



You DO have a Prayer!

Discover the principles to building a powerful and effective prayer life. Prayer - communicating with God on a personal level - is the key to seeing positive change in our lives and surroundings. Taken from the book, “Out of This World: A Christian’s Guide to Growth and Purpose” by David J. Swandt.

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“We DO have a Prayer!”

In today's society, many people view prayer as an ineffective way to work through life's challenges. In fact, some may never pray at all. Others may only engage in prayer after they've tried everything else.

But God never intended our prayer life to be a last resort to overcoming difficult odds after we've exhausted all other options and resources. The truth is that God wants prayer to be the center of every Christian's life: the first place we go when in need, not the last. He wants to hear from us all day, every day, both in our times of want and need, and in times of abundance and fulfillment. Also, God wants to demonstrate His love in so many ways by being in constant communication with us as we pray.

Prayer is the key to seeing positive change in our lives and surroundings, and is foundational to growing in our walk with God.

*“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful
and effective.”* **James 5:16**

“God Wants to Hear from You”

One of the many reasons prayer is viewed as a last resort when we face challenges is that we have an inaccurate perception of God. We sometimes mistakenly think that God has only a distant, impersonal level of interest in our lives. However, the fact is that God is intimately interested in your life. He created you for His pleasure, and wants to work in you and through you!

Prayer is simply defined as communication with God. Think about a close friendship you have. Sure, that person is there for you when you need them, but you talk to them all the time, don't you? You share your lives, don't you? Well, God wants to be your best friend. You can tell Him everything and anything, you can laugh with Him, you can talk about your day with Him, you can be honest with Him, you can express the desires of your heart with Him. The bottom line is He wants to hear it all! God greatly desires that you have intimate, personal communication with Him.

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” **Revelation 3:20**

Jesus is knocking at the door of our hearts, desiring a precious time of fellowship on a personal level. Simply opening that door to Jesus' gentle request for fellowship is the beginning of a successful, effective and rewarding prayer life filled with God's blessings.

God is the true source of refuge in life, and He wants to show us His faithfulness and love - no challenge is ever too big for Him - He simply wants to hear from you.

“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.” **Psalm 62:8**

“Personal Prayer”

Praying together with friends, family or even just praying before a meal are outstanding ways to communicate with God in a more public setting. But in addition to participating in corporate prayer, God wants us to participate in a personal, more private practice of prayer as well - just between you and God. Jesus has this to say about privacy in our prayers:

“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.” **Matthew 6:6**

Jesus’ instructions to us for praying behind closed doors indicate that God is intimately and personally interested in our lives. His desire is to enhance our personal relationship with Him through one-on-one communication. God takes notice of your commitment to have private fellowship with

Him and promises to reward and bless you.

God also wants us to be sincere and open in our communication with Him, just as we would be with a loved one. While memorizing prayers word for word is a healthy practice, the truth is that God desires an authentic expression of ourselves to Him rather than just a series of words we've memorized. Jesus has this to say about sincerity in our prayers:

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words (empty repetitions). Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” **Matthew 6:7-8**

While God already knows what we need and want before we ask, He still wants us to express those requests to Him with sincerity and expectation that He has our best interests in mind. He desires to answer each prayer with love and faithfulness.

Another important element of personal prayer is persistence and consistency. God never tires of hearing our requests, even if they're the same ones we've expressed to Him before. Jesus has this to say about diligence in our prayers:

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Matthew 7:7-8

Setting aside a daily time for personal communication with God is important to growing in our Christian walk. Try to choose a time each day when you won't be distracted, and don't be concerned that God has his stop-watch out checking to see how much time you give Him; He doesn't. He simply wants you. Privacy, sincerity and persistence are three very important characteristics of your one-on-one prayer time with God and will help you build an intimate relationship Him. You will come to enjoy this precious time, and you will come to rely on Him in a way you never have before.

“God’s Model for Effective Personal Prayer”

The Lord’s Prayer is one of the most recognized verses in the Bible. Most people have committed the Lord’s Prayer to memory, or would at least recognize it upon hearing it. Jesus instructed his disciples:

“This then is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’” **Matthew 6:9-13**

The Lord’s Prayer is one of the most recited prayers even to this day. But when Jesus gave these precious words to his disciples, His intentions went well beyond providing an effective prayer for us to memorize. He gave us an important framework to base all our prayers upon.

Think for a moment about what tends to limit you when you pray, and or what barriers to prayer you have. Maybe you have a tendency to focus on yourself too much. Perhaps you are easily distracted during prayer, or even tend to nod off. These are common problems all of us experience from time to time.

The Lord's Prayer provides a basis to overcome these tendencies and barriers when broken down into the components that follow in the next sections.

“Six Keys to a Healthy and Balanced Prayer – Part One”

1. Know who you're talking to. *“Our Father in heaven...”*

When Jesus instructed His disciples to address the Father directly, the idea was likely met with some raised eyebrows. Throughout the Old Testament, the only way a common person could express requests to God was through a priest. Thankfully, Jesus came to change all of that.

Because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the cross to cover our sin, believers now have direct communication with the Father. That is why we pray to our Heavenly Father “in the name of Jesus.” However, there are no set formulas for prayer, and praying a prayer to Jesus is just as meaningful as addressing the Father Himself. The most important part to remember is that there is now no communication barrier between God and you.

2. Reflect upon and express your adoration and thanksgiving for all He's done for you. *"...hallowed be your name..."*

By setting aside a portion of your prayer to focus specifically on praise and adoration, you remove the focus from yourself. While God wants to hear our needs and desires, He also wants us to demonstrate gratefulness for all He's done and realize it's not "all about us." In fact, it's really all about Him. He is a God of abundance and love, and praise and honor are due Him. When you reflect on the blessings God has given you and the incredible privilege it is to be in relationship with Him, you'll find it easy to express your gratitude, adoration and thanksgiving to Him. You'll also find it harder to focus on yourself.

3. Pray that God's purposes for His Church and for your life are accomplished in full. *"...your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

Vibrant and effective prayer comes when we get our minds off of the problems of the past and onto the awesome possibilities of

the future. Continually dwelling on your past will only serve to limit your future. Take on God's perspective, and don't allow previous challenges or failures to consume your thoughts and limit your thinking. Express to God your desire to achieve your full potential in Christ, and ask Him to help you enlarge your vision and dreams. He wants you to accomplish His full purpose in life, and also that of His Church.

“Six Keys to a Healthy and Balanced Prayer – Part Two”

4. Express your personal needs and wants to God, and ask Him to meet them. *“Give us today our daily bread...”*

God’s love for you is profound, endless and unconditional, often compared in the Bible to a loving father’s compassion for his child. He wants to hear from His child (that’s you); He wants to hear about your life, your needs and desires, and He wants you to come to Him for those needs. His love for you drives Him to bless you more than you can ever hope for.

5. Ask God to forgive you of your sins, being mindful of your need to forgive others who may have wronged you. *“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*

Asking God to forgive us of our sins begins with first acknowledging those sins to

ourselves, and then confessing them to God.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” **1 John 1:9**

You can be assured that God has forgiven you and cleansed you of your sins. With that forgiveness, there is also freedom from guilt, shame and condemnation.

But God also asks that just as He has forgiven us, we forgive others who may have wronged us. Just as receiving forgiveness from God brings freedom, so does giving forgiveness to others - freedom from bitterness, grudges and allowing past hurts to continue hurting us.

Forgiveness, both receiving and giving it, is foundational to living a life of freedom in Christ.

6. Pray for God’s guidance to help avoid temptations and situations which may not reflect well upon Him. *“...lead us not into*

temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

God has forgiven our sins and cleansed us from all unrighteousness as promised in I John 1:9, but we will still encounter temptation, living in this fallen world. This part of the Lord's Prayer emphasizes the importance of not simply resting and becoming complacent with the forgiveness God gives us, without being mindful of the importance to avoid sin in the future. While God removes the spiritual penalty of sin by forgiving us, He does not necessarily remove the harmful consequences of sin. For this reason, it is important to pray for God's help to avoid temptation.

On a daily basis, start giving to God whatever time you can joyfully give Him in prayer. God does not have a quota for you to meet each day. Additionally, it will be challenging at times to remain alert and avoid “nodding off.” Don't be discouraged; know that you will be blessed of God as you commit your time to Him in prayer!