

31 days, 31 ways to Pray for Families

Families who walk alongside their loved ones in the labyrinths of mental illnesses are often hesitant to ask for prayer. They might feel others will judge them or their loved one, offer uninformed advice or initiate the gossip chain. But friends who observe or are aware of their journey don't necessarily need specific details to pray effectively.

Families need God's provision for themselves and their loved ones in these areas:

Day 1: Peace. Fear, worry and confusion can stir up an oppressive cloud when a loved one is struggling with a mental health condition. Pray families will experience the presence and love of God that will drive out fear.

Day 2: Financial resources. Pray that God will provide the resources for families to pay for these extraordinary expenses and that they will not be overwhelmed by the added financial responsibilities.

Day 3: Community. Pray caregivers will have the energy to reach out to local mental health support groups.^{1,2} Ask God how you can be a part of His redemptive grace during difficult times.

Day 4: Healing. Therefore, we never stop asking Him to intervene and touch our loved one. Join families in asking for such a miracle.

Day 5: Children in the family. Pray that those who are responsible to care for the children will stay aware of and be able to meet their needs. Pray the children will be protected from finding attention in unhealthy or unsafe ways from others who would do them harm.

Day 6: Protection. Join families in praying that God would surround their loved ones with His angels. Pray He would direct them to places and people who are safe and caring. Pray for protection of caregivers and others when the ill family member is violent or abusive.

Day 7: Wisdom. Pray they will find the kind of help they need at the time they need it.

Day 8. Companionship. Pray with the families that others will bring friendship and build community with their family member. Pray the loved one will be willing to participate in peer support groups. Pray that churches will become places of acceptance and inclusion.

Day 9. Medical treatment. Pray with families that the most effective treatments can be found for their loved ones and there would be a willingness to take—and keep taking—the medications.

Day 10. Forgiveness. Pray God would pour forgiveness generously upon each person in the family—forgiveness for each other, and for themselves. Pray a spirit of forbearance and grace would create a healthy environment of kindness and love.

Day 11. Dual diagnosis/addictions. For families coping with a loved one who has a brain disorder and is abusing alcohol or drugs, challenges compound exponentially. Pray for families to be able discern what is going on. Pray for the individual to see and acknowledge the addiction, and be willing to get treatment.

Day 12. Legislative support. Pray for legislators to become aware of and concerned for the welfare of those struggling with mental illness and of the families who love them. Pray for groups like NAMI that are speaking out to inform and influence laws that better serve the mental health community.

Day 13. Spiritual growth. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work mightily to bring about salvation and sustained faith for all those touched by mental illnesses. Pray for opportunities to participate in Christian community and benefit from biblical teaching.

Day 14. Meaningful use of time. For those who suffer with severe mental health conditions, full-time work or frequent interaction with strangers may not be possible. Pray for direction and creativity to discover good options. Pray for ministries and programs that offer safe places where those with mental disorders can belong and participate in meaningful activities.

Day 15. Housing. For families caring for adult loved ones, the housing dilemma is an overwhelming challenge. Safe, affordable, sanitary, wholesome options are very limited. So, often, families provide a place in their own homes. Pray for families to find suitable and caring housing for their loved ones. If in their own homes, pray for strength, stamina and ongoing good relationships within the family.

Day 16. Grief/loss. There is an undercurrent of sadness in families where there are mental health issues. Pray for comfort and for daily joys that can lift their spirits.

Day 17. Communication. Pray caregivers will listen with discernment to what their loved ones are trying to express. Pray for wisdom in how and when to respond. Pray those with many voices in their minds will be able to listen to good counsel from those who love them and be able to know the gracious love of God.

Day 18. Self-care. Those who care for loved ones struggling with mental illnesses also struggle with taking care of themselves. Pray they would develop and maintain good rest, exercise and eating habits. Ask God to provide healthy relationships, strong faith and clear thinking.

Day 19. Guilt. Pray for relief from these internal accusers and that family members will be able to rest in the comfort of a God who knows, who understands and who pours out His redemptive grace.

Day 20. Pray families can help their loved ones identify their triggers and have a good plan for dealing with possible scenarios in healthy ways.

Day 21. Boundaries. Pray for wisdom in defining boundaries and consistency in keeping them. Pray for understanding and respect within the family when members have differing perspectives.

Day 22. Discernment. Families have to continually assess their loved one's moods, cognitive capacities and medication compliance. Pray they will be able to understand the factors at play so they can make good intervention plans.

Day 23. Reasonable expectations. Caregivers must continually adjust their expectations of their loved ones who struggle with mood swings and daily stressors. Pray for family members to discern the need of the moment and respond with wisdom, compassion and grace.

Day 24. Impact on job. The unpredictable nature of some mental health conditions means that family members often miss work as they tend to their loved ones in crisis. Pray that caregivers will find support from their employers and flexibility in their jobs. Pray for good contingency plans and that others will be willing to help when needed.

Day 25. Endurance. Pray for family members to find a sustainable pace with opportunities to rest along the way. Pray for daily refreshment and peace.

Day 26. Rest. Praying without ceasing requires the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to grant family members restorative sleep and opportunities for emotional, spiritual and mental refreshment.

Day 27. Health. Good eating and sleeping patterns, personal hygiene care and treatment for medical issues are difficult for those who deal with mental illnesses. Pray they will respond to prompts from caregivers and will have access to nutritious food, safe places to sleep and other resources necessary for good health.

Day 28. Faith. Trusting in God and His goodness can be the sustaining lifeline for caregivers in times of confusion and crisis. Pray their faith would be refreshed by God's faithfulness. Pray He would show them sparks of redemptive grace along the way that can reassure them of His presence, love and active care.

Day 29. Good counsel. Ask God to help families find knowledgeable advisors. Pray they will be able to sift through the ideas and information from others and recognize what is truly helpful.

Day 30. Legal issues. . Pray God will lead families to compassionate, competent and caring attorneys, judges and law enforcement officers. Pray responses and outcomes will always be what is best for the one struggling with the mental health difficulties. Pray for those who are incarcerated to be protected and to be swiftly released to medical care.

Day 31. Prayer. Ask God to raise up intercessors who are dedicated to pray fervently and faithfully for caregivers and their families. Ask Him to show you how to pray for specific situations.



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