

Grace, Justice & Mercy Prayer Guide

PRAYER FOR OUR JUSTICE SYSTEM

Almighty God, you are a God of justice and righteousness. The prophet Amos says, “may justice roll down like a river, and righteousness like a never failing stream.” We pray for the justice system in our country. May judges, legislators, and law enforcement work with community leaders and advocates to end oppression and exploitation, together bringing justice to our city and our nation.

Scripture: Isaiah 58: 6 - 9

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:
to loose the chains of injustice
and untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and break every yoke?
Is it not to share your food with the hungry
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—
when you see the naked, to clothe them,
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will quickly appear;
then your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.
Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

Prayer points:

- I. Pray for our nation’s leaders and decision makers that they may govern in support of all people, including people reentering society after being incarcerated.
- II. Pray for Open Hands Legal Services, a nonprofit organization that brings free legal services to community members, including New Yorkers released from prison to assist them in obtaining housing and employment.
- III. Pray for racial equity in arrest and sentencing.
 - A. Two-thirds of inmates arrested for drug offenses are Hispanic or black, even though research indicates that whites use drugs at the same rates as Hispanic and blacks.
 - B. In NYC prisons, blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented: 57 percent are black, 33 percent Hispanic, 7 percent white, 1 percent Asian, and the rest other or unknown.

PRAYER FOR THOSE IN PRISON NOW

Father God, your love is great and extends beyond walls and borders. You see the men and women who are living behind bars here in our city and throughout our country. We pray for their lives: for adequate medical treatment and care. We pray for families that are divided by the prison bars.

Scripture: Matthew 25: 33- 46 (NIV)

He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Prayer points

- I. Pray for those suffering from mental illness or addiction, that they may receive medical treatment and rehabilitation.
 - About 56% of state prisoners, 45% of federal prisoners, and 65% of inmates suffer from mental illness.
 - Nearly 76% of inmates who have a mental health problem are dependent on or abuse alcohol or drugs.

- II. Pray for those in prison who are parents, and are separated from their children. And for the children who grow up separated from their parent who is incarcerated.
 - More than five million children in the United States have at least one incarcerated parents.

PRAYER FOR PEOPLE WHO REENTERING SOCIETY AFTER BEING INCARCERATED

God of goodness and love, we pray for each person struggling with the barriers of reentry into society, after spending time in prison. Lord, break down the barriers that separate returning citizens from adequate housing and employment. Just as your grace has covered our sin in the death and resurrection of Jesus, may we bring grace and compassion to our interactions with people who have been marginalized by being incarcerated.

Scripture: Luke 4:18-19

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

Prayer Points

- I. Pray for the nonprofit organization, Defy Ventures, which brings entrepreneurship training to those with criminal histories.

- II. Pray for Exodus Transitional Community, which provides supportive services to formerly incarcerated men and women to help them reintegrate into their communities.

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Lord, we pray for the church: our local church, the church across America and the church worldwide. When learning about the numbers of people in prison, may we consider that each person - every inmate and those re-entering society - is a person you have created and that you love immensely. Teach us to respond with compassion, and give us wisdom as we are moved to action.

Scripture: Romans 12:3-5

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Prayer points

- I. Pray that God's commandments to seek justice and to care for the marginalized will be a regular part each church's mission.

- II. Pray that God may end private prison corporations and the business of making money off of inmates.
 - Private prison corporations are making large profits. CCA reported \$1.7 billion in revenue in 2011.
 - The average minimum wage for inmates is \$0.93 per hour.

Thank you for praying with us.

Resources more information or volunteer opportunities include:

- Redeemer Grace & Race (redeemer.com/graceandrace)
- Hope for New York (hfny.org)
- Exodus Transitional Community (etcny.org)
- Defy Ventures (defyventures.org)
- Open Hands Legal Services (openhandslegalservices.org)

These prayers were written by the Grace & Race ministry of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, with assistance from Sojourners Mass Incarceration Prayer Guide.