



7 PRAYERS *FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES*

@KATECBOWLER

DEAR ONE,

There's a strange and terrible feeling that I would not wish on anybody, but if you are reading this, it is one you probably already know. It's that feeling of being dangled over the edge when there is nothing you can do to save yourself. Our lives have been undone by a divorce or disease or death. We've lost someone we can't get back or we're now the primary caregiver for a parent whose mind or body isn't what it once was. We thought our life would turn out one way, but here we are. Living here. Right up to the edge, dangled over uncertainty.

It's awful. But when you're pulled back from it for a second, when we get a clean scan or have a lower-pain day. It does help you see certain things more clearly, which is this: almost all of us live up close to the edge at some point. We experience a minute of undoing.

Our lives are made of paper and we just didn't know it at the time. And once you see it in your own life, you can see it in everybody else's. You feel kind broken open to the pain and the suffering and the fragility of it all. Now that we know that it can all come apart, now that we are aware of our fragility.

There will be a desire to go back to before, back to the indestructible version of ourselves. But sometimes, we cannot go back. We have been changed. Instead, we have to learn to live here in uncertainty, in the unknowing. Managing the fact that we never get to have a delusional feeling of security. This is the life that we have. And that is going to take courage and it's going to take compassion and probably several naps to live here. In these bodies, in these families, in these webs of love and duty and not enoughness.

What follows is not going to be a quick fix or ten steps to feeling whole again. I wish I could promise you the path to an easier, more fulfilling life. But instead, I've put together 7 Prayers for Uncertain Times. May these words comfort and hold you when there is nothing else to do but pray. May the presence of God surround you and the Holy Spirit drench you in the floaty feeling of love that gives you a bit of courage to live here, in all of your beautiful, terrible humanity again today.

BLESS YOU, DEAR ONE. ONWARD TOGETHER,
Kate

GOD,

I am right here, and I wonder if you are too. With all that is happening in the world, I can't quite tell. You feel silent and distant and I feel at a loss for what to say or ask you for. I have been so disappointed in the past. And I'm afraid to hope.

So God, will you help me pray? Help me open my heart to you and tell you all that is there—all that I feel—and much of it couldn't fit into a normal, 'proper' prayer that sounds fit for a pew.

God, help me pour out my deepest lament over the state of the world, the sorrow and grief and not-enough-ness. Meet me here God, in the reality I see around me. Help me name each disappointment, each sadness, each loss.

Grant me grace to trust you to take it all into your heart of love, and trust that you are able to carry it with me. And bring your light that helps me see that there's more – more love, more healing, more hope, more of you.

Amen.

O GOD,

I feel alone. There doesn't seem to be an end of it, no bottom to this sense that there's no one else who sees me. Or understands me. Or has to bear this burden. I am all alone. And it feels ugly. Like I deserve it or something. But God, that can't be right.

Come to my awareness. Take hold of me, for I am sinking. I call out to you in my need. For you, O Lord, are good and full of mercy. I remember, you have been there in the bleakest of times before. And you are here now. Awaken me to the truth that I was never actually alone and am not alone now. Never. For You are God with us, the Immanuel. You are singing my soul awake. O God I thank You and praise You and say "be near me Lord Jesus, I ask You to stay close by me forever and love me I pray,"

IN YOUR HOLY NAME,

Amen.

DEAR GOD,

I am running on fumes again. I am burning the candle on both ends and can't stop because it feels like the weight of the world is on my shoulders. The responsibilities and duties that fall on me are too much. There is not enough time or energy or finances or bandwidth. I am coming to the edge of myself.

I can't keep going and I can't rest. God, can You help me slow down? I just need a little shelter, a little breather so I can take a minute and rest. Can You give me a space to curl up for awhile? Hold me in the palm of your hand, and take from my shoulders the weight of what can't happen right now. Let me think only about what is gentle and lovely, what is bountiful and unencumbered in this reality I am living in. Help me be amazed by nature and gaze in wonder. At the sky. The velvet of petals, and the precision of fronds. The ridiculous owl with its stark yellow stare and tweedy feathers. God, scoop me up into life as it is. Stop me from running ahead, so I can just be in this space for the moment. And rest.

7 PRAYERS FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES

Amen.

GOD,

I'm not doing well. I can feel my heart racing and my mind on fast-forward. This isn't good, and I know it. But I can't seem to find the brakes. God could you wrap me up, swaddle me, and hold me tight? That's all. Send me to my room to calm myself, but no sermons please! I carry all my own admonitions with me like a comment thread that's always turned on. They always seem to find their way to team up with my own well-established inner critic.

So God, talk to me louder. Talk to me in the secret place of my heart. Speak into the core of my being. Help me listen to the songs your spirit is already singing there, songs of love and delight and rest and beauty.

So in the quiet, while I am waiting, comfort me. Remind me that you know me inside and out. Speak tenderly, and help me tell you all that is hard to say. And as I open my heart to you, let your healing and love flow in. And may it be, that if I need help from wise counsel, give me grace to seek it. And if I need a community of faith to walk with me, give me the humility to recognize it and seek it.

Amen.

GOD,

I need to settle down. I am feeling rushed and driven, careening from one task to another and it feels like I'm in motion but I'm not getting anywhere. So God, could you point out what is amiss? But slow me down, so I can pay attention. Gather me into a quiet place, if only in my mind, so that what is happening around me, or should be happening, doesn't take up all my awareness.

God, be God of this moment. Fully. God of my heartbeat, and my intentions. God of my urgency and of my unspoken desires. Show me what is possible, and what is fitting for this time.

Bless me God. Oh God of my life, thank you for showing me that small lives can be beautiful, valuable, even efficient. I'm smiling because I realize now that's the god I've been worshiping in this time of hurry. Not worth it. You are the real treasure I most desire. Resting now, in Your arms.

THANK YOU LORD.

Amen.

DEAR GOD,

I am restless. And I mean that. I am craving rest, but my heart keeps churning and tossing up problems for my mind to solve, but they are too much for me. I keep coming to the end of the thought chain of each problem, and finding myself just tired, but with nothing solved, nothing accomplished, and much time lost.

God, could you give me some pure rest, just rest, with no strings attached? Give me grace to put a blanket over my head and shut out all the detail, all the possible rabbit-trails of possibility. Give me grace to hand over my heavy heart, weighed down with all that I can't handle myself. And settle me into the peace that goes beyond all I can imagine, think, or ask, the peace that you give that is true rest. Pure and simple.

God, keep me here, shielded by your love, until I am ready to see what you want me to see. Feel what You want me to feel. And do what you want me to do.

Amen.

DEAR GOD,

It has been so long since I felt like there was something I could plan, something I could do about this endless sameness. This uncertainty has shrunk my horizon. I can no longer think about future ideas or selves or plans. And I miss it. The feeling of endless possibility. It is too much, the blandness, the horizon that has shrunk to room-size. And yet the problems don't stay the same. They mount. Or pass their sell-by date, and move out of reach of ever being solved.

Help me, God, right here in this powerless place. Come into this small and helpless space where I live in the confines of uncertainty. Be with me here, in this. And comfort me. Show me what choices I still have left. That there may be joy in them.

Amen.