

# Prayer and Devotions

## Lancelot Andrewes and the Life of Prayer



Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626) was a bishop known for his polemical writings, sacramental and biblical works, and deep devotional life.

During the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I he regularly taught against Calvinism and Puritanism, and was also active in the Church of England's struggles with the Roman Catholic Church. He was appointed by James to lead the creation of the 1611 Authorized Version of the Bible. Speaking fifteen modern and six ancient languages, he personally led the translation of Genesis–2 Kings and oversaw the other translation work.

Known for spending five hours every morning in prayer, Andrewes' book of personal devotions is now considered a classic Anglican guide to prayer. Both his prayers and collected sermons weave biblical verses throughout every prayer and homily.

The devotions and prayers of Lancelot Andrewes demonstrate, as T.S. Eliot says, the “determination to stick to essentials, that awareness of the needs of the time, the desire for clarity and precision on matters of importance.” His *Prayer on Awakening* asks God to grant this day “to our souls what is good and profitable, and to the world peace,” and he concludes the day with *An Act of Thanksgiving* where “in the night His song shall be with me and my prayer unto the God of my life.”

Andrewes similarly focuses his *Act of Charity* on making God the focus of our lives: “Thyself, O my God, Thyself for thine own sake, above all things else I love. Thyself I desire. Thyself as my last end I long for.” We should therefore, he cries out to God, “in the life present always to love Thyself for Thyself before all things, to seek Thee in all things.”

How, though, is it possible to do this? In our busy lives, where our attention is frequently drawn to anything and everything but God, how can we focus on Him? As the apostle Paul says in Romans 8:26, we can do so only through the intercession and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Still more, Andrewes says in *A Preparation to Prayer*, as members of the church our prayer lives are strengthened by praying with and for each other.

Through these, even when we seem to have little interest in praying and cannot find the words to pray, the Holy Spirit and the prayers of others can lead us and help us into lives of fervent prayer. In this way, he concludes, “we have those motions kindled in us whereby our prayer is made fervent.”