

LEARNING TO PRAY

How can you make prayer a part of your daily life? Let me suggest six guidelines:

First, have the right attitude. A friend of mine likes to define prayer as "a declaration of dependence" - and he has a point. We will only pray when we realize how dependent we are on God and we trust Him to hear our prayers and answer them according to His will. The Bible reminds us that "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

Second, seek God's will in your prayers. God wants us to bring our every concern to Him in prayer and to be persistent. But we don't see the whole picture, and sometimes we ask for things that are unwise or even wrong. James wrote, "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (James 4:3.) Ask above all for God's will to be done.

Third, bring everything to God in prayer. God loves us, and He is concerned about every detail of our lives, both big and small. I have known young people who prayed about minor things, --but then didn't pray about their choice of college or their career or their future spouse. On the other hand, I've also known people who prayed only when they faced a crisis. The Bible says, "In everything ...present your requests to God" (Philippians 4:6).

Fourth, learn to pray at all times, and in all situations. Nothing can replace a daily time spent alone with God in prayer. But we also can be in an attitude of prayer throughout the day--sitting in a car or at our desks, working in the kitchen, even talking with someone on the phone. The Bible says, "pray continually" (Thessalonians 5:17).

Fifth, trust God for the outcome. One of the most frequent questions people ask me concerns unanswered prayer. But God knows what is best for us, and we need to learn to trust Him for the outcome. Sometimes God answers "Yes" when we ask Him for something. But sometimes His answer is "Not Yet" or even "No." And sometimes His answer is simply "Trust Me, even if you don't understand."

Finally, learn to listen. Prayer is speaking to God--but sometimes He uses our times of prayerful silence to speak to us in return. He may simply give us an inner assurance of His presence, or He may guide us in a certain direction. The Bible says, "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7).

Pray because of Jesus' example. Pray because God has commanded it. Pray because Christ died to give us access to the Father. Pray because God is worthy of your praise. Pray because you need His forgiveness and guidance and protection. Pray because others need your prayers. Pray most of all because God wants your fellowship and you need His fellowship on this journey He has set before you.

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