



relying on
GOD

A study guide for groups and individuals

We all want to pray. And in fact, most of us pray often, even if the majority of our prayers are “Lord, help!” But what if our life with God is lacking something? How do we grow closer to a God who sometimes seems so far away, and how can we learn to hear His voice in the silence?

This study guide is a good place to start. The guide opens with an article by Rob Patterson, bishop of the Allegheny Conference of the Brethren in Christ, that first appeared in the Winter 2006 issue of Seek magazine. The subsequent sessions are adapted from a chapter by Jay E. McDermond that originally appeared in the book Focusing Our Faith: Brethren in Christ Core Values, edited by Terry L. Brensinger. Designed to work with either groups or individuals, this guide is intended for all those who plead, like the disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray.”



INTRODUCTION | The centrality of prayer

Each of our 10 core values as Brethren in Christ begins with the words, “we value”—all except for the last one: relying on God. It states humbly, “we confess our dependence on God for everything, and seek to deepen our intimacy with Him by living prayerfully.”

The first nine core values present us with an enormous task. Who, in their own strength, can open themselves to “the transforming power of the Holy Spirit,” be wholeheartedly obedient, present a consistent “active and loving witness for Christ to all people,” or pursue “uncluttered lives”?

The very fact that core values one through nine employ the active verb “we value” hints at the fact that while we have set biblical authority, heartfelt worship, and integrity in relationships as our goals, we may not always live at the high level we desire. There will be times when we fail to serve others, promote forgiveness and reconciliation, or live up to any of the other core values. In fact, without God’s help we cannot even begin to live the behavior suggested by these core values.

Therefore, we must “confess our dependence on God for everything and seek to deepen our intimacy with Him by living prayerfully.”

“If we think that a little prayer can’t do any harm, we will soon find that it can’t do much good either. Prayer has meaning only if it is necessary and indispensable.”

—Henri J.M. Nouwen



SESSION ONE | Teach us to pray

“. . . dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.” —Jude 1:20

Church attendance and Bible reading are on the decline among North Americans, but when it comes to prayer—well, that’s another story. Researchers tell us that 71 percent of U.S. respondents and 45 percent of Canadians claim to pray at least once a week. And when we focus on regular churchgoers, the stats are even stronger. However, just because we spend considerable time in prayer doesn’t mean we’re good at it.

In fact, many folks—even those who have been in the church their whole lives—identify with Jesus’ disciples when they pleaded, “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Talk about prayer comes easy. It’s a familiar concept. We hear eloquent, powerful prayers in public worship gatherings. Intercessors testify to their hours alone with God: hearing His voice, seeing His answers, and singing His praises. Yet for the majority of Christians, a vibrant prayer life remains an elusive goal.

If that’s your situation, I have good news. By thinking about prayer in terms of other familiar areas of life—like breathing and communicating, for example—we can more easily grasp this vital spiritual activity.

And it’s important that we do grasp it. After all, prayer ranks number one on almost any list of spiritual disciplines. The Apostle Paul knew what he was talking about when he instructed his readers to “pray continually” (1 Thess. 5:17). Our spiritual life depends on it, just as our physical life depends upon breathing and our social life on good communication.

Practicing prayer

For most people, reading a book about breathing, enrolling in a breathing class, or hiring a breathing coach would seem like a waste of time. However, as some folks understand—for example, musicians, athletes, and expectant mothers—it’s one thing to breathe; it’s quite another thing to breathe your best. When

the goal is enhanced performance, it's helpful—indeed, even necessary—to understand and practice breathing techniques.

The same is true of communication. It's one thing to talk; it's another matter to truly communicate. In fact, the life of a relationship depends on effective communication. When the regular exchange of vital information stops, relationships suffer and die. Conversely, relationships are enhanced and strengthened by even modest efforts to understand effective communication and implement some beneficial practices.

Prayer is to spiritual well-being what breathing is to natural well-being. Prayer is to the spiritual relationship what communication is to the natural relationship. And just as these other seemingly natural activities can be enhanced through practice and intentionality, so it is with prayer. We may know how to pray, but if we want to pray with fervor, passion, and “without ceasing,” we may need some training.

Lessons in prayer

Through the years, I've learned significant lessons about prayer from devoted believers. Here are just a few examples of the invaluable teaching I have received from these godly individuals.

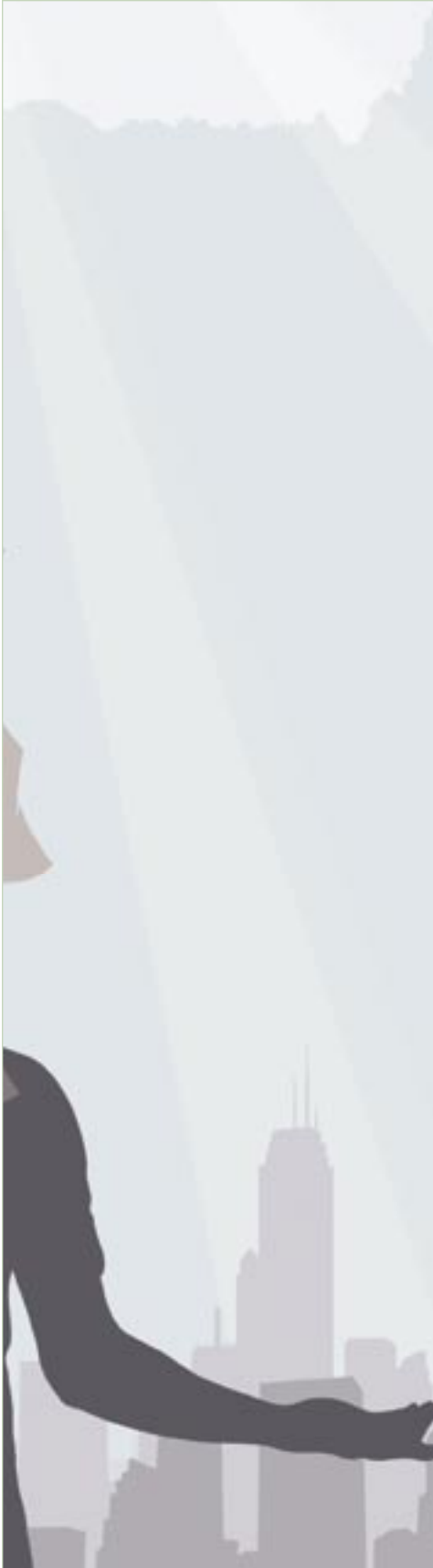
Prayer connects us to one another. I was bathed in prayer from birth—probably before birth, actually. I've heard many times about my grandfather cradling me in his lap, rocking to the rhythmic cadence of Oliver B. Greene's preaching, and praying over his grandson.

All of that was made possible by faithful prayer warriors who prayed for my grandparents. There is a corporate interconnectedness to prayer. The blessing of abundant life is directly tied to God's children praying for each other.

True prayer is humble and honest. Bishop Henry Ginder was a prominent Brethren in Christ leader of the last century. To a young, impressionable pastor, his stature was practically legendary. I figured his prayer life must surely surpass that of most mortals.

Imagine my surprise, then, when Bishop Ginder told me he didn't consider himself a great man of prayer. He prayed, certainly, but not like those who pray for hours at a time. His honesty and humility were freeing, and his words reminded me that prayer is not a competition sport.





Any time is the right time to pray. For a few months in 1989, I had the privilege of walking with a man whose distinguishing trait was his constant and bold desire to pray.

For Pastor Dallas Yetter, there was no such thing as an inopportune time or place for prayer. The time was always right now and the place was always here. And he didn't just pray alone; he drew others such as myself into his vibrant life with God. At any moment, he might grab me and say, "Rob, let's pray!" He'd call on the phone and say, "Rob, let's pray!"

One day, while trimming my hedges, I heard tires screech in the street as Dallas' car lurched to a stop. Turning, I saw the driver's door fly open and out he came like a cop on foot pursuit. Across the lawn and up to me in a flash, he laid out the situation and said—you guessed it—"Rob, let's pray!"

I learned a lot from him, but maybe most important was coming to understand the value of a partner. For inspiration, encouragement, accountability, and unity, nothing beats a prayer pal.

If, despite fixing your focus firmly on God, you feel your prayer life isn't what it should be, you may need to learn how to actually relate to Him. There was a time in my life as a pastor when I found myself thinking about God, talking about God, and hearing about God, but not really talking to God or hearing from Him.

In a moment of revelation and self-discovery, I realized that I needed to discipline myself not only to focus on God, but also to relate to Him. Don't fall into the trap of thinking about praying and talking about praying, without actually praying.

We think that good prayer should be easy, something we can figure out on our own. After all, we love God. We read His Word and each day we seek to serve Him. Yet conversation with our Creator does not always come naturally to us, and we're left wondering why it's such a chore.

But we need not struggle alone.

We are not the first believers to want to talk to God but don't quite know how, and we certainly won't be the last. With humility and an honest desire to know God more deeply, we can turn to both God and the seasoned believers around us and say, "teach us to pray."

Read Luke 11:1–10

1. Assess your prayer life. How often do you pray? What issues and topics dominate your prayers? Do you pray with others, alone, or a combination? How comfortable are you approaching God in prayer?
2. How and when did you first learn to pray?
3. Who (if anyone) taught you how to pray? Who are the people in your life today who could serve as “prayer pals” or coaches?

This week Think of a friend, family member, or someone in your congregation whom you believe might be able to impart wisdom regarding prayer. Ask them how they pray, and what creative tools or structures they use to stay focused. If you are comfortable with this person, and feel it would be beneficial, consider asking if they would meet to pray—either as a one-time session or on an ongoing basis.

SESSION TWO | Prayer and the ministries of Jesus

“We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

—Hebrews 6:19–20

The broader Christian Church, including the Brethren in Christ, has long believed that Jesus of Nazareth was God in human form. The opening chapter of John’s Gospel tells us that Jesus, the Word, was with God and was God from the beginning of time. When Jesus was born He was both fully God and fully human. In John 1:18 we are told that one of Jesus’ goals in life was to make known to us the God we have never seen. In His life Jesus revealed God’s actual identity because He was God.

But Jesus was also human. In the Gospels we read that Jesus experienced the same things we frail humans experience. He was born a baby. He grew up and went through adolescence. He was tempted. He was thirsty. He cried at the death of His friend Lazarus. And He Himself died. Jesus clearly, according to the Bible, understood what it meant to be human. As a result, only Jesus of Nazareth was able to comprehend two very different experiences: divinity and humanity.

We realize that Jesus sits in heaven at God’s right hand, but I suspect we often miss the reason why this is so.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ sits with God functioning as our high priest. He goes before us into God’s presence and draws us near to God, interceding for us. The risen Christ is the perfect intermediary because being divine He understands God and having been human He understands us. His primary roles as the ascended Lord are to plead our case before God and to translate our weak and flawed prayers to God. When we pray we do not pray alone. Jesus Christ is beside God praying with us and on our behalf.

James B. Torrance tells a story that explains this well. In California as a lecturer at Fuller Theological Seminary, he had gone to the beach for a swim. Just as he was about to enter the ocean, he greeted an elderly gentleman who was walking pensively along the beach. As Torrance finished his swim, the gentleman spoke to him again, asking where he was from.

Torrance explained that he was a Scottish Presbyterian minister on a lecturing tour of the U.S. The elderly man's face lit up and he exclaimed, "How astonishing that I should meet you just now!" He told Torrance of how his wife was dying of cancer after their 45 years of happy marriage. Furthermore, his father had been a devout man and a Presbyterian minister who faced the death of his wife with confidence, faith, and prayer. But this was not the elderly gentleman's own current experience. He had drifted away from the church, and despite his desperate attempts to pray and find hope over the past several days he had failed. Torrance writes,

What did I say to him? Did I tell him how to find faith and how to pray—throw him back on himself? No, I did not. I said, "May I say to you what I am sure your father would have said to you? In Jesus Christ we have someone who knows all about this. He has been through it all—through suffering and death and separation—and He will carry you both through it into resurrection life. He has heard your cry for faith and is answering." I continued, "You have been walking up and down this beach, wanting to pray, trying to pray, but not knowing how to pray. In Jesus Christ we have someone who is praying for you. He has heard your groans and is interceding for you and with you and in you."

Within three days Torrance met with both the man and his dying wife, leading them back to Jesus Christ. He concludes this story with these words: "The first step on the road to prayer is to recognize that none of us knows how to pray as we ought to. But as we bring our desires to God, we find that we have someone who is praying for us, with us, and in us."

How correct he is. Our first agenda is to remember that we never pray alone. Jesus Christ, God's own son, has opened the way to God, and He prays with us, making our concerns known to God and conveying God's will to us. Therefore, our primary question should not so much be "how should we pray?" but rather, "are we willing to do what is necessary to take advantage of this access to God?" Although God has opened the way for a relationship with us, it does not happen automatically. The deepening of our intimacy with God requires us to work at nurturing a life of dependence on Him.

Read Hebrews 7:11–28

1. We Brethren in Christ don't have priests (and never have), so the concept of Christ as our high priest may be slightly foreign to us. How do you understand what this passage says about Jesus and His high priesthood?
2. Think of a time when you perceived of Jesus as your partner in prayer—praying with you, for you, and in you. How did this perception of Jesus affect your prayer life, or your faith in general?
3. What does it mean to you to know that Jesus is pleading your case to God, translating your weak and flawed prayers to Him?

This week Pray regularly about a specific friend, a family member, or a situation about which you don't usually feel you know how to pray. Trust that Jesus will fill in the gaps in your broken prayers, bringing your right requests to God.

SESSION THREE | Waiting on God

In his classic book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster writes, “Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life. Of all the spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father.” It is in the process of praying that we meet God and open ourselves to the Holy Spirit’s leading us to imitate Jesus Christ. For this to happen prayer must be “much more than throwing a bag of words at God,” as I once heard an Anglican monk say. And very often, opening ourselves to God requires patient silence—waiting for God to speak.

If most of us are honest with ourselves, “prayerful waiting” is not one of our strengths. The theological traditions that influence our denomination rightly value and hold up “doing” as a virtue. Service, sacrifice, and action—these are all good things. But there is so much more to living a faithful life than just activity and doing.

In our culture, waiting is often equated with a lack of focus or simply wasting time. But just the opposite is true. To run from meeting to meeting, social event to social event, and activity to activity reveals our true lack of focus. Ultimately, we are religiously and culturally conditioned to lead busy lives that keep us from the one activity and person who can give us true meaning and focus: prayerful waiting with and listening to God.

I suspect there is one central reason why we do not regularly pray with a view toward being transformed. In our heart of hearts we are afraid.

We do not want to give up our routine behaviors. They are ours. They give our lives meaning. They are who we are or at least who we want people to think we are. If we do give up our old patterns and values, what will replace them? What will we become? And most threatening of all, prayer is being open to God. Who does not fear what God might think of our innermost thoughts and desires? As Henri Nouwen writes,

“Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.”
—Ecclesiastes 5:2

Praying is no easy matter. It demands a relationship in which you allow someone other than yourself to enter into the very center of your person, to see there what you would rather leave in darkness, and to touch there what you would rather leave untouched. Why would you really want to do that?

Why indeed? Because of our fear we fill our lives with noise, worthwhile activities, worthless activities, recreation, and work. We will do almost anything to avoid the fear that comes with the task of self-examination, and changing into the people we are called to be under God's guidance. But God loves us too much to allow us to remain the same as we are today. It is to our advantage to allow our compassionate and loving God to work at our transformation through prayer.

An initial and fundamental assumption for all types of prayer, but especially true for the specific form about which we are concerned, is that we must learn to be conscious of God's presence in our world and lives. This will not happen if our lives are filled with busyness and clutter. It will not happen if "devotions" are just another thing to do on our already long list of "things to do." We must take serious time to be silent and listen for God's voice.

Read 1 Kings 19:9b–13

As Elijah learned, God rarely screams at us. Instead, whispers are often God's way of communicating. While it is true that God desires a meaningful relationship with us and uses many ways of communication, I am convinced that time spent alone and in silent listening is the most beneficial. We must establish this form of prayerful communication before we can begin to hear other forms, such as through creation, other people, the circumstances of our lives, journaling, or even dreams. God wants to communicate with us intimately; the question is, are we willing to be quiet and listen?

1. When have you heard the quiet whisper of God? What were the circumstances? What did He say to you in those times?

2. How comfortable are you with waiting on God? Have you established a practice of silent time alone with God?

3. What obstacles stand in the way, preventing you from hearing the quiet whisper of God? Which of these obstacles are of your own making?

4. This session makes the point that busyness is a serious challenge to “living prayerfully.” What can you do to tune out the noise and opt out of the busyness in your life? Name an activity you can cut back on (or eliminate entirely) that would make more room for prayer.

5. Do you find it difficult to be still and quiet in God’s presence? Do you fall asleep, get impatient, or just start rattling off a lot of prayers? What can you do allow yourself the time and space you need wait patiently on the Lord?

This week Schedule a time (or times) when you can be free from all distractions for long enough to relax, be still, and listen. [Note: If this means you need to get more sleep the night before in order to stay awake, do that. If you need your spouse to watch the children, ask him or her to do so while you wait on God.] Then, find a quiet place and wait. If you do not hear from God during this time, do not be discouraged; in this busy age many of us need considerable practice before we’re truly able to quiet our hearts and minds before the Lord.

SESSION FOUR | Praying with the Bible

“I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I have put my hope in your word.”
—Psalm 119:147

We often think of the Bible as a source of wisdom—God’s Word speaking into our lives—but we do not typically look to the Bible to guide our prayers. Yet when we are unsure of how to pray, searching for focus, or seeking to conform our prayers to God’s will, using the Bible can be a very useful way to open ourselves to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Praying the Scriptures

A very basic approach to prayer using the Bible is found in the second chapter of Jeanne Guyon’s devotional classic, *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*. Her wonderfully simple approach, which she called “Praying the Scripture,” is based on the conviction that God still uses Scripture to speak to us, and so we can look to the Bible to find God’s focus for our prayers.

This is the process she suggested:

- Quietly and humbly approach a selected small passage of Scripture.
- Read this passage slowly and carefully in an attempt to “sense” the very heart of what you have read.
- Once you sense the passage’s core meaning you make that topic the focus of your prayer.
- After a time of prayer on this subject you go to the next small passage and repeat the process.

The ultimate goal of “praying the Scriptures” is “to find the Lord in what you are reading, in the very words themselves.”

I have found this approach to be liberating, as I do not always have to be responsible for generating or identifying what I am to pray about in my quiet times. Guyon’s suggestion that I read slowly and carefully to hear God speak to me has given me a goal and provides the focus for my prayers. By “praying the Scriptures,” there is no pressure for me to set the agenda. My task is to listen and respond prayerfully to a gracious and loving God.

Spiritual reading

A second way of using Scripture as the foundation for our prayer life dates back to the sixth century when St. Benedict established the basic form of “spiritual reading” (*lectio divina*). This approach is based on the biblical concept that the faithful person is to

meditate on God's word (Ps. 1:1–2).

In this method of using the Bible when we pray, there is an underlying assumption that there are two ways to read. We can either read to gain “information,” which is the way we usually approach a newspaper; or we can read for “formation,” which is the way we read personal letters from friends and family members. There is nothing wrong with approaching Scripture to gain information, but the main thrust behind God's Word is to form a relationship with us, not merely to pass on information. In order to facilitate this formative activity, spiritual reading employs four phases: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

- **Reading (*lectio*).** Select a brief passage and read slowly and reflectively, gathering the details as you would if you were reading a personal letter. Do not rush in order to cover more material (as you would if you were looking for information; focus on gaining a deeper understanding. Read slowly, expecting that God will draw your attention to a key aspect of the passage, something that will encourage or convict you. The question to ask yourself as you begin is, “God what are you saying to me just now?”
- **Meditation (*meditatio*).** Interact actively with the thoughts this passage has placed in your mind. Note that the goal is not, as in Eastern meditation, an emptying of one's thoughts, but rather, the opposite. Ask yourself questions about what you read, such as, “how would I feel if I were in that situation?” As you read, which characters do you most identify with? Can you identify with the author of this passage? What is currently at work in your own life that causes you to respond to the passage the way you did? What would Jesus say to you given your response?
- **Spoken prayer (*oratio*).** Pray about the things God and the biblical text have brought to your mind. Thank God for speaking to you, for saving you, and for healing you. If you have been convicted of something as you read, confess your sin to the Lord. If you have been challenged or feel uncomfortable, confess that, too, and ask for wisdom. This third phase of the process “allows for a full range of human response to tumble forth in heartfelt prayer to the One for whom we were made.”
- **Contemplation (*contemplatio*).** Rest in God's presence. Once we have entered into genuine prayer with God, we do not need to do anything but keep silent and be ready to receive whatever God may want to do or say. We sit waiting for God to speak. There is nothing more for us to do but wait, expecting God to continue the conversation.

Both of these approaches to prayer—“praying the Scriptures” and spiritual reading—are just suggestions to give focus to your prayer times. With spiritual reading in particular, there can be no quick breezing through a biblical passage and then getting on with your life. Therefore, you should plan on a minimum of 30 minutes of silent, distraction-free time to

develop this formative prayer approach. And it will take practice. But remember God, through the Holy Spirit, is always with us and always desirous to communicate with us in the hope that we will be formed into His Son's image.

1. As you understand both “praying the Bible” and “spiritual reading,” what benefits could these prayer forms provide in your own life? Would you like to pray in these ways? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever used the Bible as a way to gain God's focus for your prayers? What are other ways you have tried to set aside your own prayer agenda and conform your prayers to God's will?
3. Do you spend more time listening to God or talking to Him? How might you balance “listening” and “talking” when you pray?

This week Using one of the following passages (or one of your choosing), try one of the prayer practices outlined above, being patient with yourself as you learn to allow God's Word to direct your prayers.

Read Mark 2:1–12, Micah 6:1–8, or Acts 17:24–34

SESSION FIVE | Talking to God

If the goal of prayer is transformed lives, it should be clear that we must move beyond one direction (human to God) conversations or placing others at the center of our prayers. To view prayer primarily as petition or our “telling” God the status of our needs and concerns misses the crucial point that God wants to speak to us about His plan for our lives. To intercede only for others essentially amounts to gently pushing our friends and family members into God’s presence, while we either lurk behind them or dash away. The core of real prayer is to move ourselves into God’s presence and stay there waiting and listening for God’s direction.

However, I would present a very one-sided view of living prayerfully if I were to stop at this point, discussing only the importance of facilitating God’s addressing us. If prayer is a genuine path to intimacy with God, there must be options for our addressing God. The Bible assumes this, and the countless characters in Scripture repeatedly talk to God under every imaginable circumstance.

Moses intercedes for the rebellious Israelites (Num. 14:13–25), Job cries out when overwhelmed with intense pain and suffering (i.e., Job 6–7), and Habakkuk vents his frustration over the way God works in the world (Hab. 1:2–14). Even Jesus, though divine Himself, found speaking to His Father an absolutely essential aspect of His life here on earth (i.e., Matt. 26:36–46; John 17). While this idea of talking to God has been partially addressed in the discussion of spoken prayer (*oratio*) above, I want to make two more specific points here.

First, when we do offer prayers to God, it seems absolutely crucial that we pray “from the heart.” That is to say, we cannot pray authentically if we pray without honesty. If we are overwhelmed by the depth of God’s grace and love, then we should attempt to reflect that in our prayers. If we are angry and confused, we need to say that as best we can. If we are near despair, it does us no good to pretend we are not near the “edge.” God will not be offended by our heartfelt honesty because, as noted in the first section of this chapter, we have an

“Pray continually.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:17



intercessor who interprets our genuine and yet flawed prayers to God. Jesus Christ sits at God's side clarifying our words and groans to God, just as He mediates God's words to us as we wait prayerfully.

A second point is that we need to learn to pray habitually throughout the course of our day. Acts of prayer cannot be limited to 15 or 30 minutes at the start or end of the day. If we are to develop a truly intimate life with God, we must constantly condition ourselves to be prayerfully attuned to our need for God's presence in our world. We must allow ourselves to pray simply—with no special language; just a few words or sentences—throughout the day as we are prompted by the Holy Spirit.

Often, our prayers will seem “ordinary,” but if we desire to develop prayer as a daily habit, we must see the normal events of our lives—however mundane they may seem—as opportunities for prayer and talking to God. Richard Foster goes so far as to suggest that “if we cannot find God in the routines of home and shop, then we will not find God at all.” Such an approach to prayer reminds us that God is interested in every minute of our lives, not just the minutes we devote to worship, Bible study, or formally structured prayer.

Therefore, at work we can offer simple prayers for situations involving tense relationships or company deadlines. We can pray for news items we hear reported on the television or in the newspapers. We can pray for the reckless driver's protection (and hopefully a change of driving habits) rather than comment on his stupidity. We can pray for our neighbors and their struggles.

The prayer opportunities provided by our attention to the ebbs and flows of life are limitless. And to begin praying for these items is to pray without ceasing as Paul directs at various points in his letters (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17).

As you pray for the many needs around you, do not limit yourself to prayers that “sound good” or “holy.” Remember that Jesus is always praying with you, for you, and in you—giving you freedom to be open, honest, and candid with the Creator of the Universe. With a mediator who is at once divine and human, there is nothing to stop us from relying on God in prayer.

Read Job 6:1–10, Habakkuk 1:2–4, 12–17, Ephesians 6:18

1. What kinds of events in your life prompt you to pray most frequently? The news? Interactions with family? Pressures at work? When prompted, do you bring your requests to God?
2. It is tempting to try to conceal your thoughts and feelings when you pray. Drawing upon biblical examples like Job and Habakkuk, what do you learn about talking to God more honestly?
3. What words would you use to describe your prayer life? Ceaseless? Infrequent? Formal? Comfortable? What words would you like to use to describe your conversations with God?
4. Write or tell of a time when prayer was intimate and “two-way.” Share this with another person.

This week Incorporate brief, honest prayers into your daily life. As you drive, pray for people in the schools, businesses, and houses of worship that you pass. Thank God for His beautiful creation. While you work, lift up concerns about projects and co-workers. When you’re with your family, thank God for them and cover them with prayer. As much as possible, make your daily life a time of ceaseless prayer.



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