



CONNECTION POINT CHURCH

PRAYER GUIDE



Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in Me.

JOHN 15:4

Most believers know that time with the Lord is an important part of our spiritual walk. He has designed us to need to take time alone regularly to pray, read His Word, worship, and fellowship with Him. But do you ever feel like you are missing something when it comes to your prayer life? For some, you may feel like you have never actually had a prayer life. Or perhaps you feel like you just aren't doing something right. Maybe you are one of the many who have done everything you can to feel spiritual in God's presence only to end up feeling bored and frustrated. Or perhaps you have fallen asleep in the moments that you have tried to make space to meet with the Lord.

Would it make you feel better if you knew that even Jesus' disciples struggled to pray, and they knew Him in a very personal way (Matthew 26:41)? Jesus knew their spirits were willing, but their flesh was weak – and He knows the same about you.

When Jesus came to the earth, He came teaching about prayer. In the Sermon on the Mount, He encouraged us to ask, seek, and knock – all examples of beginning a conversation with someone (Matthew 7:7-8).

Before every major event in His life, He prayed. Before His baptism (Luke 3), before He sent the apostles out (Luke 6), at the death of Lazarus (John 11), even facing His own death (Luke 23). He prayed early in the morning and through the night. When things were going well and when they were challenging, He prayed. Jesus was showing us that, as His followers, it is imperative that we pray.

Yet many believers struggle to pray. As the world grows louder and more chaotic, as God's people we must learn to engage with Him regularly so that we can understand what He is doing in the earth. We cannot afford to carry out our responsibilities while living spiritually bored and empty. We must learn to find His voice among the many voices coming at us and distractions too numerous to count.

*For everyone who asks,
receives. Everyone who
seeks, finds. And to
everyone who knocks, the
door will be opened.*

MATTHEW 7:8



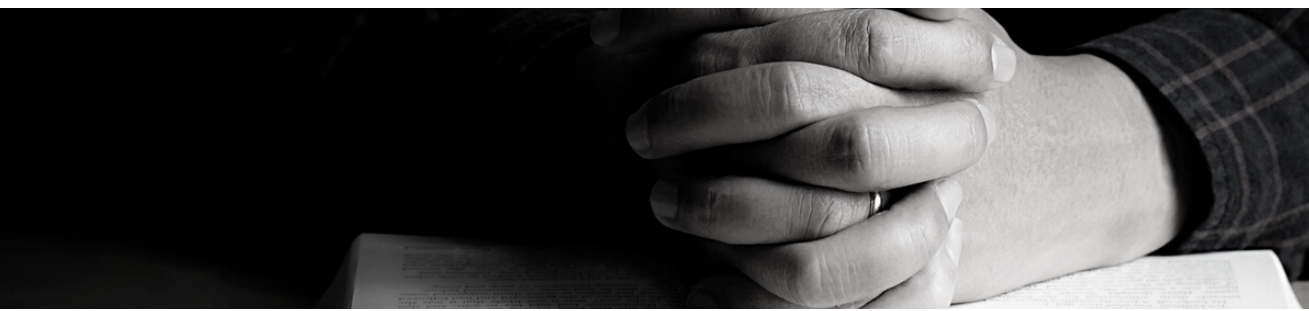
Often when we meet with the Lord, it's like dragging a log across the ground and stacking it into a pile. Each log does not feel like much, but in the larger picture it is accomplishing something. Every day that we come and drag another log and add it to the pile, we may not feel like we are making progress that particular day, but over time our pile is growing. Each day that we show up and bring our new log to the pile, the pile grows. Then, one day, God gives us an insight or revelation about Himself or His Word that is like Him shooting a flaming arrow at our pile of wood and bursting it into flames. In His kindness, God will always send the flaming arrows, but if we only have one or two logs in our pile, they won't burn very brightly. Let us be ones who diligently spend time with Him so that our pile is ready for His fire!

Prayer is God's plan to supply man's great and continuous need with God's great and continuous abundance.

E.M. BOUNDS

Whether you are starting to cultivate a life of prayer for the first time or needing to reignite the flame of your first love, God is waiting to meet with you. Let go of any guilt or shame that you may have surrounding your prayer life and trust that God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly more than you can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). He is able to draw you in, captivate you, fascinate you, and keep you coming back. We simply need to choose to learn how to spend time with Him and be patient with the process.

WHY PRAY?



Knowing **WHO** you are praying to

One of the first steps in building a life of prayer is cultivating a right view of God. How we view God determines how we will approach Him in prayer, and having a correct understanding of Him causes us to want to spend time with Him. Many believers have a wrong view of God. They may see Him as an angry taskmaster who forces us to pray so that we can prove our devotion to Him, or as a higher power who really has no interest in our lives. A foundational point of prayer is understanding that God is a tender Father who deeply loves His children, and Jesus is a Bridegroom King filled with desire for His people (Isaiah 62:4-5).

As we begin to understand these truths about God as a tender Father and Jesus as a Bridegroom King, we are energized to seek God and experience new delight in our relationship with Him. This changes our prayer lives because instead of approaching Him with shame or hesitation, we come before Him with confidence that He loves us and enjoys spending time with us (John 17:23).

A correct view of God also allows us to approach Him with the honor He is due. It is easy for us to agree with the idea of meeting God each day. We long to come out of our prayer times with our faces radiant, like Moses after he met with God on the mountain (Exodus 34:29-35). But Moses wasn't radiant because he discovered the meaning of a Bible verse or spoke an eloquent prayer. Moses was changed by simply being in the presence of God. What we behold is what we become (2 Corinthians 3:18). If our eyes are on the beauty, glory, and majesty of God – these things captivate us and draw us closer. We want to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and be with Him (Psalm 27:4), to be conformed more and more into His image. It's not our effort that changes us, it's the power of His presence, and we can't get this without making time to spend with Him daily.

The invitation to meet with God is always open. Jesus tells us that he stands and the door of our hearts and knocks, and to those who hear His voice and open the door, He will come in and dine with them (Revelation 3:20). We simply have to make the choice to meet with Him.







As children, many of us learn that prayer is asking God for things. While this is not incorrect, it's not the full picture of what God wants to do in and through us with prayer. As we spend more time with God in prayer, we will learn to open our hearts and talk to Him more and more. Over time, these conversations will move from petitions and pleas for Him to help us in our circumstances into getting to know His heart and unpacking our hearts before Him.

One way to help us focus our prayer times beyond our own felt needs is by making a prayer list. Often when we begin to pray, our mind is blank and we struggle to get going – especially when we are just beginning to cultivate a prayer life. A prayer list can help us to know what to pray about so we move past this unknowing feeling. It's important to understand that you do not need to limit your prayers to the things that are on the list. As your prayer life grows, and you begin to learn the Holy Spirit's voice in your life, you will find yourself departing from the list any time that you feel led to pray in a different direction.

WHAT to pray about

*Retire from the world each day to some private spot.
Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin
to fade out of your heart
and a sense of God's presence envelops you.*

A.W. TOZER

Here are some things we can include on our prayer list:



PERSONAL LIFE

This includes praying for my own heart, ministry, and circumstances (physical, financial, relational).

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Keep a list of individuals (family and friends), ministries (local church and missionaries), and cities (places the Lord has endeared you to) that you pray for regularly. Spend time praying for Jerusalem, as Scripture exhorts us to do so (Psalm 122:6; Isaiah 62:6)

LEADERS

Pray for people in authority over our church, city, state, and nation (1 Timothy 2:2)

JUSTICE ISSUES

This is a broad topic that can include governmental and social issues (abortion, human trafficking, racial issues, unfair systems, civil unrest, natural disasters, disease, social crises, etc.).

Having a life connected to God won't happen on the run, and it won't happen while sitting in church once or twice a week. It takes an intentional act of our will to sit down, quiet our spirit, and commune with the Lord on a daily basis so that we can receive His daily bread for our lives (Matthew 6:11). "One of the most violent things you will ever do is wrestle down all the competing elements in your calendar and consistently carve out the time to shut yourself into the secret place" (Bob Sorge).

God knows that we are busy. He knows that we have many things that legitimately need our attention. But in His kindness, He continually extends the invitation to meet with Him (Matthew 11:28; Revelation 3:20). Because of these many demands on our time, we must be intentional about developing our prayer life. If we do not set our schedules ourselves, others will set them for us, and the result will always be very little time for prayer.

Some protest that it is legalistic to schedule time for prayer (or to use a prayer list). While it certainly can be, it does not have to be. We step into legalism when we seek to earn God's love by praying or obeying rules.

Setting regular times for prayer is not an attempt to earn God's love, it is a reflection of your desire to take control of your schedule in order to make prayer a priority (Galatians 5:13). Scheduling time for Him is an expression of both your love for Him and your hunger for more of Him (Matthew 5:6).

We will not keep our prayer schedules 100% of the time. But by diligently scheduling and protecting our prayer time, we will keep it more often than not. We must treat our prayer time as a sacred appointment that we try not to miss, except for emergencies.

This does not limit our abiding with the Lord throughout the day. Jesus modeled for us the importance of both focused time specifically set apart to meet with God in a quiet place and turning our thoughts toward the Father throughout the day. Jesus regularly went away in order to seek time with His Father, but He no doubt had moment-by-moment communion with the Father – sharing His thoughts, seeking His Father's will, and whispering words of adoration.



WHEN *to pray*

By turning our focused attention to God throughout our day, we can make connections with Him and begin to understand what Paul meant when he encouraged us to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We will sustain a more consistent “abiding conversation” with the Lord if we have regular times to talk to God set into our schedules.

Some worry that if they take the time to pray, they will lose valuable time to love and serve their family, friends, church, or business. But people who pray regularly will love their families, friends, and neighbors more because their hearts will be energized by the Spirit, and their negative emotional traffic will diminish, enabling them to love more deeply and consistently. Jesus is our example, He did not permit ministry to others to hinder His prayer life, nor did He allow His prayer life to hinder His ministry to others. Even after He had ministered for long hours in preaching and healing the sick, He still departed to a lonely place to pray – to commune with His Father and be strengthened. Praying to the Father was foundational to His ministry and life.

It may be necessary to tweak our prayer schedules based on what is happening in our lives during a given season. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you know the best way to spend your time in this season of your life – it’s a prayer that He loves to answer!

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Bob Sorge

WHERE *to pray*



Jesus told His disciples, "When you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private." One reason why Jesus draws us into the secret place is to refine our motivation for praying. Are we spending time with the Lord to build a reputation of godliness that impresses others? Or are we spending time with Him because He is our lifeline, our source, and the object of our deepest affections? By keeping, at least a portion of, our prayer life secret, we make it easier to be sure that our motives are pure.

There are a number of places where Scripture refers to the secret place with God as a one-on-one meeting with Him where we are alone and unhindered by the distractions of daily life. The Bible talks of these times as a place of safety, protection, and a place of shelter (Psalm 32:7). A place where He can be our safe place when we need a sanctuary (Psalm 71:3). The Bible also speaks of us dwelling in this secret place – not merely visiting it on occasion (Psalm 91:1). God desires you to live regularly and consistently in this place with Him.

There is nothing more holy or spiritual about praying in an empty room versus a room full of people. But when the room is empty, and it's just you and God, it can be a lot easier to get in touch with the true state of your heart. This is a gift of God to us. With distractions limited, we have a much easier time quieting the traffic of our hearts and minds and actually communing deeply with the Lord.

Many of us have a habit of praying in the car, singing in the shower, or reading our Bibles while we eat. There is nothing wrong with any of these and they are a great way to redeem our daily tasks to use as time to grow closer with the Lord. The problem is that we have become so accustomed to multitasking in our busy culture that we find ourselves feeling restless before God, as though we should be getting something accomplished instead of sitting idly before Him.

Silence and solitude are imperative for connecting with the Holy Spirit because they create an atmosphere in which we are least likely to be distracted by anything and everything that vies for our attention. Psalm 46:10, encourages us to push away the distractions, at least for a time, and, "Be still and know that I am God." It takes conscious effort on our part to sit in the presence of the Lord and be still.

We need silence to be alone with God,
TO SPEAK TO HIM,
AND LISTEN TO HIM,
to ponder His words deep in our hearts.

We need to be alone with God in silence to be
RENEWED AND TRANSFORMED.

Silence gives us a new outlook on life. In it
WE ARE FILLED WITH THE ENERGY
OF GOD HIMSELF
that makes us do all things with joy.

MOTHER TERESA

HOW *to pray*

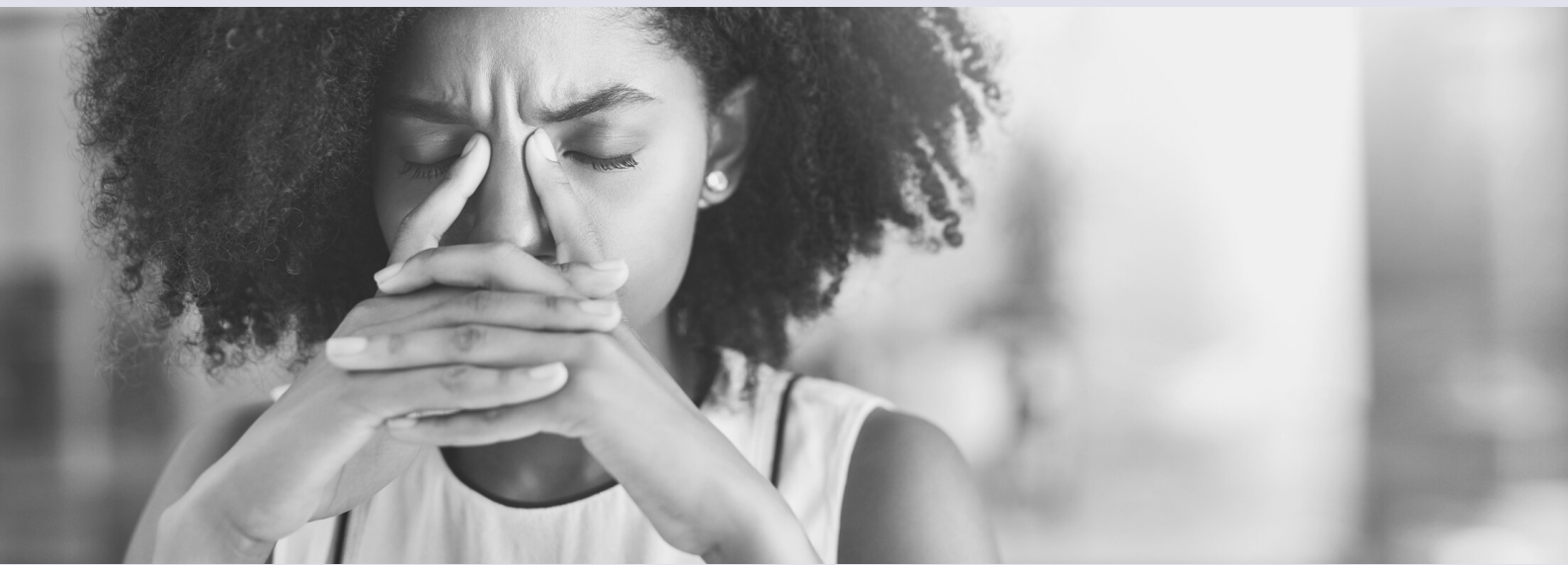
There is no right or wrong way to pray, and no two people will have prayer lives that look the same. Learning how to pray is a lot like learning how to speak when we are babies. We begin with short phrases and then begin to put sentences together. As we learn more about God, we begin to find new ways to communicate with Him

Too often believers kneel down and try to pray eloquent prayers, for a seemingly long period of time, without ever having learned how to pray. As you begin (or begin again) to develop a prayer life, be content to pray at your level of experience. As you pray more, you will learn more. Sometimes we struggle to say the “right” thing when God just wants to hear how we feel and what we think. The best way to pray is to be real. Pray what comes to your heart and mind.

David often prayed about exactly what he was going through and was real with God (see Psalm 22 or Psalm 51). And God called Him a man after His own heart.

During our prayer times, it is important to turn off our phones, our email, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. If we are overly stimulated with information and communication in the flesh, we will not be able to open up our spirits to connect with God. If we fall asleep or miss a day, we don’t need to beat ourselves up. He has great grace for us. We can hit delete on our failures and get back up and start again. He sees our weak efforts, and they count to Him.

There are many different types of prayer listed in the coming pages. Use these to help you develop a prayer life that is enjoyable for you and allows you to connect with the Lord in deeper ways.



TYPES OF PRAYER

PRAY-READ THE WORD

The Word of God records many prayers that were prayed by real people. The ones who had the favor of God and prevailed were men and women of prayer. The patriarchs (Genesis 20:17), the prophets (1 Kings 18:37), the kings (2 Kings 23:3), sinners (Luke 18:13), and the saved (Acts 10:9).

If you read the Bible with a conversation in mind, you will see that the Bible is filled with topics to talk over with the Lord. Pray-reading simply means turning the Word of God into a dialogue with Him. You can talk to God about promises we are to believe by thanking Him for the truth of the promise and then asking Him to reveal that truth to you in a deeper way. You can talk to God about commands that we are to obey by declaring your resolve to obey the command and then asking God for the power to obey it.

APOSTOLIC PRAYERS

The prayers that Jesus, Paul, and Peter prayed are recorded for our benefit. These are often referred to as the “apostolic prayers” because they are the prayers that Jesus prayed as our chief apostle (Hebrews 3:1) and that the Holy Spirit gave to the apostles. The apostolic prayers are a valuable gift to the church. As the prayers that burned in God’s heart, they give us the language of His heart. He never changes, so we can be assured that they still burn in His heart! They are prayers that He will answer because they are His desires.

The apostolic prayers are positive prayers asking God for the impartation of positive things instead of the removal of negative things (i.e., for love to abound instead of removing hatred in Philippians 1:9; for unity instead of against division in Romans 15:5). For a list of some of the apostolic prayers, see www.connectionpointchurch.org/spiritual-life-resources



THE SECRET
PLACE IS
YOUR
PORTAL TO
THE THRONE,
THE PLACE
WHERE YOU
TASTE OF
HEAVEN
ITSELF.

Bob Sorge

TYPES OF PRAYER



WORSHIP

Spending time reflecting on the person of God - His nature, character, and attributes - and giving Him praise for those things.
(*Psalm 145; Hebrews 13:15; Revelation 4*)

PETITION

Asking the Lord for things we want or need.
(*Matthew 7:7-12*)

CONFESSION/REPENTANCE

Acknowledging sin in your life and turning away from it, toward the Father and His ways.
(*2 Corinthians 7:10; 1 John 1:9*)

WARFARE

Pushing back darkness and releasing light on the earth. No Kingdom work is accomplished unless it is first established through prayer.
(*Matthew 16:19; 2 Corinthians 4:4*)

STILLNESS/LISTENING

Stilling the noise of life and allowing God's voice to speak to your heart.
(*1 Kings 19:12; Psalm 4:4; Psalm 46:10*)

PRAYER LANGUAGE

Allowing the Holy Spirit to pray through us by praying in tongues.
(*Romans 8:26-27; Jude 20*)

INTERCESSION

Praying on behalf of another person or a group of people.
(*Daniel 9:1-27; 1 Timothy 2:1*)

MEDITATION

Focusing on one phrase or passage of Scripture both through speaking to and listening to the Holy Spirit.
(*Joshua 1:8; Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 4:8*)



START WITH 15 MINUTES

- **Enjoy the simple presence of God in silence, without the need to offer words.**

Some people find that playing or singing a worship song to start this helps to switch from a busy mind to a quiet one ready to hear from the Lord.

- **Listen to God's word for you in this particular moment through Scripture.**

Try reading 1-2 Psalms, followed by a Gospel passage or a few verses of an epistle.

- **Thoughtfully express to God the thoughts and feelings of your heart and mind as you contemplate that Scripture.**

Write out a prayer in a journal or simply speak about what is in your heart. Try finding a truth to thank Him for in your Bible reading, then ask Him to show you more about how that truth is working in your life or how He would like you to embrace that truth in a new way.

*May my prayer be set before you like incense;
may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.*

PSALM 141:2

Additional Resources on Prayer



A Praying Life

Paul Miller



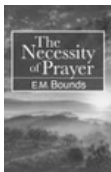
Growing in Prayer

Mike Bickle



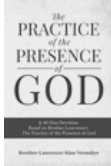
How to Pray

Pete Greig



The Necessity of Prayer

E.M. Bounds



Practicing the Presence of God

Brother Lawrence



Prayer: Why Our Words to God Matter

Corey Russell



Secrets of the Secret Place

Bob Sorge



The Way of the Heart

Henri Nouwen



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