sun of Thy mercy is shining upon all, and the clouds of Thy bounty shower upon all. Thy gifts encompass all, Thy loving providence sustains all, Thy protection overshadows all. O Lord! Grant Thine infinite bestowals, and let the light of Thy guidance shine. Illuminate the eyes, gladden the hearts with abiding joy. Confer a new spirit upon all people and bestow upon them eternal life. Unlock the gates of true understanding and let the light of faith shine resplendent. Gather all people beneath the shadow of Thy bounty and cause them to unite in harmony, so that they may become as the rays of one sun, as the waves of one ocean, and as the fruit of one tree. May they drink from the same fountain. May they be refreshed by the same breeze. May they receive illumination from the same source of light. Thou art the Giver, the Merciful, the Omnipotent.

*'Abdu'l-Bahá*

## *A Prayer*

i thank You god for most this amazing  
day:for the leading greenly spirits of trees  
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything  
which is natural which is infinite which is yes.

(i who have died am alive again today,  
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth-  
day of life and of love and wings;and of the gay  
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing  
breathing any—lifted from the no  
of all nothing—human merely being  
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and  
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

*E. E. Cummings*