



Spiritual Disciplines Toolbox

02 Prayer

“Pray without ceasing.”
— 1 Thessalonians 5:17

What are Spiritual Disciplines?

At some point we all get stale, stuck, or start searching for more. Most often all we need is the right tool to break through in our relationship with God. Spiritual disciplines are the biblical tools Christians have been using for centuries to draw closer to God. We use the disciplines because we need help, not because we are so holy. Experiment with the tools to find out what helps you connect with God the best.

What is Prayer all about?

Prayer is God giving you privileged access to the most precious thing in the universe—Himself. It takes time to learn to pray, even for the disciples (Luke 11:1-4). Developing an unceasing prayer life is an ongoing journey. We often start because we should and grow so that we do not want to stop. Prayer is a must for the Christian: We are commanded to pray (1 Thess. 5:17), invited to ask (James 4:2), and welcomed into the presence of God to find what we need from Him (Heb. 4:16). Then with wonder we get to see God “do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

When people prayed in the Bible the weather was affected (James 5:17), God’s plans were changed (2 Kings 20:1-5), people were healed (James 5:15), peace was gained (Phil. 4:6-7), sin was overcome (1 Cor. 10:13), the timid were made bold (Acts 4:31), and growth was secured (Phil. 1:6). Understand that anything under the authority of God can be affected through prayer—and what isn’t under the authority of God? There is not a situation that prayer cannot change, and God’s power cannot overcome. You have to breathe every moment to survive. That’s the idea with prayer—when you stop living in a posture of prayer you start to suffocate spiritually; for it is in Him that “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

So stop worrying about saying the right thing, ditch the fancy language, and just talk to God. He’s looking forward to the time together with you.

Where do I start?

30-Second Praying. Set a timer for thirty seconds. Start the timer and spend the time only praising God for who He is and what you love about Him. When the timer runs out, start it again. This time, confess your sins to Him and receive His forgiveness. Run the timer again and focus on talking to God about what you are most thankful. Start the timer one more time and spend the last thirty seconds praying for the needs in your life and the lives of those closest to you.

What other ways can I use this tool?

Repurpose Your Routine. Our lives are filled with mindless tasks we do every day or week. Use the time when your hands are busy to draw closer to God in prayer. Talk to God while you are doing laundry or dishes, while mowing the lawn or trimming the hedges, when you run or ride a bike, during your daily commute or on errands. Note: it helps to have a key verse or prayer request in mind as you start.

Pray Scripture. It is powerful to pray the prayers of Scripture. You can pray the prayers of Paul like Ephesians 3:14-21, Philippians 1:9-11 or 1 Thessalonians 1:1-12. The prayers of Jesus can be found in Matthew 6:9-13 and John 17. Or you can pray some of the Psalms, depending on your need, like Psalm 25 (for instruction), Psalm 51 (for repentance), Psalms 42-43 (when depressed), Psalm 63 (when you want more of God), Psalm 118 (when afraid), and Psalms 27 or 100 (for worship).

Letting Go. Philippians 4:6-7 makes it clear that prayer is a stress reliever. We take the burden off of us and drop it into the capable hands of God, and He takes His peace and puts it on us. The problem is—we take the burden back, and we lose His peace. Use a piece of paper or dry-erase board, list and then erase each prayer request as you pray it. Whatever you have left is what you have to worry about—you shouldn't have anything left!

Prayer Walk. Walk and talk with God. You can journey around the block, through a park, or around your community. Wherever you go, spend the time speaking to God. Sometimes it is helpful to visit specific places to pray for specific needs (a church for the advancement of the kingdom, a hospital for the sick, a statehouse for the civil leaders, a school for the children, etc.). Hint: this is great to do with others.

“Prayer is not preparation for work, it is work.
Prayer is not preparation for the battle, it is the battle.”
— Oswald Chambers