

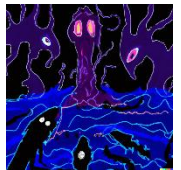
Prayer

What is Prayer? Fellowship with God. A dialogue, not a monologue. Our ability to understand and work with the spiritual world. A lifestyle. Prayer is to our spiritual life what breathing is to our physical life.

Why should we Pray? Because it is our means of communication with God; is the one way we can ask God's help to overcome sin. It is our means of interceding for others. It is our way to know God more than through His word. Without prayer, we are like soldiers on the field of battle, with no way to communicate with our commander; we need prayer to be more faithful, effective, resilient, fruitful warriors in the Kingdom of God.



Prayer can be hindered by: A) Regarding iniquity in our hearts (Ps 66:18) B) Unconfessed or current sin (C) Turning away from hearing God's law (Proverbs 28:9) D) If we don't ask, or ask amiss (James 4:3) E) If we ask in unbelief (James 1:7) F) If our prayers are not in God's will (1 John 5:14) G) Unforgiveness (Mark 11:26) H) Lack of reconciliation (Matthew 5:23) I) Family discord (1 Peter 3:7) J) Idolatry (Ezekiel 14:3) – in other words, prayer goes best with a holy lifestyle, which means we need to be in the Word to understand what holiness means.



Prayer and the Word of God: If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you (John 15:7). This means A) we need to abide in Him, and B) we need to have His words abide in us. That means we need to abide in His word.

Prayer is sometimes passionate: Jesus was passionate in His prayer, who prayed "with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear" (Hebrews 5:7). If Jesus was this passionate and devout, shouldn't we try to imitate Him, at least in some grave situations?

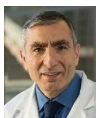
OiOi Prayer before reading scripture: We can pray before we read the scriptures, Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law (Psalm 119:18), Insight and Obedience - Give me insight that I can do what you tell me – my whole life one long, obedient response (Psalm 119:34), Give me intimacy as I draw near to You, that You will draw near to me (James 4:8). [From When People Pray, pp 84]



Prayer is a triangle that connects us to anyone on the earth through God. We can intercede through information passed along by ministries like Voice of the Martyrs for specific individuals. We can ask for God's leading in the Spirit for hidden situations.



Prayer should be specific: Ask for help for specific issues you are having with family, work, life, and also for local, national and global leadership. James Tour the renowned chemist has testified that the only way he could have achieved his success was through answers to specific prayers for help with difficult problems.



Prayer should be 'unceasing' and in 'all things': When we wake, eat, travel, work, make decisions, help others, when we're tempted, before we sleep, when we have negative thoughts. We shouldn't forget there is also praying in tongues available to us, and Paul said that in private "I will pray in the spirit... sing in the spirit... I thank my God I speak in tongues more than you all" (1 Corinthians 14:15-18). In the church setting, he advised to have an interpretation, but in private, you have no such limitation.



There are rewards for praying in secret: But when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly (Matthew 6:6). Why would we not want to pursue these rewards? In fact, prayer is integral in the many acts for which God deliberately offers rewards.



God also gives rewards for: Fasting in such a way as to not boast about it (Matthew 6:17,18), being insulted, excluded and persecuted for Jesus' name sake (Luke 6:22,23), loving your enemies (Luke 6:35), being good stewards with what God has put in your hand (Matthew 25), compassion for the vulnerable (Matthew 25:37-40),

generous giving (Luke 6:38), hospitality to those who cannot repay (Luke 14:12-14), working heartily as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23-24), watching against deceivers and being faithful to the truth (2 John 1:7,8).

God's reward structure may be the exact formula that will help us get victory over the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the enemy. Picture a beam balance with a bar of gold on one side, and nothing on the other side; the bar of gold represents Eternity in Paradise in the presence of the King of the Universe. The emptiness on the other side represents the temporary and deceptive pleasures of sin and self-will.



The Lord's Prayer – this brilliant template is too often recited automatically, bordering on a violation of Matthew 6:7, where the Lord exhorts us not to pray with vain repetitions. When we pray this prayer, we can do so by meditating its meaning - on the fact that we have a Father in Heaven who is Holy, whose Kingdom we are committed to being a part of, who provides for our every need, who is our protection against temptation and evil, who forgives us as we forgive others... or we can add our own words that coincide with each section, for example “Do not lead us into temptation – Father, I know I am tempted to watch meaningless media at the end of a long day of work, as a way to unwind, but keep me strong in You that I would default back to Your word or a good teaching and see the wisdom and value in that...”.

Dick Eastman's 'Hour of Prayer': 5 minutes each on praise and worship, waiting on the Lord, confession of guilt and sin, praying scripture, watching, intercession, petitions, thanksgiving, song, contemplation & meditation, listening, praise.



Intercessory prayer suggestions: For unbelievers in your circle to be saved, for national spiritual awakening, for unity in the church, for families to be strong and Godly, for racial reconciliation through the Spirit, for life to be valued and protected through all stages, beginning at conception, for local, national and global leaders.

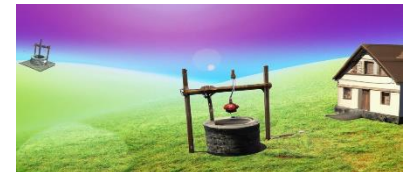


Listening to God can happen via: An audible word, a thought, scripture that jumps off the page or resonates, a dream / vision / divine appointment, a sense of static or lack of peace, a sense of peace or confirmation.



You can also hear from God by writing after you quiet your thoughts down, focus on Jesus, frame a question in your mind, and write down the flow of thoughts and pictures within you as you ask for His understanding. God's answers to prayer will never contradict scripture. [Mark Virkler]

The well of the flesh and the well of the Spirit - The well near your house that you are used to going to, to cope with life's challenges – that's the well of the flesh. You find out the well of the flesh is contaminated. In the distance there is another well, the well of the Spirit, which requires faith and patience to use instead.



Directed change led by the Word and the Spirit – Psychologists believe we underestimate how much we change, and assume that our 'present' is our final state – but we continue to change, and by working on changing aspects of ourselves, we can change in the right direction. *Prospection* is a psychological term meaning to be drawn forward by your own view of the future. How might more a more diligent prayer life change you and your present situation as well as your eternal future? What two or three things can you do today that will become habits that lead to a better you in the future? As Christians with God's word at our fingertips, we are ideally situated to change under His guidance.

