

2024
MORE OF THE SAME

21 DAYS OF PRAYER

“Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

- 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

Few things bring more guilt and shame to many Christians than asking them about their prayer lives. We often think that we aren't praying enough or long enough and we don't know if we are using the right words. Crippled by insecurity and uncertainty, we just don't do it at all. We may mutter a few “help me” or “bless this food” prayers every once in a while, but for many of us that is it and we feel we are missing the mark.

If that's you, don't worry. You are in good company! Martin Luther once wrote to his barber,

“I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray. May our dear Lord grant to you and to everybody to do it better than I! Amen.” - Martin Luther

So as we dive into this churchwide intentional season of prayer, let's answer the two most common questions about prayer so we can relieve you of any guilt and shame.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I PRAY?

There's a two word verse that can easily cause us to throw up our hands and give up when it comes to prayer: “Pray constantly...” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Great. But instead of throwing in our prayer towel, this verse should set us free to make prayer a regular part of our daily lives without worrying about doing it right. Praying constantly means having a posture of prayer and talking to God whenever and however you can. Sometimes Jesus prayed early in the morning (Mark 1:35), sometimes he prayed late at night (Mark 14:32). King David liked the night time prayers (Psalm 42:8; 63:6) and Daniel prayed three times a day (Daniel 6:10). There really is no perfect time of day to pray, so just pray.

HOW LONG SHOULD I PRAY?

One thing you will quickly notice in the Bible is that most recorded prayers are short. When asked how to pray, Jesus gives his disciples a lesson in brevity with a twenty second prayer (Matthew 6:8-13). Even his longest prayer clocks in at just under three minutes (John 17). Similarly, Moses spends four verses (roughly 20 seconds) praying before having the ten commandments etched in stone (Deuteronomy 9:26-29). The same brevity in prayer is true of Elijah (1 Kings 18:36-37), Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:5-11), and the Apostle Paul who prays really fast (Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12). Some of the prayers in the Psalms are pretty long, of course they were meant to be sung and there are few decent songs under a minute. Even Daniel's passionate prayer of repentance for the nation of Israel was about a minute and a half (Daniel 9:4-19).

Can I pray longer? Of course! The nation of Israel once prayed for about three hours (Nehemiah 9:5-38) so knock yourself out. But know that there are no brownie points in heaven for long prayers. In fact, Jesus warned against relying on your many words when he said, "When you pray, don't babble like the Gentiles, since they imagine they'll be heard for their many words. Don't be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask him." (Matthew 6:7-8, CSB)

Martin Luther sums it up well when he writes,

"The Christian prays, and because he knows that God hears him, he does not need to prate (talk foolishly or at tedious length about something) everlastingly...there is no use in many long prayers, but [to] sigh heavenward with a word or two; which one can do very often when he is reading, writing, or doing some other work...In short, one should pray short, but often and strongly; for God does not ask how much and long one has prayed, but how good it is and how it comes from the heart."

- Martin Luther

To help you pray during the next 21 days, here's a daily passage of scripture to base your prayer on and a few thoughts to get you started. You may want to set a specific time to pray each day or you may want to read this passage in the morning and reflect on it with short bursts of prayer throughout the day.

DAY 1

Sunday, 9/13/20

When Jesus' disciples asked Him how to pray, His response was, "Pray like this." It makes sense for us to start our 21 day journey by praying His prayer.

"Therefore, you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, your name be honored as holy. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

-MATTHEW 6:9-13

DAY 2

Monday, 9/14/20

Thank God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do.

Let the whole earth shout triumphantly to the Lord! Serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Acknowledge that the Lord is God. He made us, and we are his - his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the Lord is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations.

- PSALM 100

DAY 3

Tuesday, 9/15/20

Jesus prayed this simple prayer for us. Pray this prayer of unity along with Him and don't be afraid to apply it to yourself and for people you know.

May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me. I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one, that the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me.

- JOHN 17:21-23

DAY 4

Wednesday, 9/16/20

One of the hardest things to do is to confess our sins and to do so specifically. Be bold and honest with God and tell him where you have fallen short (He already knows).

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- 1 JOHN 1:9

DAY 5

Thursday, 9/17/20

Pray for our governing authorities and don't forget to pray for the ones you disagree with.

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

DAY 6

Friday, 9/18/20

Pray for someone you need to forgive and leave the offense with God.

For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.

- MATTHEW 6:14-15

DAY 7

Saturday, 9/19/20

Along with the psalmist, bring your troubles to God's throne and leave them there. Dwell on the imagery of God's might and rest in Him.

I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber. Indeed, the Protector of Israel does not slumber or sleep. The Lord protects you; the Lord is a shelter right by your side. The sun will not strike you by day or the moon by night. The Lord will protect you from all harm; he will protect your life. The Lord will protect your coming and going both now and forever.

- PSALM 121:1-8

DAY 8

Sunday, 9/20/20

Pray for wisdom and grace as you interact with people who are not Christians yet.

Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person.

- COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

DAY 9

Monday, 9/21/20

Following the example of Jesus, pray that God's will would be more important in your life than your own.

And he said, "Abba, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will."

- MARK 14:36

DAY 10

Tuesday, 9/22/20

Thank God that He has already made you unified with fellow believers through the Spirit. Ask Him to help you keep that unity.

...making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope at your calling—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

- EPHESIANS 4:3-6

DAY 11

Wednesday, 9/23/20

One of the scariest prayers is to ask God to peer deep into your life and to show you where you are out of sync with His holiness. Courageously pray this passage and be prepared to respond when He answers.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.

- PSALM 139:23-24

DAY 12

Thursday, 9/24/20

Spend some time today reflecting on God, His creative power, and what He has done for and through you.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

- COLOSSIANS 3:2

DAY 13

Friday, 9/25/20

If something is worrying you, bring it to God. Be thankful for it (really) and trust that He is in control.

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

- PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

DAY 14

Saturday, 9/26/20

Pray for more people to proclaim the Gospel in our city, state, nation, and world.

Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.

- MATTHEW 9:38

DAY 15

Sunday, 9/27/20

Before you pray today, forgive someone who has sinned against you.

Therefore I tell you, everything you pray and ask for—believe that you have received it and it will be yours. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.

- MARK 11:24-25

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DAY 16

Monday, 9/28/20

Reflect on how powerful God's love is for you.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- ROMANS 8:38-39

DAY 17

Tuesday, 9/29/20

If you are weary and burdened, bring it to Jesus.

Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

- MATTHEW 11:28-30

DAY 18

Wednesday, 9/30/20

If there is an area of sin that is weighing you down, bring it to God in prayer and trust that Jesus's finished work on the cross has covered it over.

How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How joyful is a person whom the Lord does not charge with iniquity and in whose spirit is no deceit! When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Therefore let everyone who is faithful pray to you immediately. When great flood waters come, they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with joyful shouts of deliverance.

- PSALM 32:1-7

DAY 19

Thursday, 10/1/20

Pray for wisdom and knowledge.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

- EPHESIANS 1:17

DAY 20

Friday, 10/2/20

Pray that you would experience the joy of God's salvation and that He would sustain you.

God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not banish me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit. Then I will teach the rebellious your ways, and sinners will return to you.

- PSALM 51:10-13

DAY 21

Saturday, 10/3/20

In an anxious season like the one we are in, it's good to reflect on Jesus' calming words to his "little flock." Pray that you would trust in God to take care of the big and little stuff in your life.

"Consider how the wildflowers grow: They don't labor or spin thread. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these. If that's how God clothes the grass, which is in the field today and is thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will he do for you—you of little faith? Don't strive for what you should eat and what you should drink, and don't be anxious. For the Gentile world eagerly seeks all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. "But seek his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you. Don't be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom.

- LUKE 12:27-32