

What is Prayer?

The Gift of Prayer

Prayer is an awesome gift from God that many people choose not to open. When I contemplate this gift, words vanish and I stand in awe of God. I find it absolutely incredible that the Creator of the universe and all His hands have made, desires to give His undivided attention, lavishing His everlasting love to me through prayer! Isn't it awesome and almost inconceivable that we can come into His sanctuary and bow before His throne and have His full attention! And even more awesome is the fact that you and I and millions of others can have His full attention at the same time!

We have an incredible gift, the gift of prayer. The Creator who stretched out the heavens above us, flung the stars all into place, poured the mighty oceans that rise and fall, and designed the intricate detail of a butterfly wing, wants to spend time with us in prayer. We do not have to have special permission to enter His throne room. We are never sent away to come back later. We do not have to be announced before we enter. We do not have to be escorted by anyone (Christ already did that for us). We can come into His mighty, awesome presence by prayer at any time.

He already knows us. He knows every thread of our every thought and motive, yet He desires we come to Him to speak heart-to-Heart. He has given us full access to His throne room and Himself anytime, day or night. He is faithfully attentive to the voice of His child. All we have to do is come, just as we are.

God commanded in the Old Testament (**Deuteronomy 6:5**) that we love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls and with all our strength. Jesus tells us in the New Testament (**Matthew 22:37**) that this is the greatest commandment. How can we love God to that depth if we don't spend time with Him to fully know Him?

Have you committed yourself to a daily prayer time with God? How I wish I could come into your home, sit with you and tell you of all the amazing ways He has changed my life in such a short time through prayer. Since that is impossible, I encourage you and I challenge you to commit to a daily quiet time and let Him amaze you at all the ways He will transform your life.

How do you develop a discipline to daily prayer?

-First, repent of any "lukewarm" places in your relationship with Him.

-Make a serious commitment to spend daily time with Him, and ask Him to help you keep that commitment.

-Then, set your clock 10-15 min. earlier and get up! That is sometimes the hardest part! (I know you have a lot of responsibilities with your family and your sleep is important but 15 minutes is not a huge sacrifice.) I believe we are to follow the example of Christ who awoke early in the morning and went to a solitary place to pray.

There is not a right or wrong "recipe" of prayer. This article will not, nor will any other, teach you the "right way" to pray. Prayer is born out of a need to communicate with the Most High God. How you pray depends on what you are praying about. I will offer some suggestions to help you begin your quiet time, but ask Him to lead you and He will.

- Use a good devotional. Sign up for Proverbs31 Daily Encouragement devotionals that can come to you through email. If you don't have a computer, purchase a devotional book.
- Read through a Book of the Bible in short daily readings. Begin with the Book of John or the Psalms.
- Pray honestly about anything and everything on your heart.
- Ask for forgiveness for any sins you have committed.
- Praise Him! Praise Him for who He is and what He is. Your growing love for Jesus will cause your heart to sing His praises all through the day.
- Listen to anything He reveals to you during this time or anytime throughout the day. Discipline yourself to listen to the Shepherd's voice. (**John 10:1-4**)
- I also recommend keeping a journal of the transformations He makes in your life. This journal will serve as a great faith builder and encouragement to you later.
- Remember to carry prayer throughout the day even when your quiet time is over.

I am already excitedly anticipating all the changes God will make in your life, and I'm praising Him in advance! Be committed. I will be praying for you, I promise.

The Gift of Daily Prayer

Daily Prayer = Relationship

Daily prayer is the way we talk with God. Prayer is our conversation with God. It is communion with Him. In our prayers we may express our feelings, views, needs, wants, desires, frustrations, and concerns to a loving, all-powerful God. Prayer is also the way to thank Him for what He has done for us and our family and to offer our worship and love to Him

If you are a parent, don't you long to listen to your child each day. Your child comes to you with his or her trials and joys. They tell you of their experiences of the day, the things they have learned, the problems they solved, the problems they have not solved. As a loving parent, we listen, we suggest, we instruct, we comfort, we laugh, and we cry with them. This is the attitude we should have as the children of God.

God wants us to come to Him with all of these conversations. He is our loving Father. He wants to discuss life with us. He wants to help lead us. This is the type of prayer relationship we should have with God. God wants us to come to Him with all of these conversations. He is our loving Father. He wants to discuss life with us. He wants to help lead us. This is the type of prayer relationship we should have with God. Paul tells us to "Pray without ceasing (**1 Thessalonians 5:17-18**),

The Elements of Prayer

The elements of our prayers are many. The descriptions of prayers cover a multitude of concepts. The elements of prayer are those things which comprise the basis of our prayer life. The words of prayer describe the varying types of prayers we offer.

A simple list of the elements of prayer would read as follows:

Faith -- the basis on which we offer our prayers

Adoration -- the love we demonstrated to God

Confession -- of our sins and misdeeds

Thanksgiving -- offered for the gifts God has provided us from our daily food to great and wonderful gifts, such as healing from disease or mental turmoil

Worship -- the highest honor to bestow upon God, the knowledge that He is the Highest of all and He alone is deserving of our adoration and praise.

Isaiah 6:3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" NKJV

Praise -- the offering of love and worship to God, telling Him and others that God is God
The "words" or descriptions or types of prayers might read as follows

Intercessions -- This is making a petition for others, an interceding on behalf of another for God's Will to operate in their lives. The pattern for this intercession is the action of God Himself, the Holy Spirit working in our lives making intercessions for us when we cannot or know not what to pray **Romans 8:26** Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. NKJV

Petition -- These are our requests to God -- our requests for Him to intervene in our lives. A petition is nothing more than asking God for something. Most New Testament prayers are given in the form of petitions. Petitions are generally motivated by the moment, but they truly cover the entire span of one's life. The pattern of our petitions and requests give a clear indication of the health of our prayer life and the health of our walk with God. The closer we are to God and the more intimate our prayer life, the closer our petitions and requests come to discussing every decision of life with our Maker. **1 John 5:15** And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. NKJV

Request -- This term appears as both a noun and a verb in the Scriptures. It means to beseech, pray, or request. As a noun, it refers to that which has been asked for. It appears in **1 John 5:15** And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him NIV, as well as **Philippians 4:6** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God NKJV

Supplication -- is the translation of two different Greek words. It may be viewed as a synonym of request. It's word history shows it related to a word meaning "olive branch," thus, a peace offering. Our supplications become our requests of a less demanding nature.

Psalms 142:1 I cry out to the Lord with my voice; With my voice to the Lord I make my supplication. NKJV

Why Pray?

In short, to be prayerless is to be without God,—without Christ,—without race,—without hope,—and without heaven. It is to be in the road to hell.

Sometimes a Christian may wonder, Why pray?

This reveals more about his spiritual condition than any uncertainty of biblical doctrine on prayer.

Yet it's good for Christians to understand why prayer is commanded by God.

Prayer sustains our spiritual health by securing God's presence and grace for our lives, just as breathing brings life-sustaining oxygen to our physical bodies.

As Moses explained in **Deuteronomy 4:7**, *God draws near with blessing and power when His people pray*. Faced with the daunting task of overcoming more powerful enemy forces, Israel had to pray. Only the Lord's help could avert defeat and His assistance was contingent upon sincere, faith – filled prayer. This principle was basic for the Hebrew nation. The high moments in Israel's history were typically related to God's response to their prayers. Likewise, the nation's decline was connected to their refusal to seek His direction.

A careful reading of 2,000 years of religious history reveals identical patterns for the church. Prayer precedes revival and expansion, while the lack of prayer hinders the kingdom of God on earth.

On a personal level, Christians who spend time with God in prayer are often blessed with spiritual vigor and effectiveness in service. Prayerless believers – and congregations – rarely see lives transformed. It is God's presence and power that make Christianity vital, and that depends on this New Testament command: "*Come near to God and He will come near to you*" (**James 4:8**).

We need Him

The first great challenge in establishing a life of prayer is to feel our first need for God. Without the inward conviction that we must have the Lord's help on a daily basis, we'll rarely pray. Although mercy and grace are freely offered at His throne (**Hebrews 4:16**), it is only the hungry and thirsty who take advantage of God's provision.

We need to see our condition apart from God's grace and power. As we sense our need of God's Spirit, we will be inspired to draw near to the Lord.

Security Through Prayer

We must also remember that it's "*prayer offered in faith*" (**James 5:15**) that brings answers from God. Too many see prayer as a kind of divine lottery, where people might hit the winning number if they are lucky.

This is not the way our loving Father would have us approach Him with our needs. God has promised to answer our petitions. If we take the time to read and digest His promises and commands, they will produce strong faith for powerful, breakthrough prayer.

Polls taken among believers reveal an overall decline in church growth and spiritual life. Statistics concerning divorce among Christians and the lack of godliness in personal lifestyles are disheartening. It's pride, self-satisfaction and spiritual blindness that make us wonder whether time spent in prayer is really worthwhile.

Who else can change the spiritual landscape but God? And how will the Lord visit us unless we pray with confidence that, "he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (**Hebrews 11:6**)?

Alone With God

This is a review of John MacArthur's book entitled *Alone With God: The Power and Passion of Prayer* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1995). The book is an expanded version of his earlier work *Jesus' Pattern of Prayer*. The first two chapters cover the attitude of prayer, the next seven chapters cover the "Lord's Prayer" as found in **Matthew 6:9-13** (MacArthur calls it the "Disciples' Prayer") as a pattern for prayer, and the last two chapters cover prayer in action which includes praying for the rights things and praying for the lost. The following are five principles for prayer in the book that are based on the "Disciples' Prayer": Glorifying God in prayer, praying for God's will, praying for our needs, praying for forgiveness, and praying for protection from sin.

Glorifying God in Prayer.

This principle comes from the phrase "hallowed by thy name." MacArthur wrote, "to hallow God's name is to revere, honor, glorify, and obey Him as the one and only completely perfect God" (p. 58). Some suggestions MacArthur gave on how to hallow God's name are to acknowledge that God exists, know the truth about God, be aware of His presence, and live in obedience. Believing that God exists seems too simplistic but it is very important in prayer to truly believe that God exists and that He actually can be known personally. Doubt in this area is deadly to true power and passion in prayer. Knowing the truth about God is also very important because our thoughts about God determine how we live and pray. We must know God as He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures and be well-acquainted with His nature, attributes, purposes, and ways if we are to have an effective prayer life. To glorify God in prayer we must also be continually aware of His presence. "God consciousness," as MacArthur called it, will allow us to "draw Him into every daily thought, word, and activity" (p. 63). Finally, we glorify God in prayer when we live in obedience to His will. We cannot glorify God in prayer if we are disobedient in our lives.

Praying for God's Will.

MacArthur warns against having bitter resentment or passive resignation regarding God's will based on His sovereignty. Rather he encouraged the reader to "pray in faith, believing that our prayers do make a difference to God" (p. 78). According to MacArthur, "Thy will be done" is a prayer for three things: "The consummation of the world and the use of sin's consequences for God's eternal plan, the salvation of people who don't know God, and the obedience of every believer to God's commands" (p. 84). MacArthur stated that this prayer is closely related to the prayer "Thy kingdom come." The rule of God is the manifestation of His will.

Praying for Our Needs.

Praying for our needs does not set aside God's glory. Rather, He glorifies Himself by meeting our needs. "Give us this day our daily bread" is the example Jesus gave for praying for our needs. The phrase "daily bread" symbolizes the necessities of physical life. We must focus on God as the One who supplies all of our physical needs and daily live in the confidence that He will meet those needs. By asking God to provide for our physical needs, we acknowledge God's providence and goodness to us. It creates gratitude towards God as He provides for us and shows our dependence on Him. It puts things in proper perspective, that God is the sovereign Source of life and we are subject to Him.

Praying for Forgiveness.

MacArthur wrote, "Deliverance from guilt by real forgiveness is man's deepest spiritual need. Apart from it, he can't enter into a relationship with God that produces peace and hope" (p. 98). When we pray "forgive us our debts," we are acknowledging that we have a sin problem. Sin separates us from God, destroys our lives and, if left uncovered by Christ's blood, ends in eternal destruction in Hell. MacArthur discussed the various words for sin in the Bible showing its various aspects and the various results of sin. He then discussed the solution for sin which is forgiveness. The two types of forgiveness are judicial and parental. Judicial forgiveness is the comprehensive forgiveness believers receive at the moment of salvation. It changes our spiritual position from one of condemnation to one of justification before God. Parental forgiveness is for those occasional lapses into sin by believers. These sins do not change our position before God but they do disrupt our intimacy and fellowship with God. They too must be confessed and God will forgive and restore us to intimate fellowship with Himself. A part of this forgiveness is the requirement to forgive others as a condition for God's forgiveness.

Praying for Protection from Sin.

The petition, "Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" is an "appeal to God to place a watch over our eyes, our ears, our mouths, our feet, and our hands – that in whatever we see, hear, or say and in any place we go and in anything we do, He will protect us from sin" (p. 114). Though trials (or temptations) which are overcome make us more mature in the faith, they nevertheless also provide the possibility of failing and succumbing to temptation and thus sinning. The discerning believer knows that "the testing of [our] faith produces endurance" (**James 1:2-3**), but has enough healthy skepticism in his or her own ability to resist trials and temptations. This part of the prayer is a plea to God to protect us from temptations which we cannot endure. God has already promised to do so (**1 Cor. 10:13**). However, when we do encounter temptations, we can pray this prayer which shows our submission to God and His Word wherein we find strength to overcome victoriously.