
How is your Prayer Life?

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Is prayer your first response for all thoughts and encounters in your life? If not, we need to examine *why not!*

Matthew 6: 5-15; 7: 7-12; Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 23:46; John 15:4-5; Romans 8: 18-30; James 5:13-18

Have you ever thought through why you do not spend more time with God? What aspects of your time and commitment hold you back from prayer? Most of us do not have the kind of prayer life we should have; in my experience, most people give up because either they do not know how to pray or they do not understand the significance of prayer. Others may have prayer lives but they are not godly or effectual prayers; these tend to be the prayers with only the self-interests or personal agendas in mind. We may know *about* prayer, but is our understanding and practice lined up to Christ as Lord, or to what we want? One might presume that a Christian in a church automatically knows how and why to pray, but few are ever taught the power, relevance, and importance of prayer. Therefore, we go on presumptions and perhaps even model our prayers after someone else, not from what God has communicated to us. Also in paragraph

The purpose of prayer is not just to get what we want; it is lining ourselves up with His thoughts, ways, and precepts. The focus of our prayers is Christ, His work, and His impact on you, your family, and the world. This is what the Lord's Prayer is about (Luke 11:1-4). The main theme of prayer is our vital connection with God as Lord and Savior, and His empowering us for all we do in life. He is sovereign; He directs our lives as well as the rest of the universe, so we must get in tune with Him. We must lean on and dwell in Him so we are infused with His Way rather than clouded and distracted by our ways or the ways of the world.

If prayer is our connection with God, then to ignore prayer means we are trying to put God out of our lives. When we misuse prayer, we are usurping God's authority and missing out on His best for us. We are treating God like a pet, giving Him the time and affection when it is convenient for us, when it fits our needs, concerns, and occasion. God must come first and prayer helps us make this happen. Prayer is one of, if not *the* most quintessential important aspect of the Christian life. Prayer needs to be number one for the serious Christian to whom Jesus is not merely Savior but also LORD. However, to make entreaty (deep prayer) with God our first priority, we must first receive His redemptive work through the power of the Spirit. Once we have received His amazing gift, and His work is transforming and renewing us (Rom. 12:1-3), prayer becomes our response to Him, and helps us continually commune His Work within us.

Do we truly understand the power, significance, and eminence of prayer? If not, why not? What is in the way of prayer being more momentous in our lives? We need to

ask ourselves, *what has happened in my life and how am I responding in prayer to my connection to God? What will it take to become more of a person who has “heartfelt prayer” at my core; what will it take for me to be a “prayer warrior,” whose life goal is to make Christ first in all things?* The prerequisite to this type of effective, *prayer warrior* prayer is consistency and growth in our prayers. In conjunction, we learn about prayer and life in general from spending time with Him and His Word, and by continually growing in that prayer life. We also become better equipped to handle all that comes our way.

Prayer helps us see the great expectations He has for us, but this insight does not come about all at once. As with any growth, it is gradual. Prayer is something that does not just happen overnight; it is like planting a seed that germinates, grows, matures, and then produces its fruit. The seed alone does not produce the fruit; it is only after its growth and development from its time in the sun, the water and fertilizer, and its care and cultivation that brings about its bountiful harvest. It is the same with our growth in Christ! Prayer develops as we consistently obey Christ. It is watered by the fertilizer of His Word. The care and cultivation comes from effective, godly teachers. Our nurturing and learning feeds our roots in Him. If we negate our cultivation of prayer, we are negating Christ in our life and the result will be a very slow growth, perhaps even retardation in our spiritual formation. Prayer needs attention and constant tending for effectual growth.

Prayer helps create more of itself. Prayer begets more prayer and that begets greater spiritual formation. When our prayers are not just self-focused but engage others as well, our Christian walk becomes deeper, more relevant, and heartfelt. *Heartfelt prayer* is the sense of passion and urgency that needs to come before progress can take place. This is where prayer becomes more *real* and transfers into an authentic connection with God, not just regarding Him as a *vending machine* for meeting our desires.

Our prayer life grows when we plow the field and plant the seed so it can grow. We must plow away the *weeds* of our selfishness along with the things in life that distract and obstruct us. This must take place to bring more nourishment into our *soil* from His presence, so the seeds of our faith can grow into the mustard tree of maturity and service. We have to know God and His Word first; then we will know the importance of worship and faith development that fuels our prayer that in turn fuels our worship of God and connection with others.

Prayer is reciprocal, as it needs to be a perennial and continual attitude that begets a perpetual, continuous, constant action; thus, prayer is a ceaseless relationship we have with God and that echoes in eternity. Prayer begets our character and maturity and, in turn, our character and maturity help spur on our prayer life. Learning about God and worshipping Him brings us closer to His presence and makes our prayers deeper and more alive.

Passion that honors Christ synergizes our prayer life; it forms from our realization of who He is and what He has done for us. Passion increases prayer from explorations, curiosity, or perhaps a selfish mindset, to a vigorous lifestyle. Prayer becomes more continual and effective as we build on our growing relationship in Him. Thus, the characteristics of knowing Christ, worshiping Him, learning more about Him, and practicing prayer through the work of the Holy Spirit fuel the growth of our prayer life. Then those characteristics *back flow* to cause each one of them to work synergistically better.

Consequently, as our prayer life grows, so does our worship and learning of Christ. As our relationship grows, our gifts and skills grow, our meaning and purpose in life grows, and so forth (2 Peter 1:5-9). Therefore, more prayer will cause us to be more passionate, have deeper worship experiences, become better leaders, develop more knowledge, maturity, and character, and become better servants and friends.

Questions to Ponder

Read Luke 3:21; 5:16, remember, *Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

1. How is your prayer life?
2. Is prayer your first response for all thoughts and encounters in your life? If not, we need to examine *why not!*
3. Have you ever thought through why you do not spend more time with God?
4. What aspects of your time and commitment hold you back from prayer?
5. How can you better understand and practice Prayer?
6. Why is prayer not about what we want? Why would people think it is?
7. The purpose of prayer is not just to get what we want, so what is the reason we are to pray?
8. How can prayer help you be lined up to Christ as Lord?
9. Read Luke 11:1-4. The focus of our prayers is Christ, His work? How will this improve your spiritual life?
10. How does His impact on you affect your impact on your family, and the world? (This is what the Lord's Prayer is about).
11. Do you truly understand the power, significance, and eminence of prayer? If not, why not?

12. What is in the way of prayer being more momentous in our lives?
13. How can you better respond in prayer to your connection to God?
14. What will it take to become more of a person who has “heartfelt prayer” at your core?
15. What will it take for you to be a “prayer warrior,” whose life goal is to make Christ first in all things?
16. The prerequisite to this type of effective, prayer. How will you make this so in your personal life and in your church?
17. How will prayer help your growth in Christ?
18. What are you going to do about your prayer life now?
19. How does the practice of prayer build much heartier relationships with others?
How can you improve your prayer life?
20. Can you think of a specific area in your life where prayer needs to be more manifested? If so, how can you make this so?