

Prayer

Every Wednesday with fasting included on the first Wednesday of every month

DECEMBER 21

Why is prayer important?

Prayer is important because it makes us more like Jesus and because it reveals to us the heart and mind of God.

When we look at the spiritual powerhouses of the past, we know that prayer was immensely important to them.

Prayer Quotes

"I pray because I can't help myself. ... I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me." **C.S. Lewis**

"I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." **Martin Luther**

How do ordinary people live up to that, and why should we? Ordinary people can't be expected to drop everything to pray, right? Actually, ordinary people can't afford *not* to pray. Prayer is a gift given to us—and an activity expected of us—by the Lord. The Bible often says, "when you pray," not "if you pray," because prayer seems to be assumed of God's followers.

Bible Verses about Prayer

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." **Ephesians 6:18**

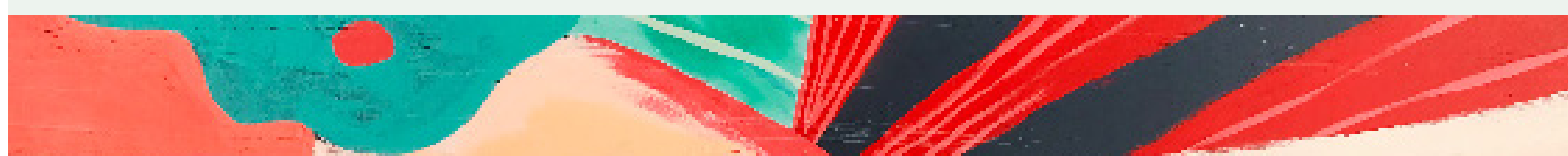
"Pray continually." **Thessalonians 5:17**

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray." **James 5:13**

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." **Romans 12:12**

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." **Philippians 4:6**

Praying because we're "supposed to" isn't always enough to motivate us, but the truth is that prayer is much more than a rule. Prayer is important because it makes us more like Jesus and because it reveals to us the heart and mind of God.





The Importance of Prayer

1. Prayer makes us more like Jesus.

If we look at the life of Jesus, we see that he prayed—with others, (**Luke 9:28**) for others (**Matthew 19: 13-14**), and on his own (**Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12**). It was a fundamental part of how he approached each day and every decision, retreating faithfully to spend time with his Father.

Clearly prayer was important to Jesus—it was his lifeline and his connection to the Heavenly Father. It equipped him for the battles he was about to face. It kept alive the intimate relationship that sustained him. And it revealed to him God's desires and direction.

If the goal of a Christian is to become more like Jesus, that process should include imitating his actions and living out his words. As we pray, we will become more like Jesus, and we will find that prayer changes us.


2. Prayer shows us the heart of God

When Jesus prayed for his disciples (**John 17**), he prayed for those who would believe in him, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (**John 17:21**).

Prayer helps us become one with the Father and have the kind of relationship Jesus had with him. The Bible is filled with stories illustrating God's desire to have an intimate relationship with his people, and any close relationship involves communication. When two people have no contact with each other, their relationship will never advance. And since prayer is, quite simply, a conversation with God, it is how we get to know him.

When we come into his presence, all pretense is gone—there is no longer anything to hide because he sees all and knows all. Prayer humbles us because as we spend time with him, we realize how powerful and able and good God is and how much we need him. And yet, God accepts us as we are—not because he wants us to stay that way, but because he knows that the relationship comes first.

As we grow to love him, we will want to become more like him. When we find **forgiveness** through prayer, God softens our heart and allows us to forgive others. When we experience God's compassion and mercy, we will share that with others. When we understand that God's **grace** is freely given, we recognize that no one is any more or less deserving of God's love than we are, and it transforms our hearts and our actions, helping us reveal God's generous love to others.





3. Prayer reveals the wisdom of God.

The best part about prayer is that it's a conversation that goes both directions. Yes, we will talk to God, but when we spend time with him and are willing to receive, we will also hear from him.

James 1:5 says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."*

Jesus prayed all night before selecting the 12 apostles (**Luke 6:12-16**), and he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane to try to ascertain God's will regarding what God was asking him to do. His time in prayer helped align his will with that of the Father, just as our time with God will do for us. After getting in touch with the heart of God and realizing how much he loves us, we will learn to trust him and value his insight and guidance.

As we spend time talking to God, he aligns our will with his, changing the way we experience a situation and respond to a problem.

Sometimes we miss his answers (because we're not listening or we're expecting a different answer so we don't recognize it when it comes), and other times the answer comes through reading the Bible or talking to others, but God *will* answer. His wisdom far exceeds our own because he sees farther and loves deeper and has his sights set on an eternity with those he loves, not just gratification in the immediate moment. There is no one else who can see and know what he does, and he delights to share his wisdom with us in prayer.

- Pray for souls to be won for the Kingdom
- Pray for the hurting and suffering
- Pray for revelation from our God
- Pray for grateful hearts in God's people