

## **Prayer Guide 1      Leaning how to Pray**

“The LORD would speak (with Moses) face to face,  
as one speaks to a friend.”

**Jesus:** “My sheep listen to My voice;  
I know them, and they follow Me.”

**Prayer** has been the one practice that cannot  
be scientifically proven... other than that patients  
who pray to God & have people praying vocally over  
them generally do much better & heal faster.

**George A. Buttrick** insists “Prayer is more than a lighted candle,”.

“It is the contagion of health. It is the pulse of Life.”

A real relationship with God means walking with Him daily, like  
Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It means talking with Him intimately.

**Mark 1:35** “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up,  
and left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.”

**The greatest person who ever lived on this planet was preeminently  
a Man of prayer.** After being Baptized, after meeting most of those who  
would be his disciples, He sent them home. Before beginning His ministry,  
He would go into the wilderness and fast and pray for 40 days and nights.  
At the end of that time Satan came to test Him.

**The priority of prayer is found in the Bible** is found in one way or  
another on almost every page of the Bible and in every chapter of church  
history. It is neither a peripheral theme nor an optional extra for the  
desperate and the devout.

**How to “PRAY”:** Anacronym **P=Pause R =Rejoice A=Ask Y=Yield**  
**A 4 fold Circle of Prayer**

### **Your Guide for 15 minutes of Prayer daily**

1. Choose a time and place
2. Sacred meeting between you & God – no interruptions, music, phone,
3. Know that He wants to meet you more than you want to meet with Him
4. Talk out loud to God,(Whisper if you must)what’s currently on your mind
5. If you run out of things to say then just listen.. come expecting to hear

**Prayer** does not belong to some other time in history, nor to some other  
type of person more spiritual or disciplined or experienced than you and me.  
Prayer is nothing at all unless it is a matter of vast and all-consuming  
importance for each one of us.

And it means **listening attentively to his voice** because, as Jesus said,  
“My sheep **listen** to my voice; **I know** them, and **they follow** Me.”

## **Prayer Guide 2            Spending Time with God**

God wants to spend time with us,  
more than we want to spend time with Him.

### **1. Finding Your Place of Prayer**

We are told that, prior to giving the Lord's Prayer,  
"Jesus was praying in a certain place."

Go to your "room" and close the door.

**Acts 2:1-4** <sup>NLT</sup>

4     "And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit"

**Thin Places:** There are places where people have prayed so much and so often with such strong faith it seems that God's Spirit is always present. The Celtic Christians called these places "Thin Places", for the distance between Heaven and Earth seemed so slight. You might find "thin places" throughout your life, unexpectedly. It's not so much about finding where God shows up, it's about our attitude. Are we inclining our ears and souls toward God? Find or create your own thin place.

### **2. Keep your prayers simple:**

God understands that we get tongue tied & sometimes don't know how to express what we are feeling. Just speak to God as you would to any friend. Sometimes it is hard to find the words to express our feelings.

But just trust that God understands, even if you can't find the words.

**Romans 8:26-28** <sup>NLT</sup>

26     And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

**Romans 3:23-25** <sup>NLT</sup>

23     For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

24     Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

**Psalms 103:13-18**

14     For He knows how weak we are; He remembers we are only dust.

### **3. Keep it Personal & Real:**

Real, deep & powerful relationships are about love. You know what is like to fall in love with someone. Make it your goal to fall in love with God Himself.

**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner** (text of 1834) Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
"He prayeth best, who loveth best". God loves you. John 15:9-17

### **4. Keep it up**

In order to experience the Presence of God in our prayer time, the above disciplines need to be repeated daily in our lives. If we repeat something daily for 6 weeks it will become a habit. Loving God must be foremost.

**1 Timothy 4:7-8** <sup>NLT</sup> "... train yourself to be Godly... Godliness is profitable for all things, not only in this life, but in the life to come"

### **Prayer Guide #3     The Romance of Prayer**

It makes me a bit uncomfortable to tell the truth, but here it is. If you are not doing certain things to keep your prayer alive it will die. I know of no other way to convince you that in order to sustain a great prayer life, it is going to take some discipline and effort on your part.

But here is the great and inescapable truth—modeled by Christ, and lived out without exception by all the heroes of our faith:

“You cannot grow in prayer without some measure of effort and discomfort, self-discipline and self-denial. Just as you cannot get physically fit without regular exercise and a healthy diet, so your spiritual growth will be determined, to a very significant extent, by the prayer exercises you choose (or do not choose) to establish and sustain.” Greig, Pete.

#### **The Development of Romance**

Remember what it felt like when you first fell in love? You couldn't spend enough time together. You were always thinking of ways to please your beloved. You were always fawning over one another, holding each other tight. Now, years later, have you lost that loving “feeling? Most have. Why? Simple. Because you no longer invest in the **ROMANCE** of your relationship. Marriages fall apart because of this. Which is why there are so many divorces. In time, someone else enters the picture, and a new fire begins to burn for that person. If you fan the flames of that fire it will lead to adultery and divorce.

Staying in love, to keep that old feeling, in order to maintain those old flames is a bit more difficult. Apply what I quoted by Pete Greig above. It will require some effort, some discipline, and maybe even some discomfort, if you really want to keep the romance alive. It is a love relationship in which you both need to be invested. It takes time, effort, imagination, sacrifice & self-discipline. But the rewards you reap from these disciplines will renew your relationship with your beloved. Ignore it and you will slowly drift away.

Now take what I have just said and apply it to God. The same is true in our Love relationship with God. We need to treat it like a romance in the sense that it will take some imagination and effort on our part. If you just drift along, you will surely drift apart. Just like to life rafts bobbing up and down in the ocean, soon you will be miles apart without an effort to keep together. Soon you can't see one another, let alone hear each other.

1. Make it your 1<sup>st</sup> priority, to keep your love with God alive.
2. Spend at least 15 minutes a day, habitually: the same time & Place
3. Make it easy and enjoyable, so that you will look forward to the time you spend with God.
4. When it really ramps up, is when you learn to hear Him.

We will spend the next couple of weeks showing you how that can happen. In the meantime, start of 1<sup>st</sup> base with committing yourself to that love relationship with God. If you have already stopped what you started back in November, it's time to restart. Commit to spending time with Him **DAILY**.

## Prayer Guide 4 "Learning Silence" Slow Down & Take Your Time

**Psalm 46:10** "Be Still and Know That I Am God"

Remember our Anacronym

**P=Pause** **R=Rejoice** **A=Ask** **Y=Yield** **A 4 fold Circle of Prayer**

The first step in developing a healthy Prayer is learning to pause, or in reality stop everything for your 15 minutes with God.

Go to your quiet place: no phone & allow for no interruptions

Get comfortable (not too comfortable, we don't want to doze off).

Put down your prayer list, close your eyes & imagine yourself coming into the presence of God. It should be quiet, peaceful, and still.

**Blaise Pascal** says "All of man's (woman's) problems come from a man's inability to sit in a room, alone, quietly, all by his self."

This is the process we take in coming to God. It is a Holy time. It is very personal & intimate. This takes practice. Use your imagination. All your worries are gone. You have put them away in a box that you can go back to later. I like to imagine myself on a beach with warm sun & sand, water slowly lapping the shore, no big waves. You can smell the ocean & feel a slight cool breeze. You can feel the warm grains of sand on your hand as you sit there. It's getting towards evening and some clouds are interplaying with the sunlight – giving off a warm glow on the surface of the ocean. You are all alone. Then you see someone coming down the beach. You are not afraid. You feel very safe. As he gets closer, you recognize Him. It is Jesus. He comes up to you and sits down at your side. He doesn't say a word, but you know that it is Him & He knows you, closer than a friend. You are both looking out across the beauty of the waters, the beautiful beach with palm trees & greenery. You feel wonderful. He heard that you wished He was there with you. He has chosen to come and meet you. Now you are in His presence. You can feel Him. It is so real that you feel like you could reach out and touch Him.

This is the process of getting out of your world and entering a quiet time with God. Maybe you would use some soft worship music instead or maybe you would read a psalm that speaks of His love for you. But once you are there, turn off the music or stop reading and focus on God. There are many ways that you can do it. The goal is to be at peace & know that you are in the presence of God. He has given us wonderful imaginations to use. Don't be afraid to use it. He wants to meet with us & is happy that you have come.

There is a time to be silent and a time to speak. Let us first master that art of being alone in silence. It is not as easy as you think.

## **Prayer Guide 5 - Serenity** – Calming the Storms of Life

Our lives are twisted together with a seemingly endless parade of distorted, irrational, worries and fears. In fact, 90% of what we worry about never happens. But we don't follow the stats too much. It is easier to go to our default system of fretting. It is where we naturally go as fallen souls. Given that, how do we unload all that stuff in order to focus completely on God. Unless we unload it, believe me, it will keep popping up in your quiet time with God.

### **Matthew 8:23-27** NASB

23 When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.

24 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep.

25 And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!"

26 He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

27 The men were amazed, and said,

"What kind of a man is this, that even the winds & the sea obey Him?"

Now if Jesus can calm a raging sea in an instant, do you suppose that He might be able to handle the storms in your life? Yes, He can! It is a matter of focus. People consumed by a puzzle, playing with their smart phone, swimming or any other form of exercise can easily drown out their worries. God has equipped us with brains that can choose to focus on anything they like. Whether it is playing Tetris or working up a sweat, it can help you clear your mind of all of it's worries for a while. Exercise is especially good.

Take a short vacation from your worried mind. Vacation means to vacate, to move out of there and go someplace else. Where? God might have you lie down in the green pastures for a while, beside the still waters. He might be saying to you, "Why don't you stop "playing god" for a little bit, and let Me be your God! Here, sit down and rest with Me. I will handle all that other stuff with which you are normally occupied." Resign from your role, as savior of your life and family. "Let it go." You can trust God to take care of everything for at least 15 to 30 minutes can't you? He is worthy of your Trust. (Proverbs 3:5,6)

Before you begin to connect with God... reach for this island of Serenity. I can't begin to urge you enough, to get your mind in a place of peace, letting go of your world for a few minutes, in order to have a great communion with God. As long as all of that other "stuff" is floating through your consciousness, you will be distracted from your main goal, time alone with Jesus, your God, who loves you and longs for some time alone just with you. What an incredible honor. What a great God we have. He loves me, even me, not for what I have done or not done, but just for who I am, His child.

## **Prayer Guide # 6. Honest to God**

Most Christians want to experience growth, (aka) spiritual transformation. But many are frustrated by the limited progress of our spiritual self-improvement efforts. We find our praying burdened by a sense of obligation and failure. Why do we hesitate? What is holding us back?

Why are we afraid? Why are we hiding from God?

I have found the answer to be very simple. We are afraid that God will see us as we really are. It is the same reason the Adam and Eve tried to hide from God after they had disobeyed Him. It is the great cover up, and we have been doing it since the beginning of time. Well, it is now time to open the door. I know you hear Him knocking as I do. We are hesitant in our openness to God and when we get close, we often run back. We are tentative and there might be obstacles (sins & thoughts) in our way.

We think we are hiding from God, but you know as well as I do, He knows us all, inside and out, better than we know ourselves. We can't hide anything from God. He knows all about our wishes and desires. He knows what temptations we struggle and fail with.

Up to this point we have discussed the "**Art of Prayer**":

1. Learning **How** to pray
2. Learning how to spend **Time** with God
3. Learning the **Romance** of prayer
4. Learning the discipline of **Silence**
5. Discovering the **Serenity** of prayer

Step Six is learning to **Honest** with God. It is impossible to have a good marriage without honesty. We are incapable of have good relations with our earthy fathers, when we are continually being disobedient and not acknowledging our faults and failures. Being truly honest is very hard because we don't want to thoroughly examination of our lives. We do not want the shame and embarrassment.

Shame is a powerful tool in our culture. Often, we are fearful of saying what we truly believe or admit who we truly are because we know that there are people out there ready to come down hard on us and shame us for believing or being like we are. We are shamed into silence, because we want to fit in, even though we don't want to be a part of the culture. We feel terrorized and paralyzed.

God does not want to shame us. Shaming is a mistake that even Christians make when they meet someone who has done terrible things. Jesus was always lifting the fallen one who humbly comes to Him. Refresh yourself by reading the parable of the prodigal son, or the woman caught in adultery. The Devil wants to accuse and shame us. God wants to forgive and honor us. But we must open the door to let Him in to ourselves. It is time for us to open the door and let the fresh winds of the Holy Spirit flow through and cleanse our lives. That is God's fondest desire for us. He wants us to come and be purified by His Blood, by His Love, to be His.

## **Prayer Guide Step 7            Communion with God**

But prayer is not merely something we do; prayer is what God does in us. Prayer is not just communication with God; it is **communion** with God. As we **open ourselves** to Him, God does the spiritual work of transformation in us. Prayer is far more than just saying words to God. All of life can be prayer when offered to God in faith and with openness. In **Discipleship Training** we have learned how to read scripture with the **Lectio Divina** method:

The slow, contemplative reading & praying of the Scriptures in 4 steps

1. Read a Bible Passage
2. Meditate on the Text
3. Pray over the Application
4. Contemplate on its use in your life.

In **John 20:31<sup>NASB</sup>** John tells us why has written his Gospel.

31     but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

The Bible was written so that that we might know **God** through his Son, and so that we might become **Christ-like**. The purpose of the Bible is not **information**; it's **transformation**. By reading scripture this way we can begin to experience the life-changing power of God's Word.

Now we can learn to pray to God in the same way.

We can pray to God using the same fundamental steps of Lectio Divina

1. Getting in His presence
2. Pondering or meditating on His presence
3. Responding to what you feel God is saying to you
4. Living out what He has communicated to you, the transformed life.

### **Christ in You, the Hope of Glory**

What you will experience is a life-changing union with God.

Remember, God is living in you and He becomes the center focus of your life, your only Hope for Glory. **Colossians 1;26-27** nlt

26     This message was kept secret for centuries and generations past, but now it has been revealed to God's people.

27     For God wanted them to know that the Riches and Glory of Christ are for you Gentiles, too. And this is the secret:

Christ lives in you. This gives you assurance of sharing His glory.

Prayer becomes a way of living your life. God will use your senses throughout the day. He will speak to you in your imagination.

Music will become a tool of experiencing Him daily.

All of this takes time and effort. Move beyond just saying words to God.

Learn to experience His transforming power in your life, for His Glory.