

Daily Prayer

Prayer – The Touchstones

What it is

- Work – prayer is a duty and a discipline.
“Train yourselves to be godly” (2 Tim 4:7)
- Word – prayer is conversing with God.
Duty/discipline but also a delight - to speak with Almighty Father!
John 15 Jesus said prayer is - abiding in me and my words abiding in you.
- Balance – prayer is adoration, confession, thanks, and supplication.

What it requires

- Grace – prayer is “in Jesus’ name” based on the gospel.
Hebrews - Jesus as our high priest - perfectly understanding our weaknesses, interceding, but also sacrificed life for us. How do we respond to Jesus’ great high priestly work on our behalf?
“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace in our time of need.” (Heb 4:16).
- Fear – prayer is the heart engaged in loving awe.
Being amazed and thankful/humbled at who God is & what he has done.
- Helplessness – prayer is accepting one’s weakness and dependence.
Creator vs. finite/created and need him, “Apart from me...” So everytime we come to God, we acknowledge our need, utter dependence.

What it gives

- Perspective – prayer reorients your view toward God.
In our “me first” culture, consumer - transforms our thinking Godward.
- Strength – prayer is spiritual union with God.
Helps us fight the good fight of faith, protection from evil.
- Spiritual Reality – prayer seeks the presence of God at the heart level.
“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you.” Ps 63
Rom 8 - Spirit intercedes for us.

Where it takes us

- Self-knowledge – prayer requires and creates honesty and self-knowledge.
- Trust – prayer requires and creates both restful trust and confident hope.
Before and after a prayer time, peace that comes.
- Surrender – prayer requires and creates surrender: the whole life in love to God.
We yield to him, his plans & purposes, “thy will be done.”

(Keller, *Prayer*)

Group Questions

1. Who has inspired you in prayer? Why?
2. When you get in a “rut” with prayer (your prayer life seems stagnant or routine), what do you do?
3. How can we incorporate prayer throughout our daily life routines/schedules?

Daily Prayer - “Pray without ceasing” 1 Thess 5:17 (ESV)

- Possible? Not literally. Hyperbole - exaggeration for effect, emphasis.
- “Pray continually” (NIV) “Pray all the time” (Message)
 - “Never stop praying” (NKJV) - living a life of prayer.
 - Someone you love is very sick - “Can’t stop thinking about him/her.”
 - Disciples should “always pray and not give up.” (Luke 18:1)
 - “Persevere in prayer.” (Rom 12:12; Eph 6:18)

“A mental attitude of prayerfulness, continual personal fellowship with God, and consciousness of being in his presence throughout each day.” (ESVSB)

- Paul modeled his “pray without ceasing” exhortation for the churches:
“We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers.” (1 Thess 1:2-3)
 - Also see - 2 Thess 1:11 “we constantly pray for you” - Rom 1:9 “constantly remember you in my prayers at all times.”
- “Do everything all day with conscious reference to God (1 Cor 10:31).” (Keller)
- Prayer is “not to be limited to prescribed hours but should rather be a common and constant element in daily life.”

(PNTC)

Old Testament Examples of daily prayer

- Daniel, “Three times a day [Daniel] got down on his knees to pray, giving thanks to God.” (Dan 6:10). Amazing dedication, as continued his daily prayer even when it was illegal (thrown into lions den for it)
- Nehemiah’s example full of different types/contexts
 - Practices longer, personal prayer (chapter 1),
 - Quick “arrow” prayers for help (2:4 - before making his request to the king),
 - And extended corporate prayer (chapter 9)
- David - “In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.” (Psalm 5:3)

Jesus’ Example - (from last week)

Jesus’ life was full of daily prayer, had an attitude and lifestyle of prayer.

- He prayed alone, with disciples, publically.
- Prayed during major events, at start and end of his public ministry (baptism - Gethsemane) before major decisions (choosing the disciples).
- He prayed all night or into the evening - and also short, quick prayers throughout the day (before meals).
- He taught on prayer and modeled how to pray.

His ministry and life was saturated with a broad scope of types of prayer and themes in prayer. He prayed, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt 6:11). He demonstrated Pauls command in 1 Thess 5:17, “pray without ceasing.”

So how do we practice daily prayer in practical ways?

- Alone and in community.
- Planned times of prayer and spontaneous.

Jesus said (contrasting with the hypocrites), “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” (Matt 6:6). Never underestimate the importance of planned times of prayer - in the schedule of your life. This one practice will totally change your life. So,

- Set aside a time.
- Go to a place.
- Receive your reward.

A.C.T.S. Method

Adoration - praise God for who He is, character, greatness/goodness

Confession - speak to God about your sin & failures, repent & trust anew

Thanksgiving - thank God for what he has done & his many blessings.

Supplication - ask God to work in your life, requests for others, world.

- This method is very flexible. In a *group*, leader moves from each topic.
- *Alone, extended*. Look up passages/verses
- Or *alone quick, daily* - jot down one or two on side of paper/notebook. After reading Bible, doing your study - write out a meditation/application prayer based on a verse that stood out.

Lord's Prayer Method - themes, topics, pattern

"The Lord's prayer moves from adoration and praise,

(our Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come. Thy will be done),

to petitioning for our needs

(give us this day our daily bread...deliver us from evil),

to confessing our sins and asking for inner change

(forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors),

to thanksgiving for our blessings

(for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory),

and even for our difficulties

*(thy will be done)." **All these "dimensions of prayer are crucial to use."*

(Keller, Prayer, 124)

Method

Praise (Who he is, aspects of his name, King, Sovereign Ruler)

"Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name"

"Thy kingdom come"

"Thy will be done - on earth, as it is in heaven."

Ask (for your daily needs, needs of others, & spiritual needs/Word/satisfied in Jesus)

"Give us this day our daily bread"

Confess (ask for forgiveness of sins, grace to forgive others, help in temptation)

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"

Ending with Praise & Surrender (yield to him for your day/life; praise/acknowledge)

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen"

P.R.A.Y. Acrostic (Similar to ACTS)

Praise - worship God for who He is and what He has done.

Repent - confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

Ask - intercede for particular needs in your life and the lives of others.

Yield - surrender your day & life to following Jesus wherever he leads.

Other ideas to incorporate prayer into your daily routines

1. Make prayer a part of devotions - devotional sandwich - pray (illumination), read, pray (ACTS, list, journal, pray through Scripture). Once or twice a week, write out your prayer based on a verse you read that week that stood out to you, just a couple sentences, but it personalize it.
2. Morning (pray through day's schedule) and evening (praise/thank - give anxiety).
3. Before bed (psalm of day, notepad next to bed - list anxieties - give to God).
4. Select a literal prayer spot - chair, place next to bed, closet, corner, outside.
5. Use prayer prompts - intentionally use small parts of your day for prayer.
 - a. Stoplight prayer - missionary, family member, etc.
 - b. Shower prayer, brushing your teeth, get up in night
 - c. During commute or morning/afternoon walk
 - d. Email, Facebook, Instagram - pray through as you see/send
6. Pray the prayers of others. One per week?
 - a. *Valley of Vision*
 - b. *A Way to Pray* by Matthew Henry
 - c. *Collects* of Thomas Cranmer (one per wk)
7. Write a *Collect* prayer
 - a. The address - a name of God
 - b. The doctrine - a truth about God's nature that is the basis for the prayer
 - c. The petition - what is being asked
 - d. The aspiration - what good result will come if the request is granted
 - e. In Jesus' name - this remembers grace, Jesus as mediator

Example: Cranmer's famous Collect for communion

- a. Almighty God,

- b. unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid,
- c. cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,
- d. that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name,
- e. through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

8. Daily Prayer Patterns (Keller)

Application - In groups to the PRAY Method together using sheet as a guide.

PRAY Method

Praise - worship God for who He is and what He has done.

Prayer through a Praise Psalm - Psalm 103

- Go around the circle, reading two verses at a time, after each reader has read the verse, he or she prayerfully reflects on the truths that were just read.
- If you can't think of anything to pray, after reading say, "next person"
- Continue around the circle until the Psalm is finished.

Repent - confess your sin to God and acknowledge your need for Jesus.

- Silently read Galatians 5:16-26. Confess any shortcomings that these verses bring out in your life.
- Confess any other sins that you can think of.
- Ask God to renew his strength in you and assure you of forgiveness in Christ.

After awhile, have the leader start the next section.

Ask - intercede for particular needs in your life and the lives of others.

- Pray for your friends and family.
- Pray for your needs individually.
- Pray for those who do not know Jesus.
- Pray for our country and state leaders.
- Pray for missionaries that you know.
- Pray for our church - ministries & leaders.
- Pray for the persecuted church.
- Pray for the world's unreached peoples.

Yield - surrender your day and life to following Jesus wherever he leads.

- Spend some time praying for areas of life - ask for God to do his will in,
 - Our thoughts,
 - words,
 - actions,
 - work & school,
 - families,
 - decisions & future.
- Spend time praying over your week ahead, items on your schedule - ask God to work as you surrender these things to him.

about God, then praise and thank him for it and for who he is, and finally ask God sincerely to come near and show us his face in his good time. What follows are two plans for daily prayer, one more full and challenging and one simpler for those starting out. Don't be intimidated by these plans. Follow the steps in the outline—approaching (evocation), meditation, Word prayer, free prayer, contemplation—without feeling the need to do all the specific proposals or answer all the questions within each part. Prayer will grow and draw you in.

A PATTERN FOR DAILY PRAYER

Morning Prayer (25 minutes)

APPROACHING GOD

Ask him for his presence and help as you read and pray. Choose from one of these scriptural invocations: Psalm 16:8; 27:4; 9-10; 40:16-19; 63:1-3; 84:5-7; 103:1-2; 139:7-10; Isaiah 57:15; Matthew 11:28-30; John 4:23; Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:16-20.

BIBLE READING AND MEDITATION

(Keep in mind that no one can do all of the following in any one session of meditation and prayer.)

To study the passage: Read it three or four times. Then make a list of everything it says about God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); list anything that it tells you about yourself; and finally, list any examples to be followed, commands to be obeyed (or things that need to be avoided), and promises to claim. When this is all done, choose the verse and truth that is most striking and helpful to you. Paraphrase the thought or verse in your own words.

To meditate on the passage: Write down answers to the following questions:

What does this text show me about God for which I should praise or thank him?

What does the text show me about my sin that I should confess and repent of? What false attitudes, behavior, emotions, or idols come alive in me whenever I forget this truth?

What does the text show me about a need that I have? What do I need to do or become in light of this? How shall I petition God for it?

How is Jesus Christ or the grace that I have in him crucial to helping me overcome the sin I have confessed or to answering the need I have?

Finally: How would this change my life if I took it seriously—if this truth were fully alive and effective in my inward being? Also, why might God be showing this to me now? What is going on in my life that he would be bringing this to my attention today?

PRAYER

Pray each of the meditations—adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving for Jesus and his salvation.

Pray for your needs and pressing concerns.

Take a final moment just to enjoy him and his presence.

Evening Prayer (15 minutes)

APPROACHING GOD

Ask him for his presence and help as you read and pray.

PRAYER

BIBLE READING AND MEDITATION

Read a Psalm, eventually working through the Psalter twice a year.

PRAYER

Turn the Psalm into a prayer and pray it back to God.

Think over your day and confess where you sinned or failed to respond as you should have.

Think over your day and pray for people you met or heard about who have needs or are in difficulty.

Pray for some of the more urgent and important needs on your heart.

A Starter Plan for Daily Prayer (15 minutes)

APPROACHING

Think of the privilege of prayer. Realize God is present. Ask him to help you pray.

MEDITATION

Read a Scripture passage. Discern one or two truths you learn there. Choose the one that most impresses you and write it in a sentence. Now ask: How does this truth help me praise God? How does it show me a sin to confess? How does it show me something to ask God for?

WORD PRAYER

Now turn the answers to the three questions into a prayer—adoration, petition, and supplication.

Practice: Daily Prayer

FREE PRAYER

Pray about whatever needs are on your heart. Also spend time thanking God for the ways you see him working in your life and caring for you.

CONTemplation

Take a moment to thank and admire God for what he has showed you today. End with a note of praise.

Praying the Psalms

From earliest times, the Christian church adopted the Psalms of the Old Testament to be its prayer book. A famous letter from the great fourth-century African theologian Athanasius to Marcellinus makes this clear. He wrote: "Whatever your particular need or trouble, from this same book [the Psalms] you can select a form of words to fit it, so that you . . . learn the way to remedy your ill." Athanasius goes on to argue that the Psalms show us how to praise God, repent for sins, and be thankful, in each case giving us "fitting words" to do so. Finally, he concludes: "Under all the circumstances of life, we shall find that these divine songs suit ourselves and meet our own souls' need at every turn."³⁷⁷ There is no situation or emotion a human being can experience that is not reflected somewhere in the Psalms. Immersing ourselves in the Psalms and turning them into prayers teaches our hearts the "grammar" of prayer and gives us the most formative instruction in how to pray in accord with God's character and will.

What does it mean to pray the Psalms or turn them into prayer?