

Praying

A Five Day Devotional

Wholehearted Prayer

What does prayer mean to you? Be honest with yourself. Do you feel like you're talking to the ceiling? Do you actually believe God not only hears all your prayers, but can and will respond? Prayer can be misunderstood and is often overlooked, but it is central in our journey with Jesus. It isn't an itemized list or simply a task to check off our busy schedules.

God doesn't want proper words or mindless, rote recitations; He wants our hearts. While talking with God can take many forms, it is always about relationship. It's about spending time together, talking and listening, becoming familiar with God's heart and character. It's about being authentic and truthful, exposing your deepest pains, most secret hopes, and wildest dreams for your life.

This is the kind of relationship we were made to have with our Father, and it is profoundly reciprocal. Prayer becomes our roots, fastened to the rock, Jesus, and built upon the foundation of His Word. In this relationship, we begin to hear the Holy Spirit speaking to our hearts through the Scripture and our lives become linked up to what God is already at work doing in us and the world around us, for our good and for His glory!

Prayer and time alone with the Father was a priority for Jesus. Take some time today to consider the priority of prayer in your own life. Does it hold a significant place of importance in your relationship with the Father?

“Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.”

Romans 12:12 (NLT)

Present in Prayer

Sometimes, when we pray, there is a tendency to just rattle off some words and ask for the things we need. Or, maybe we offer up a quick, passing prayer for someone else in need. In those moments, prayer can be just about “doing” it, and can often feel empty and impersonal. Have you been there?

Thankfully, Jesus modeled perfectly for us how we should approach God in prayer when He taught us to pray, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name! [Matthew 6:9] Prayer is about relationship and intimacy with God, our holy and awesome Father. It is an invitation we are given as followers of Jesus! We have received the Spirit of adoption into the family of God; we are children of God and we, too, can cry out to Him as “Abba, Father”.

This is an invitation to engage God as Father. Our perfect heavenly Father, who loves, accepts, and longs to be in relationship with us. And like Jesus, the choice to pull away and create space and time to just be with Him, unrushed and quiet, allows us to sit in His presence, hear His voice, and receive.

Yes, God is holy, awesome, all-powerful and vast. Yet, He is also completely aware and in the details of our lives. High and lifted up, yet close and longing to be with us. In humble surrender we will find peace, joy, and hope as we come to Him in prayer. Ask God to help you reset your awareness of His presence and of His desire to draw near to you today.

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God’s house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.

Hebrews 10:19-23 (NLT)

Day Two

Surrendered Prayer

Jesus taught us to pray from a posture of, Thy Kingdom come Thy will be done [Matthew 6:10]. With that mindset, we don't shy away from praying and bringing our whole heart before God. But we also maintain humility through trusting and declaring that we accept and believe that God's will is the best plan for our lives. We surrender our agenda and submit to Him because we believe His plan is perfectly loving and righteous.

With our hearts open and our minds focused, we can unashamedly ask for His kingdom to come. We can petition for Him to move and act and bring change to the world around us, while in the same breath we simultaneously choose to trust His perfect will to be done. For as long as we have breath, there is more work to be done in this life for the glory of God, and our prayers are a powerful weapon to bring such change. We can pray God's glory and restoration will come powerfully through the Church, and that His perfect love and peace will prevail on earth, just as it already does in heaven.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, our prayers can impact individuals, communities, and even the nations. Take time to pray today for something or someone that has been consistently on your heart and mind. Pray with an expectation of God's will, as it is in Heaven, to be done here on earth, invading the very petition you've brought before Him.

“Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.”

Ephesians 6:18 (NLT)

Authentic Prayer

There's nothing we can't bring before the Lord in prayer. There's nothing He can't handle. Nothing! The reality is, He knows all of your cares and worries, all of your secrets and fears – so that should provide the courage to just share freely! Every thought, every action, and every emotion can be brought before Him with full assurance that we will be met with grace, goodness, and love.

All throughout the Psalms, King David models this freedom for us through a full range of emotions. There are times when talking with God that he is extremely angry at his enemies, in deep distress, full of sorrow, repentant, filled with joy, overcome with praise, and everything in between. He knows and trusts the goodness and faithfulness of God so completely that he is completely confident in simply being authentic and vulnerable before the Father.

We have that same freedom. There is actually so much peace available from this position as his children: Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors [Matthew 6:11-12]. To stand in both of these postures and give full access to our hearts to God, is the greatest gift of freedom. We can ask freely for our daily needs to be met, and we can confess freely with the fullest assurance of the goodness of God for our lives.

Is there anything holding you back from approaching God in prayer with complete freedom? Make today the day you talk to Him about it. Because of His nature, you can always know that He is safe and will always be for your good!

“Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart. Pray for us, too, that God will give us many opportunities to speak about his mysterious plan concerning Christ. That is why I am here in chains.”

Colossians 4:2-3 (NLT)

Honest Prayer

One of the great confidences we have in coming to the Father in prayer is to know that we can bring all our wrongs before Him and trust Him to forgive and restore. Confession and repentance are essential to our prayer life and in dealing with our sin. Confession is acknowledging that we've done something wrong and openly seeing our sin for what it is. Repentance is a choice to turn away from sin and move forward in righteousness.

We won't always get things right in life. In fact, sometimes we get it really wrong. Praise Jesus that He has accomplished the finished work on the cross so that we have the assurance of the forgiveness of our sin! There's no special prayer that must be prayed to receive forgiveness. Rather we simply come, honest and open, to tell God we're sorry for the wrong we've done and to ask for His forgiveness. When we confess, forgiveness is immediate, complete, and restorative!

The beautiful kindness of God and His great love for us is what moves our hearts to confession and repentance. Take a few minutes today and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything that you need to make right with God.

Adapted from *Flourish in Prayer*, a bible.com reading plan.

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”

James 5:16 (NLT)