

Enhancing Your Prayer Life

By Veronica Winston

Keep it simple. God delights in hearing the prayers of the righteous (Proverbs 15:8, I Peter 3:12). You need not wait until you've taken a prayer course to have a conversation with our Heavenly Father. Talk with Him as a friend. Confide in Him and expect Him to answer your prayers.

There are three basic categories of prayer (even though there are many different kinds of prayer), and you may want to include each one in your daily prayer time:

Relationship Building Prayers

This is where our intimate relationship with God is nurtured. During this time, we express our thanksgiving, praise, worship and adoration for God. We fellowship with Him, talk to Him as a friend, sing praises to Him and sometimes quietly wait in His presence.

This relationship building phase of prayer keeps the soil of our hearts fertile and ready to receive His Word and His guidance. It is here that we express repentance for our sins. We pour out our heart to God and express our love for and trust in Him even in the midst of difficult situations. We reaffirm our commitment to serving Him and renew our determination to remain steadfast and unwavering, for He is faithful to fulfill His promises.

Prayer of Petition

I John 5:14,15 assures us that God will grant our petitions when we ask according to His will. What is His will? His Word, the Holy Bible. When we ourselves have needs, we can search the scriptures to see what God has promised us (or has already granted us as our inheritance in Christ Jesus) and pray according to Mark 11:24 - believe we receive it and we shall have it. Some call this the "prayer of faith", but of course every prayer should be prayed in faith. We should be specific in our requests. We need not pray "if it be Thy will" because we know God's will from His Word.

Prayer of Intercession

The Bible states that both Jesus (Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:34) and the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26) make intercession for us, and that God is looking for intercessors to "stand in the gap" or to pray to Him on behalf of others. God wants us to ask so He can answer (Psalm 2:8). Intercession begins in the heart of God and He places His desires in our hearts to pray for an individual, city, nation, etc. He wants us to pray with hearts of love and compassion, even sometimes weeping and travailing. Sometimes when a feeling of being lost or depressed comes upon us, it is actually a signal that someone is in need of prayer to get the breakthrough. It may take minutes, hours, days or longer, praying as God brings it back to you. For God to fulfill His purpose and plan in the earth, He needs praying people - ones who are willing to lay down their lives for others.

Practical Tips for Prayer

1. Set a regular time and place for daily prayer. Trying to "fit it in" around your schedule can rob you of this time. Even if you start with fifteen or thirty minutes, as your consistency builds, you will begin to see a definite change in your days. (I look at my morning prayer time as "seedtime". Once I've sown the right seeds, I get a full days' harvest of the Word of God working on my behalf.)
2. Get a notebook - spiral or three-ring, whichever works best for you. (I use both.) When you become aware of something that you want to pray about, you'll have a central location to write it down, and you won't have to search through little bits of paper stuck in your Bible, desk, or kitchen drawer. As you study your Bible daily, God sometimes enlightens a scripture to you that really speaks to your heart. Jot it down and make a point to meditate upon it to get a fuller understanding of what God is saying. God may speak to you during or after

prayer. Write down the impressions He places on your heart. When you keep a journal it helps you to see how God has communicated with you over a period of time, and when events take place you can go back to your journal and praise God that He used you to pray for that to come to pass.

3. As you read God's Word, you may come across scriptures that nudge at your heart because they relate so closely to what you've been praying for. Write it down, so the next time you pray you can thank God for the answer, which lines up with His Word.
4. Make sure you allocate time daily for Bible reading/study/meditation also. If you don't know where to start, you may want to purchase a "How to Study the Bible" paperback, and follow their suggestions. You don't have to be locked into any one way. Try several ways to see what works for you. Examples:
 - A. Read three chapters a day.
 - B. Read one chapter a day and choose a certain passage of scripture to study in detail and meditate upon.
 - C. After reading, choose one scripture to memorize (at least one per week) and consider and visualize how this should impact your life as you act on this verse.
 - D. I recommend that you get a concordance and study different verses on a particular topic, person or event. This type of study is useful to find scripture promises or to build your faith in a particular area.
 - E. Another way to begin your study is to read one chapter of Proverbs a day; or one or two Psalms a day. However you study, just make sure you're getting your "minimum daily requirement" of spiritual bread each day.

• Study different people in the Bible and what they prayed in various circumstances, and see how God answered them. Here are a few:

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| A. Ephesians 1:15-23, 3:14-21 | Paul praying for the church |
| B. John 17 | Jesus praying for His disciples and us |
| C. Genesis 18:22-33 | Abraham for Sodom and Gomorrah |
| D. I Samuel 1:9-18 | Hannah prayed for a son |
| E. Acts 4:23-31 | The saints prayed for boldness |
| F. II Chronicles 20:1-30 | Jehoshaphat prayed for protection |
| G. II Chronicles 6:12-7:22 | Solomon dedicated the temple of God |
| H. Nehemiah 1 and 2:14 | Nehemiah repented for Israel's sin |
| I. The Book of Psalms | Prayers and poetry set to music |

• Pray and study the Bible with a goal or purpose in mind. Instead of spending your 15 to 30 minutes as a duty, ask God what He wants you to pray for, or pause to think about family members or those in your church or work environment who need a touch from God. Of course, we should keep our nation and our leaders in prayer, as well as our pastor and local church, the body of Christ and the lost (I Timothy 2:1-4).

• Consider purchasing a book on prayer. There are so many good ones on the market. As you read, choose one or two things at a time to apply to your own prayer life. Make sure that you continue to pray and don't just read about prayer! Most of the prayer warriors I've read about didn't learn from a book. They learned by spending time with God in prayer and fellowship.

• Get filled with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues, and pray "in the Spirit" daily to build up your spirit man (Jude 20). Every new testament writer spoke in tongues, and the writer God used the most prayed in tongues more than anyone else (I Corinthians 14:2-4, 14,18). One benefit of praying in tongues is that we pray the perfect will of God, and God is able to go to the root of a problem even when you didn't have the foggiest idea of what it was.

Resources to Learn More About Prayer...

The Art of Prayer, Bible Prayer Study Course, Prayer Secrets, The Art of Intercession, Praying to Get Results, Prevailing Prayer to Peace

By Kenneth E. Hagin, Kenneth Hagin Ministries, P.O. Box 50126, Tulsa, OK 74150-0126

Prayer Your Foundation for Success

By Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Copeland Ministries, Fort Worth, TX 76192-0001

Releasing the Ability of God Through Prayer, Jesus Our Intercessor

By Charles Capps, Charles Capps Ministries, P.O. Box 69, England, AR 72046

Effective Fervent Prayer

By Mary Alice Isleib, Mary Alice Isleib Ministries, P.O. Box 46105, Minneapolis, MN 55446

Prayer: Key to Revival

By Paul Y. Cho, Published by Word Books, Waco, Texas

"Intercession as a Lifestyle"

by Suzette Hattingh

12 Lesson Video Training Course or 12 Lesson Audio Course

Distributed by Marilyn Neubauer

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"Prayer and Your Life in God"

By Lynne Hammond

6 Tape Audio Series, Living Word Christian Center

9301 75th Avenue North

Brooklyn Park, MN 55428

(612) 424-2756

"A Formula for Answered Prayer"

By Dr. Frederick K.C. Price

7 Tape Audio Series

Ever Increasing Faith Ministries

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