

A Guide to Prayer



What does it Mean to Pray?

For some, prayer has become an afterthought. It is something done while sitting in a church pew, or around a child's bed before sleep. Or sometimes a prayer is offered to the cosmos as a wish or a heartfelt desire. However, the act of praying is a vibrant, dynamic, and transformative one, and should become an integral part of your life.

In the simplest terms, prayer is a reverent conversation between you and God. When you pray, you remind yourself that everything you are, and everything you have is because and through the power, grace and mercy of the one true God. When you are in communion with God through prayer, you allow the connection between the Word, the Holy Spirit, and yourself to become stronger and deeper, and allow the seeds of faith to be firmly planted within yourself.

This conversation with God begins with you opening your mind, soul and spirit to what God has to say, both in a still small voice, and within the Bible. In addition to supplication, and bringing your requests and praises to the presence of God, prayer is also about being able to listen to the voice of God. Sometimes a response is easy to determine, and sometimes our ability to hear God is hampered by the many other voices that we hear throughout our daily lives. Praying in a reverent and devoted manner is one of the best ways to allow us to focus solely on the word of God, and what he is saying to us.

Throughout the Bible, the act of praying is not seen as something done without thought, or as an obligation. There are numerous examples of prophets, disciples, and even Jesus praying to God in a sincere, alert manner. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus implored Peter to "watch and pray" with him, extolling him to be alert and watchful. In the letters of Paul, there are many examples of his encouraging words, telling his fellow Christians to pray in reverent and focused manner.

When a person prays, it is not for the betterment of God. God knew from the start all the potential within you, and it is through prayer, that you can unlock His Grace, and the potential to transform yourself into the true Christian that you were meant to be.

How to Pray

Prayer plays an important role in one's relationship with the Lord. Prayer is our way to communicate with Him. Praying allows us to have a close personal relationship with the Lord. People, especially new believers, often wonder if there is a wrong or right way to pray. While there is no wrong way to pray, the Bible does give us an outline we can follow to help in our prayer time found in Matthew 6:7-13 (King James Version).

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

Part of the above passage of scripture is also known as The Lord's Prayer and most believers are familiar with it. It is the model prayer that the Lord gave and is also found in the book of Luke. The Lord's Prayer actually starts at verse 9 in the book of Matthew, Chapter 9.

Matthew 6:9, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name,” instructs us on how we ought to start our prayers. We should start our prayers by addressing God as our Father because He is our spiritual Father. He has given us life. It also gives God the glory and respect He deserves. The word hallowed actually means,

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“reverenced as holy,” and by addressing God as our Father we are acknowledging His holiness.

Matthew 6:10, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven,” reminds us that it is His kingdom and His will that is important not our wants or will. We often get sidetracked in our prayer life with asking the Lord for things that we want. The Bible encourages us to ask for everything we might want in James 4:2, “yet ye have not, because ye ask not,” but we have to realize that what we want may not be God’s will. Try praying for God’s will to be done and ask for God to reveal His will to you.

Matthew 6:11, “Give us this day our daily bread,” instructs us to pray for daily provisions. We should pray for food, water, shelter, clothing, etc. You must remember that God provides everything for us – every little thing! God provides the shoes on our feet and the food we eat. Not only should we pray for our daily provisions but we should also thank Him for providing them to us.

Matthew 6:12, “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” reminds us that not only are we suppose to ask God for forgiveness of our sins, but that we should also offer forgiveness to those who have done us wrong.

Matthew 6:13, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.” We need to ask God to not lead into temptation and also to help us resist and conquer temptation. God promises us in 1 Corinthians 10:13 to never give us a temptation we cannot resist and conquer. Finally we should end our prayers praising God, acknowledging that He alone is the King and holds all power and glory.

It is important to recognize that the Lord's Prayer is not something we are suppose to repeat verse by verse. Of course, reciting scripture is always a good thing, but the Lord's Prayer is meant as an outline of how we could

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construct our prayers. The important thing is to just to talk to God. Remember there is no wrong or right way to pray.

Finding Time To Pray

People use all kind of excuses in order to not pray. Some of the most common excuses are, "I don't know how to pray", "How do I know God is really listening?", "I feel self-conscious when praying", and "I just don't have the time to pray!". Do any of these sound familiar to you? Prayer plays a vital role in our relationship with the Heavenly Father. When we make excuses not to pray we are telling God He is not important to us.

One of the easiest excuses to fix is "I don't have the time". Prayers do not have to be long or time consuming. Keep in mind that prayer is not just a time to ask God for something, but also a time to praise and thank God for the things He has done in our lives. A prayer can be something as quick and simple as, "Thank you God for allowing me to miss that traffic accident on the highway".

You don't have to speak out loud to pray either. Remember God knows everything in our minds. Nothing is hidden from Him. It is easy to say a quick prayer while getting ready for the day, before meals, while driving, or even at the grocery store.

While the quick and simple prayers are great you still need to make sure to spend some quality time with the Lord in your prayer closet. A number of people do this before they go to bed or first thing in the morning. Set aside 10 minutes and do nothing but pour your heart out to God. Praise Him, thank Him, ask Him. If you have a prayer journal this is the time you want to bring it out.

Taking just 10 minutes out of your day to pray can make an astronomical difference in your life and in your relationship with God. By continually praying you will see your personal relationship with the Heavenly Father start to grow. Prayer can help take worries away, reduce stress, and give you peace. Having a regular prayer life with the Lord will change your life.

The Importance of a Prayer Journal

Prayer is a very important aspect of a believer's spiritual life. It allows us to have a way to communicate with the Lord. While there is no wrong way to pray, having a prayer journal can make your prayer life a little easier.

A prayer journal does not have to be fancy. It can just be a plain notebook, composition pad, or a blank, hardback journal. All you need is a place to write notes and thoughts. It can be as complicated or simple as you want. Of course, you will also need a pencil or pen.

The purpose of a prayer journal is to record your prayer requests and praises. When you are writing down your requests, it is such a joy to be able to cross one off as having been answered. The prayer journal helps to give us physical proof that God does indeed answer prayers.

To begin just start writing down all your prayer requests in your prayer journal. You may have many or just a few; the number does not matter. Throughout the day, as you think of new prayer requests, add them to your journal. You can also take your prayer journal to church and write down the requests of other members. When you pray, all you have to do is pull out your prayer journal and your requests will be right there for you. No longer will you have to worry about forgetting a prayer request.

It is also very beneficial to record all the praises you have for the Lord. It is important for us to thank the Lord for providing for us and meeting certain needs. By writing down praises and making note of when a prayer request is answered you will see just how powerful prayer is and how God is moving in your life.

Along with keeping track of prayer requests and answered prayers, it can also assist in keeping our minds focused while we pray. Prayer journals can change the way you pray for the better. While keeping a prayer journal is not something you have to do in order to have a successful prayer life, it something you can look at down the road and see proof that yes, God does answer prayers.

The Benefits of Prayer

Prayer plays an important role in one's relationship with the Heavenly Father. The Bible instructs in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to "pray without ceasing." If God wants us to continually pray it must be important. Having a healthy prayer life can be the most satisfying aspect of a your life. Pray is not one-sided, it is not only for God, but is beneficial for us as well.

One benefit of prayer is a stronger relationship with the Heavenly Father. By praying we are opening the lines of communication. In order to have a healthy relationship you have to communicate. When praying to the Lord we are able to communicate our worries, our needs, and our praises. Even though God already knows these things, it is very therapeutic of us to say it out loud.

Prayer is very therapeutic. It has the power to reduce stress and worry. It can encourage us and get us through difficult times. When we pray we are allowing putting our burdens on God. He is taking them away. The burdens are no longer ours to carry alone. You can rest assured that God is in charge

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and that His will will be done. Having God's promise to supply our every need, we have no reason to worry (Philippians 4:19).

Luke 11:9 tells us “...Ask, and it shall be given you; ...” (King James Version). An additional benefit to prayer is the ability to ask God for our heart's desires. There are times we do not have items we would like to have because we have not God for them. Of course our prayers should not entirely be filled with our wants, but we do need to let God know of our desires and needs. If anyone can provide us our desires, it is God.

The above are just a few of the benefits that a healthy prayer life can provide. The fact that we were given the ability to communicate with the Heavenly Father is a privilege that should not be ignored. Prayer is the most powerful tool you could have ever in your life.