

CEC Sunday Circle
Lesson October 3, 2021
Stewardship and Gratitude – Focused Prayers

Opening Prayer

Psalm 100 NRSV

A Psalm of thanksgiving.

¹ Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness;
 come into his presence with singing.

³ Know that the LORD is God.

 It is he that made us, and we are his;^[a]
 we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
 and his courts with praise.

 Give thanks to him, bless his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good;
 his steadfast love endures forever,
 and his faithfulness to all generations.

Icebreaker:

Name:

A ways you pray

Tool you use for prayer time

What is prayer?

Prayer, at its simplest, is talking with God. It is our direct dial communication line with our Father in heaven. There's no operator asking you to hold while they get Him on the line. You just call and He will answer.

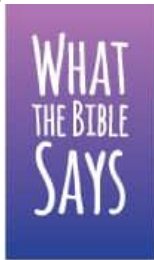
Prayer is not, however, just us telling Him what we want. It is so much more than that! It is a conversation with our Creator and should include asking for forgiveness of our sins, thanking Him for all He has done for us and sharing your needs and desires with Him.

Prayer is a chat with your best friend. Someone who knows you deeply and loves you unconditionally.

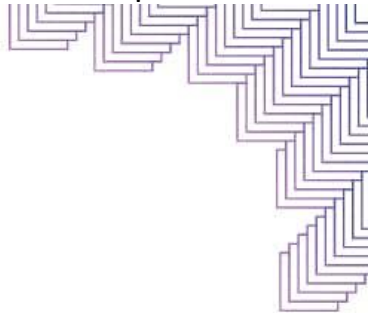
It is waiting with expectation and joyful hope that He is going to answer (maybe not in the way we want or expect, but He WILL answer!).

What the Bible Says About Prayer?

God desires for us to communicate with him. It is part of the foundation of how He created us – to be in fellowship with Him. Of course, since prayer is so important to God, the Bible is filled with scripture related to prayer.



About Prayer



Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Mark 11:24

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

John 15:7

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray continually

Romans 8:26

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.



What Tools do you use when you pray?

Ten Tools for Your Prayer Toolbox July 10, 2017 by Pastor Mark Brussel

Prayer is an amazing privilege. To think that Almighty God pays attention to our words is hard to believe, but true. And yet I find that many Christians struggle to pray. I certainly do. I am easily distracted and repetitive in what I say. And if I don't watch out, my prayers are quickly reduced to reading items on a shopping list instead of a genuine, heart to heart conversation with God.

Our prayers often lack vitality. They feel dull and stale. Author Don Whitney puts it bluntly: "I can be praying to the most fascinating Being in the universe about the most important things in life and yet be bored to death". Our pattern of prayer is often predictable and therefore boring. And whatever we find boring, we don't delight in and we don't get excited about. So perhaps this may help. Here are ten tools that I've put in my Prayer Toolbox lately. They've proven to be a help. Like any toolbox, I don't use all tools simultaneously. In fact, some of them are still unused. View them as ideas, as suggestions that can help you to stay or get out of the rut and give substance and flavor to your prayers.

Tool #1: Pray back the Bible

We've separated Bible reading from prayer and that is very unfortunate. Turn Scripture into prayer! Let the Bible direct your prayers. When you read for instance: "All things are possible with God" (Mat. 19:26), praise Him for His power and bring your impossibilities before His throne. When the Bible says "I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1), thank God that He has given you all that you need in Himself and ask Him to help you and your family to grow in contentment.

Tool #2: Use the nook and crannies of the day

Much time leaks from our day unnoticeably. I think of those 3 or 5 minute gaps between activities. Instead of filling them up with checking your phone, flipping through a magazine or just nothingness, pray! Have some prayer and praise items on the shelf of your heart so you don't have to think long who or what to pray for.

Tool #3: Be spontaneous in your prayers

Ask God to make you alert to situations that lend itself perfectly for seeking God's face, ever so briefly. When you're confronted with a beggar on the street, or with a decision you need to make at work or you witness a spectacular sunrise in the early morning, pray! Prayer should be our instinctive knee jerk reaction to the troubles and blessings of life.

Tool #4: Plan to pray

Many good things don't get done simply because we don't plan for it. The Christian life demands self-discipline and order. Rethink your priorities and how prayer fits in. If you are committed to praying regularly, where and when and how will you do this? Some people have a prayer bench, or take a daily prayer walk. Be realistic, but don't be afraid to think outside the box!

Tool #5: Pray specific prayers

Life is lived in the trenches of the daily particulars. Our worries, fears, lusts, and jealousies have a name and address. Call them by name. It will help to stay focused in prayer. And when you pray specific prayers, don't be surprised to see specific answers. Ask a friend or church member: "What is going on in your life that I can pray for?"

Tool #6: Fill up your big and sweeping Bible prayers

The Bible contains large and general prayers, such as for the lost and for God's kingdom to come. These are such abstract concepts that it is hard to wrap our hearts and minds around them. But we can pray them meaningfully by filling them up with other goals God has. So instead of praying "Bless all the missionaries in the world", we can ask God to help the missionaries to be bold in their witness.

Tools #7: Put together your own prayer list

A prayer list has a bad rep. If the goal is to mindlessly repeat names or to cram as many items as possible into a 15-minute prayer time, rightly so. But with the right mindset, a prayer list can help us to be structured and avoid mind drifting, especially when we pray out loud. It can help us to pray for things and people more than once.

Tool #8: Start a prayer journal

Journaling helps to track prayer requests and answers. Some use their journal to write out prayers and record praises. We live at such a frantic pace that we take little time to reflect. D.A. Carson hit the nail on the head when he wrote: "Believers who spend no time reviewing and pondering in their minds what God has done should not be surprised if they rarely sense that God is near".

Tool #9: Run your prayers through the ACTS acronym

This is an old one, but helpful nonetheless. Each of the letters stands for a key element of prayer. Adoration (praising God), Confession (we all fall short of His holiness), Thanksgiving (for the grace and kindnesses we have received) and Supplication (petitions for ourselves and others).

Tool #10: Find someone to pray with

Many things are easier when you do it together with another person. A few years ago, the couch to 5k running plan became a whole lot easier for me

when my son Caleb joined me. Find one or two other people to pray with, weekly. You can carry each other burdens and share the joy of prayer.

<https://www.nlbcma.org/pastors-corner/post/ten-tools-for-your-prayer-toolbox>

The Power of Prayer: Why Does it Work?

At the end, prayer and meditation are like anything else in life. If used with knowledge, awareness and the right intention, they can benefit you.

By

Michelle Roya Rad, Contributor

Professional psychologist, motivational writer

Why do you think Prayer works?

There is strong scientific evidence indicating that faith and prayer may help us with experiencing greater health physically, mentally and psychologically. Many studies have been published in both medical and psychological journals supporting the positive effects of prayer and faith. But some of the studies related to prayer have mixed results depending on the type of prayer, the demographic and the methods and means its effects were being measured. So, it is important to follow these studies with a critical mind to be able to see why they came up with their conclusions. But overall most conclusions are supportive of the positive influences of prayer and faith on human health and functioning.

Physician and researcher Larry Dossey, M. D., in his book "Prayer is Good Medicine," discusses how praying for oneself and others can have a scientifically measurable healing effect on illness and trauma.

When it comes to the types of prayer, there are different types. For the major religions like Christianity, Judaism and Islam, prayer is more focused on something "outside of the self," so they pray to God. But the more mystical traditions of these religions like Gnosticism, Kabbalism and Sufism, it seems like they are more focused on the "inside of the self" aspect of the prayer, believing that we all have a divinity inside of us. And then there are Eastern traditions like Buddhism and Hinduism, which focus on mediation rather than prayer.

Which type of prayer do you prefer?

In regard to science, studies done of brain activities on prayer and meditation have indicated that people who engage in these activities on a regular basis have a change in the frontal lobes. [1] This is the area that controls concentration and focus. When one is in a state of deep prayer, the parietal lobe's power goes down, which can contribute to a sense of transcendence. Furthermore, it has been indicated that people who pray and meditate on a regular basis have some permanent changes to the brain. [2] Self-aware people who have been meditating with clear intention for 15 years or more seem to have thicker frontal lobe than non mediators. [3] The frontal lobes are involved in motor function, problem solving, spontaneity, memory, language, initiation, judgment, impulse control, rationality and social and sexual behavior.

Prayer and meditation can influence our state of mind, which then have an effect on our state of body. It can help with anxiety, sadness, blood pressure, sleep, digestion and breathing. It also can influence thinking. These, overtime, can change the brain activity and ultimately the subjective and objective experiences of us in the world.

What benefits do you get when you do pray? What happens when you do not regularly pray?

There are two general types of prayer: personal or individualistic and group or collective. Logically, if one is good, two is better. When a group of people meditate or pray together with the same clear intentions, self awareness and enough focus and concentration, then the effect could be even more positive. Historically, there have also been social impacts to the collective prayers from the Baptist congregation to the Islamic Salaat.

Which type of prayer do you prefer? When is one better than the other?

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/power-of-prayer_b_1015475

Closing Prayer

2 Timothy 1

Thanksgiving and Encouragement letter from Paul to Timothy

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³ I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

⁸ Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, ^[a] ¹² and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. ^[b] ¹³ Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Amen