To my niece Morgan—a young woman of ever-deepening faith and prayer. You’ve shown such courage and grace this year. Thank you for being such a light. I look forward to seeing how God will use your generous heart in the years to come.

And to three up-and-coming fabulous young women—my nieces Avery and Lindy, and my friend, Emily K.—may you each walk in the sweetness of God’s love and know that your greatest gift to the world is to be your wonderful self.

—Hope

To my dear daughter, Anna:
May my small love light the way for you to the infinite love of the Father. He will guide your sweet confidence and helping heart in the path that is perfect for you.

—Paul, editor
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God is a true friend. Now, it might sound a little far-fetched to say, “Jesus is my best friend,” but when you face life’s difficulties and deep joys, you begin to understand how true this statement is. Your Lord—and the maker of your heart and mind, with all their complexities—is a generous, loving, forgiving, and personal God.

As you discover more about who God is and what He’s like, as well as discovering these things about yourself, you’ll be inspired to follow His lead a bit more each day…each month…each year. God’s loyalty and consistency offer you a foundation of security…and that security will help you give and be your very best.

Your relationship with God will be strengthened the more you talk to Him through prayer. If it doesn’t feel “normal” to talk to God yet, give it time, and give Him time as He’s at work in your heart and life. When you aren’t even sure what to say or what to ask, God is in the middle of the silence. He’ll know what your heart needs.
Prayer Starter:

God, I need You for many things. And since You created my life, You know just what I need and when I need it. Sometimes it feels like You are far away and not involved in my life. I believe that You are near and that You care. Help my beliefs and my feelings line up as I spend more time talking to You. I really want to feel that You are my Lord and friend.

Right now, I need to feel that You’re with me as I face these situations:

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I’m grateful for Your friendship, God. As I learn how to talk to You and how to trust the times of silence and of waiting, I know that You are with me and that You are making me into the young woman I am meant to become. Amen.
Prayers Rising

May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.
Psalm 141:2

God, I’m still discovering how to talk to You. Sometimes it’s easy, because in a difficult moment I call out for help. But when I’m not in a mini-crisis, I don’t know what to say. I hate to admit it, but I’ve had times of doubt about whether my prayers matter. Yet I know You’re here with me.

I like to imagine my prayers rising up to Your heart like smoke rising from a campfire. While the warmth comforts me and Your light brightens my outlook, my words gently spiral their way to Your accepting ears. You don’t rush me, and You never think what I have to say is insignificant. I can’t wait to talk to You more often, Lord.
Calling God

Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.
Psalm 116:2

You gave me Your personal number and You are available anytime to take my calls. That’s the miracle of prayer. I can call to You, and You turn an ear to me and listen. You don’t tell me to try back at a more convenient time. You don’t say, “Hold on” and then finish playing a computer game or start a conversation with someone else while I wait.

God, Your attentive ear shows me how attentive You are to my heart. As I go about my day, I talk to You and ask for Your input and guidance, and for reminders of Your promises. Let me also be a good listener as I wait for Your answers for me. And may my first call to You always be with words of gratitude.
Making a New Habit

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:12-13

I’m grateful for the hope You bring to my life, Lord. I’m eager for the practice of prayer to become a regular part of my life. When I am experiencing happy moments with friends or laughing with my family, may I thank You for the gift of joy. When I face a school day that overflows with mini-disasters or mistakes, may I patiently await the comfort of Your peace and the refreshment of Your generous heart.

As prayer becomes second nature for me, I hope that I can encourage others. I want to see their needs and hopes so I can be compassionate. Show me how to do these things, Lord, and help me want to come to You for everything.
Prayer Power

The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. 

James 5:15-16

Lord, I come to You today with the broken parts of me lifted up for Your care. I have hurts that need Your healing, and sins that require the mending of Your forgiveness. I’m realizing that prayer isn’t just about asking for things—it’s about bringing the pieces of my life to You so I can see Your power to make me whole.

Sometimes I pretend to be okay so that I don’t have to deal with friends asking me what is wrong, but I want to be vulnerable to You—open with You always. Each time I ask for Your help to overcome my heartaches and flaws, I experience the incredible feeling of being known and loved unconditionally.
Today Matters

Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Today is the first day of the rest of my life. Even though that sounds like a hyped-up motivational poster, it actually makes me happy! I believe You give me this day to make a difference, God. This moment is a new beginning. It is a chance to give 150 percent to all that I do. I have lazy days when I want to crawl back under the covers and forget about any plans that have been made. But today, I’m eager to see what You have in store for me. I pray that my words, actions, prayers, and decisions make a difference.

Give me a strong sense of Your guidance so that my efforts and commitment would play a part in turning an ordinary day into an extraordinary example of living life completely for You.
Change of Plans

*There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the L ORD.*

*Proverbs 21:30*

God, I have so many things to do and so many plans-in-the-making. I’ve shown You my lists! And You’ve heard my prayers packed with ideas and intentions. I’m giving so much attention to my plans that I have forgotten to ask about Your plans for me and my faith journey. I’m still learning how to depend on You for direction, but I want You to guide my steps, Lord.

I know that when I walk in Your way, I’ll still encounter rough spots, but I’ll be able to face them with greater peace and trust. As I change my plans and to-do lists to line up with Your will, may I seek Your guidance, Your priorities, and Your strength.
You Include Me

The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.
Psalm 33:11

I like being a part of Your legacy, Lord. The work You do in and through me is a way I have a role in Your big picture. When I feel insignificant around someone who seems on top of the world, I will rest in the truth that I am part of Your plan for today and tomorrow. If I second-guess my abilities, I will be reminded to give my circumstances over to Your strength and ability.

I don’t know what tomorrow will look like. Some of my dreams will come true, and some of them will fade away. But Your plans are forever. And today, like every day, You invite me to be a part of Your purpose and compassion for the world. Thanks for including me! I love You, God.
Set Me on Course

In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.
Proverbs 16:9

Lord, You know my heart has held many dreams and expectations over the years. But lately, I’m not so sure what I want or even what step to take next. I’m just gazing into the distance without a focus. My moods often alter how I respond to situations and how I make decisions! I want to be entrusting each step to Your plan and not to my uncertain whims.

God, set me on the right course. Guide me to embrace priorities and plans that match up with Yours. Things change. Sometimes so quickly, I lose my footing. But as I turn to face Your course with renewed commitment, I know You won’t let me fall.