

HOW TO PRAY

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As a shepherd, probably the most common prayer request I receive from God's people is to pray that they would pray more and accelerate their prayer lives. How can we pray? Many people can relate to the request of the disciples: *Lord, teach us to pray*. This certainly isn't exhaustive, but this brief essay will provide 5 helps to aid you in your times of meeting with God.

1. FELLOWSHIP WITH YOUR GOD.

Think of prayer as an intimate relationship with your *Abba, Father*. Consider that prayer is you crawling into the lap of your Father in heaven and adoring Him, thanking Him, confessing your sins to Him, and petitioning Him. His tender eye is upon you. His affections are kindled toward you. And He, like a Father, loves to fellowship with, commune with, share this time together with you, His beloved, blood-bought child.

2. PRIORITIZE PRAYER IN YOUR DAY.

You are no good till you meet with God. Resolve in your heart to meet with God before you meet with men. Warm your heart with the precious glories of Scripture before you face the onslaught of the dark world. Prioritize prayer. If you don't, it won't happen. At least, if you don't plan to pray and prioritize it, you may push it aside till a more opportune time later in the day until you realize that you're just too tired, can't focus, and have too many distractions. So, believer, wake up early, meet with God. Awaken the dawn with your praises and seek God early! If anything has to give each day, let it be something other than your prayer time. Are you busy? Then pray more!

3. PRAY WITH YOUR BIBLE OPEN.

Prayer is talking with God. Talking to God is wonderful and essential but don't forget that conversations best occur when there is a two-way dialogue. So, hear God speak through the written Word. Daniel prayed as he read Jeremiah's prophecy. Let God's people open the Bible and pray through the psalms -- verse by verse -- and through Paul's prayers in the Epistles. Are your prayers rote, boring, mindless and heartless? Do you pray the same thing every day and feel tired of not having enough to pray for? Then, open your Bible and turn God's promises into prayers. Take your Father's written Word and turn them into prayers. A Father can't refuse His own promises! Make a case & build the argument with God. Take His Word and His promises & turn them into prayers. This is how you pray according to the will of God so that He cannot refuse His own Words. Make the case, stand and watch, see God answer far beyond your expectations!

4. SPECIFICALLY PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS.

Rather than praying that God would 'be with them' and that 'God would bless America' and that 'God would go with them', perhaps consider praying more specifically, more thoughtfully, more intentionally and more biblically. Paul said that he thanked God for *all* the believers in Thessalonica (1 Thess 1:2). Pray for revival, pray for God's strengthening of the weak, pray for those who evangelize, pray for God to revive your soul, pray specifically and watch God answer.

5. INTERCEDE FOR YOUR CHURCH FAMILY.

Do you not know what to pray for? Do you need revitalization in your prayer times? Then take your church's membership role and begin praying for each person *by name*. Pray specifically? Do you not know how to pray for them? Then seek them, pursue them, ask them, pray for them, and follow up. Pray for your preachers and teachers. Pray for their wives and for spiritual protection. Pray for the families, for sexual purity, for the youth, for the young children, for every ministry in the church (specifically), for every missionary (by name), and for every elder (by name). Pray for the Spirit's power. Pray for many conversions and for holiness. Intercede and see God mightily work.