

A Passion To Pray

In the opinion of many, of the many spiritual disciplines nothing is more important than prayer. Nothing will quite impact our spiritual development like a well-developed prayer life. However, prayer has sadly become one of the most neglected of disciplines in our hurried lives. If you hunger for a closer walk with God, the following six points will help you to develop your prayer life in a more meaningful way.

The importance of prayer. With God, everything revolves around relationship. God desires you to know Him, to love Him, and to make Him the number one priority of your life. While He desires our service, it falls a distant second to relationship.

In Luke 10:38 we read of Jesus in the home of Mary and Martha. Martha was focused on service, taking care of her guests. In contrast, Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and drank in the words that Jesus spoke. Martha complained that Mary was not helping. Jesus told her that Mary “hath chosen that good part” and that Martha should not be so “careful and troubled about many things.”

If you too busy to pray, you are simply too busy. Jesus is not impressed with our college degrees, how many books we have written or what positions we hold in the church – not if they come at the expense of our prayer time and relationship with Him. He wants to talk to us in that still small voice and hear us express our problems and needs. He desires our worship and devotion. He wants our heart above all else (Psalm 27:4; I Corinthians 13:3).

The more you pray, the more you want to pray. Developing a prayer life begins with understanding the absolute necessity of prayer (James 4:17). It begins in the mind with knowledge and understanding and then moves into the heart. What begins as a purpose soon turns into a passion.

Great prayer warriors often talk of their prayer journey. Over time God leads them to that place of deep communion and devotion, a journey that takes time and persistence.

Few have heard of Igal or Nahbi. But we have all heard of Joshua and Caleb. All were spies, but only two returned with a vision for victory (Numbers 13). But Joshua’s faith began long before the river crossing. In Exodus 33:11 we read, “But Joshua, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.”

Make a commitment to daily prayer. Force the flesh daily to obey what you know is right in the Spirit. Then observe how your flesh will soon submit to God and your passion to pray will grow.

God is more interested in consistency than quantity or quality. We are not ignorant of Satan’s devices. He will tell you that if you are not praying an hour a day, you are wasting your time. So you start with an hour or more. You struggle. It’s challenging to pray an hour! So you become discouraged and finally quit, which is what the devil intended.

You must learn to walk before you run. An athlete does not start by pressing 300 pounds. He starts with 75 pounds and builds from there. Satan will press you to do more than you are able, knowing you will soon quit. Therefore understand this: God is more interested in your daily prayer being consistent than He is in the quantity or quality of your prayer. Focus on praying five minutes a day, but do it seven days a week at a set time and place (Psalm 55:17). It will soon grow to ten minutes, then twenty. Before you know it, the time flies past and you are praying an hour or more and the quality of your prayer time will grow as well. Focus on consistency. Pray every day. God rewards faithfulness. The quantity and quality will soon come.

Be a believer and not a beggar. We need a proper mental image of God. He is a good God. He wants to answer your prayer. He enjoys doing good things for His children (Matthew 7:11). We do not have to beg God for answers. We should simply tell God our needs and then thank Him for the answer. As long as you are not asking amiss, i.e. contrary to the will of God (James 4:3), you can be assured that God hears your need and will do what is best – which is also why we must always pray for God’s will, (not our own), to be done (Matthew 6:10; Luke 22:42).

Too many see the parable of the woman before the unjust judge (Luke 18) as an example of the need to beg God. The first verse provides the meaning of this parable: “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” This parable is not about begging, but persistence. I will never stop asking God to bring my family to salvation. To this end, I thank God every day for directing their path toward truth.

Do not try to fight in the flesh what should be fought in the Spirit. The Apostle Paul said, “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1). The word “patience” here means steadily, faithfully. Satan knows that if he can stop you from praying, he will soon defeat you. So Satan quickly points out our faults and tells us we are wasting our time praying because we have sin in our lives.

This lie of the devil is most insidious. Having faults are reasons all the more to pray. The devil says you must first overcome your sin before you can rightly pray. But the Bible says, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). The key to overcoming sin is praying daily for God’s strength to conquer them. We are fighting a spiritual battle. Trying to overcome with the flesh what can only be conquered by the Spirit is folly (Ephesians 6:12). Start praying, keep praying, and God will show you how to vanquish every fault by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Finally, have a specific time to pray, a specific place to pray, and maintain a good prayer list. David said, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.” (Psalm 55:17). Throughout the scriptures are repeated references to a specific time and place of prayer (Psalm 5:3; 88:13; Acts 3:1; 10:3, etc.). I am saved today because of a praying mother. I remember coming home many times from school and finding my mother on her knees, Bible open, photos spread out, and prayer list stained with tears. She also kept her “honey box.” This tin box was stuffed with notes of God’s answers to prayer. In times of discouragement, she would go to her honey box and thank God for His many miracles, renewing her faith that God was still a prayer answering God.

To this end, consider keeping a prayer journal. Add to it regularly requests, answers, scriptures to inspire, and inspirational notes of encouragement. As prayers are answered, note the date and circumstances. Prayer must never become routine or mundane. It is as real and alive as our God. It is the time in which we meet with a personal God and fight supernatural battles. Start and end each day with prayer. It is the key that unlocks the depths of spiritual understanding and the door that opens your heart to unspeakable joy.

**Tim Massengale
Indianapolis, Indiana**