

“How to Pray” Tips to increase your prayer life

Community Group Questions

1. What is the best time and place for you to pray?
2. Do you have a plan to keep track of your prayers?
3. Have you had an experience in which you prayed for something very specific and received a specific answer?
4. Are there any prayer goal you would like to set for yourself?

Over the past 5 weeks we have been learning more about prayer in the series I have entitled “Learning to Pray”. My prayer before this series that you would be inspired to be a better prayer and realize your daily necessity for prayer.

I could get up here and say “you need to pray” but I think it is more effective for you to see the importance of prayer and be inspired and then say “I need to pray”

So if you have come to that conclusion in your life the next step is going to be developing prayer habits.

*Habit- a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up: this can develop into **a bad habit***

We can all agree that some habits are bad and other are good. (talk more about)

The reason we need to develop habits is because there will be times when we don’t feel like praying, we don’t feel that prayer is working, we are unsure or unhappy with the answers that we are getting or we don’t make it a priority.

We have to remember that because of the GOSPEL our prayer is based on our relationship that we have with the Lord

~ Billy Graham "Prayer is simply a two-way conversation between you and God."

We can all agree we should make communication with the Lord a habit in our lives and today we are going to look at 5 tips to increase our prayer lives.

Tip 1- Time and place. We see Jesus do a few things when it comes to time and place the first is he prayed early...He started his day that way

Mark 1:35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed

It is not a biblical mandate to pray first thing in the morning but I think it is the best way to start your day.

Jesus found a place that no one could bother Him

Luke 5:16 But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

It is important that we are free from distractions when we pray and the best way to do that is a desolate place.

~ Andrew Murray said "O, let the place of secret prayer become to me the most beloved spot on earth."

We also see that Jesus spent extended times in prayer.

Luke 6:12 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

Maybe there are issues and things going on and you need to spend an extended period of time praying.

So we make the time and find a place the next tip is...

Tip 2- Prayer Plan...Where do you start and how do you stop. Jesus gave us an outline for prayer and really when we do this we are

Praying the Scriptures Matthew 6:9-13 "The Lord's Prayer"

Adoration Vrs 9 The concept taught here is when we open in prayer we are adoring God for His holiness and the fact that no one else is like Him. A proper greeting is almost lost in our culture. But think about this...how do you greet a very important or prominent person?

Thanksgiving Vrs 9 In our opening we give thanks to God for who He is and what He has done in our lives.

Affirmation Vrs 10 This is the act of agreeing with the will of the Father and opening ourselves up to accepting His will in our lives. Basically saying “when I come to you I am affirming that you are in charge and I want to comply to your will.

Abe Lincoln said it this way “I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had no where else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day.”

The very act of prayer affirms our need and that God is in charge.

Personal Needs/Others Needs Vrs 11 This is the section of prayer that many of us are familiar with and really have no problem doing...”Asking” We ask on our behalf and we ask on behalf of others. I will talk more about this in Tip 3

Forgiveness Vrs 12 This is where we ask for forgiveness. Remember as believers our sins are forgiven past, present and future but the act of asking for forgiveness is a reminder to us when we are going in the wrong direction and we need to redirect. Notice the prayer says “as we have forgiven our debtors” the Christian response to when people sin against us is to forgive them and if we do not forgive them it makes our prayers that much more difficult.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave

your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Have you ever tried to pray for someone that you have not forgiven? It doesn't work because you are mad at them and deep down don't want good for them.

~ D.L. Moody said "I firmly believe a great many prayers are not answered because we are not willing to forgive someone."

But when we pray for forgiveness from God it reminds us how much we love forgiveness when it is coming our way....so why wouldn't we want to send forgiveness the way of another person?

Protection Vrs 13 Keep us from tempting areas and protect us from evil. These two issues are important...keeping us from temptation is a request that is asking to protect me from myself in a sense...here is why we all have certain weaknesses, certain sins attract us and temp us...so we are asking God to protect us from our own sinful desires.

"Delivering us from evil" are the prayers of safety and protecting from the evil that is outside of us.

So this is a basic outline of what our prayers should look like...does it have to look like this each time we pray? No and this is where the next tip will help us.

Tip 3- Keep on track-One of the most encouraging things we can do is keep track of what we are praying for and how God has answered. A trap that we fall into when praying for other people is we forget what to pray for or to pray for them. Paul Miller in his book "A Praying Life" offers some suggestions to stay on track.

-Prayer Cards- using 3x5 index cards for all the people in your life...maybe a verse that pertains to them and requests that they have and you have for them

-Journaling-This is simple writing your prayers and thoughts out and going back looking over them and seeing how the Lord has answered or how your requests have changed.

-Prayer apps Just like anything else “there is an app for that”

-Bulls Eye prayers (Explain how)

Tip 4- Set achievable goals: Now you may be thinking “I can do this” or “I should start doing this” I want you to be successful so the best way for you to be successful is to set realistic and achievable goals. If you don’t have a prayer time yet don’t say “tomorrow I am going to start and pray an hour a day” ...you won’t. That is like being a person that never exercises and goes and signs up to run a marathon.

Come up with achievable goals and start...maybe it is starting with 5-10 minutes 4 days a week or every day...maybe you do that and you want to add prayer cards or journaling. Make sure it is something that you can achieve

Tip 5- Get started Don’t wait until the new year, don’t wait until next week...start today.