

Prayer and the Bible

"The word of God is the food by which prayer is nourished and made strong."

- E. M. Bounds

The Prayer of Illumination (from Outward Prayer week)

Asking God to fill the soul with desire for His Word. Prayer for the Spirit to give understanding and insight into the depths of God's word.

Why?

- Our hearts and minds can easily stray, become distracted, lose perspective
- We need God's grace. The process of Bible study/reading, meditation, and reflective prayer is all His working! We desperately need his help each time.
- Word fuels prayer – nourishes it, makes it strong, gives it freshness, depth.

When?

- Before start of devotions. After reading, meditate & pray what stands out.
- As you do your Bible study for community group or personal study.
- Before a group discussion.
- Before a sermon or Bible talk.
- As you are making a decision and interacting with Word.
- As you pray through the Bible – a type of prayer of illumination.

Psalm 119 – example of prayer of illumination

- Longest chapter in the Bible is an extended meditation and prayer, filled with examples on praying prayers of illumination.

Examples

- **Psalm 119:18** – “open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.”
- **Psalm 119** is full of this desire for God to give insight and fill the soul.
(18) – “show me wonder”
(105) – “illuminate my path”
(14-16) – “In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.”
- 7 times – “Teach me!” (119:12,26,33,64,66, 68, 124)
Read Psalm 119:64-68

- 5 times – “Give me understanding!” (119:27,34,73,125,169)

The I.O.U.S. Prayer (John Piper)

Reading the Bible Supernaturally – summary from chapter 16 & 17

I—Incline "Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain." (Psalm 119:36)

- Basic prayer for God’s teaching and understanding
- God would give both will & the *desire*, the inclination to read the Bible, long for it. Psalms 1:2 says that the righteous person delights in the law of the Lord. And Psalm 19 says that God’s words are “more to be desired... than gold” and “sweeter than honey from the honeycomb (19:10).
- Why pray for this? We easily drift from the desire for God’s Word!! Like the hymn “Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love, here’s my heart Lord, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.”

O—Open "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law." (Psalm 119:18)

- Prayer for seeing what is really there, understanding into meaning. And also understanding into the value, worth, glory “wondrous” words of God.
- Possible to understand, but not see/feel the wonder and worth of God’s words. “eyes of your hearts may be enlightened” (Eph 1:18)
- Pray when stuck as study and read, low motivation.
- Pray this without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17) over the years as you interact with the Word.

U—Unite "Unite my heart to fear your name." (Psalm 86:11)

- This is prayer specifically focusing on the heart. Not just for understanding, inclination.
- Our hearts are easily divided – souls can become scattered in many directions – the fight against sin is real... so we need a re-focusing/re-dedication prayer for our inner being.
- This is why when we read the Bible, we pray the unite prayer
- Remember the greatest commandment “Love the Lord with all your *heart* and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Mt. 22:37)
- That we would be wholehearted in our devotion to God and his Word, to change us.

S—Satisfy "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." (Psalm 90:14)

- The prayer that we would love and savor God, enjoy him and his Word anew each day.
- Psalm 17:15 “When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.”

- Psalm 16:2 “I say to the Lord, You are my Lord, I have no good apart from you.”
- Read Psalm 63:1-5 – for a very vivid example from David
- Need new mercies each day, be in the Bible each day, pray this prayer again and again, for God to show us his beauty and work through his Word and we would be moved to worship him with all of our life.

L – (Lead!) “Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.” (Psalm 25:5)

- Prayer that God would satisfy us and move us to good works, obedience, bless others.
- Psalm 23:4 “He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”
- Psalm 25:5 “Lead me in your truth and teach me.”
- Psalm 5:8 “Lead me, O Lord, in your righteousness.”
- This is the prayer of transformation, motivated by grace – to be moved to do the practical, visible fruit of good works for God.
- Paul’s prayers – know the love (Eph 3 wide, deep) so that “you walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:9-10). Paul also prays that they would be “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.” (Phil 1:11)
- Jesus prayed in Jn 17 “Sanctify them in the truth, your Word is truth.”

Summary – Piper quote, “We are praying that the word reveal the worth and beauty of all that God is for us in Christ, so that we would *see* it as all-satisfying, and *savor* it above all desires, and *be changed* by it from selfish to self-giving, so that people might see our good works and *give glory to God* (Matt. 5:16).”

Praying the Bible

Problems –getting in a “rut,” feeling bored with prayer, saying the same things, lack motivation.

Solution – Pray the Words of Scripture. It’s a simple, permanent, biblical solution.

“Praying the Word of God means your prayers include inspired words...there is a supernatural quality to the words of Scripture that you pray. Jesus said, “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63). When you pray the Bible, you aren’t just praying ordinary words; you are praying words of spirit and life.”

- Donald Whitney

Praying the Bible – benefits (focusing on the Psalms)

Benefits

1. Inspiration.

The Psalms are a great to pray Scripture because they were inspired for the purpose of being reflected back to God. God gives us the words he wants us to say, sing, and pray. Someone once said, “There is a Psalm for every sigh of the soul.” In the 150 Psalms there is the whole range of emotions we experience.

2. Freshness.

It is easy to get in a “rut” with prayer, saying the same things in the same ways. This helps make your ongoing requests fresh.

3. Newness.

It helps you pray new things in new ways—requests you have never thought of before and things that are on the heart of God.

4. Relationship.

As you pray through the Psalms, you will be focusing on your relationship with God as he uses his Word to help you, “pour out your heart before Him.” (Ps. 62:8)

5. Conversation.

It helps you concentrate better as you move through a Psalm and you will feel like it is more of a conversation. You will find that the Bible really is God speaking to you. You are allowing yourself to interact with God in new ways.

The Process of Praying a Psalm

The process is basically taking the words of the Bible and using them to inform and prompt your own words back to God. Read two verses, then pray back the truths to God... whatever comes to mind. It may be a praise, confession, or a request for you or someone you know. When you are done with what comes to mind, don't wander, just read the next two verses and repeat the process until you are done. Good Psalms to start with are 23, 103, 139, and 145.

Psalms of the Day

A method for keeping prayers fresh each month

150 Psalms divided by 30 days = 5 Psalms per day

Take 30 seconds or so to scan 5 Psalms and pick one to pray through.

Donald Whitney Videos

3 examples from Psalm 67, 1 Thess 2:1-4, John 5.

<https://vimeo.com/album/3940017>

Praying other parts of Scripture and Praying with a Group

- Pray through a NT prayer and relate it to your life – (Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Philippians 1:9-11; John 17).
- Pray through a rich NT letter, pick a topic related to a person or issue in your life. Praying for greater love (1 Cor 13) or praying for humility (Philippians 2:3-11).
- Paragraph by paragraph, using Scripture as a prompt. i.e. Sermon passage/chapter.
- **Group methods –**
 - **Psalms:** (1) assign a verse or two to each person and read aloud, then pray around the circle until Psalm is done, (2) read an entire Psalm together and then allow space for people to read a verse that sticks out to them and pray it, (3) read a Psalm together then call out a good verse to repeat and pray for – allow time for all to pray over same verse, then move on to another one (i.e. Ps 37).
 - **Other portions of Scripture:** read a paragraph or couple verses together, give some time for silence to consider how to pray, then open it up for group response prayer on themes that stand out. Repeat.

Application Time

Try it out on own for ten minutes from a Psalm or continue one of Whitney's video examples.

Come back and discuss.



We all want to pray, but sometimes it's hard to know where to start. One helpful approach is to pray through the Psalms.

Insert this chart into the back of your Bible, using it as a tool to help you pick a new psalm to pray through each and every day. Don't feel pressure to pray through every psalm listed for each day; simply choose whichever one seems most relevant in the moment.

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6
Psalm 1 Psalm 31 Psalm 61 Psalm 91 Psalm 121	Psalm 2 Psalm 32 Psalm 62 Psalm 92 Psalm 122	Psalm 3 Psalm 33 Psalm 63 Psalm 93 Psalm 123	Psalm 4 Psalm 34 Psalm 64 Psalm 94 Psalm 124	Psalm 5 Psalm 35 Psalm 65 Psalm 95 Psalm 125	Psalm 6 Psalm 36 Psalm 66 Psalm 96 Psalm 126
DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12
Psalm 7 Psalm 37 Psalm 67 Psalm 97 Psalm 127	Psalm 8 Psalm 38 Psalm 68 Psalm 98 Psalm 128	Psalm 9 Psalm 39 Psalm 69 Psalm 99 Psalm 129	Psalm 10 Psalm 40 Psalm 70 Psalm 100 Psalm 130	Psalm 11 Psalm 41 Psalm 71 Psalm 101 Psalm 131	Psalm 12 Psalm 42 Psalm 72 Psalm 102 Psalm 132
DAY 13	DAY 14	 PSALMS OF THE DAY			DAY 15
Psalm 13 Psalm 43 Psalm 73 Psalm 103 Psalm 133	Psalm 14 Psalm 44 Psalm 74 Psalm 104 Psalm 134	 PSALMS OF THE DAY			DAY 16
DAY 17	DAY 18	 PSALMS OF THE DAY			DAY 19
Psalm 17 Psalm 47 Psalm 77 Psalm 107 Psalm 137	Psalm 18 Psalm 48 Psalm 78 Psalm 108 Psalm 138	 PSALMS OF THE DAY			DAY 20
DAY 21	DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24	DAY 25	DAY 26
Psalm 21 Psalm 51 Psalm 81 Psalm 111 Psalm 141	Psalm 22 Psalm 52 Psalm 82 Psalm 112 Psalm 142	Psalm 23 Psalm 53 Psalm 83 Psalm 113 Psalm 143	Psalm 24 Psalm 54 Psalm 84 Psalm 114 Psalm 144	Psalm 25 Psalm 55 Psalm 85 Psalm 115 Psalm 145	Psalm 26 Psalm 56 Psalm 86 Psalm 116 Psalm 146
DAY 27	DAY 28	DAY 29	DAY 30	DAY 31	
Psalm 27 Psalm 57 Psalm 87 Psalm 117 Psalm 147	Psalm 28 Psalm 58 Psalm 88 Psalm 118 Psalm 148	Psalm 29 Psalm 59 Psalm 89 Psalm 119 Psalm 149	Psalm 30 Psalm 60 Psalm 90 Psalm 120 Psalm 150	Psalm 119	