

the rock

The Power of Prayer



The Power of Prayer

Have you ever tried to hide your feelings from your best friend? It's not easy, is it?

Your best friend knows you just about as well as you know yourself and can tell when you're angry, sad, scared, depressed. And when you open up and tell your friend what's on your mind, he or she almost always has a way to help you deal with your problem. Even if your friend only listens and empathizes, you come away feeling better, just knowing someone cares about what's going on in your life.

If you let Him, God will be that kind of friend to you—only He goes one step further. He knows you *better* than you know yourself, and He has the *best* solution to any problem you encounter. He wants to help you with the things that are going on in your life! But, we always have a part in any relationship. How you get to know God is no different. Relationship comes by talking with Him.

When we call it by its formal name—PRAYER—lots of us get scared and back off. We say grace and repeat our please and thank-you prayers ("please give me this . . . thank You very much"), but we don't really talk with Him, which is what He desires most. Of course, your conversation will be pretty short if you just tell God what you think He wants to hear. He's more interested in how you feel.

I never quite believed this until I started reading the Old Testament. Some of those people were pretty blunt with God. And yet, if they spoke with reverence and honesty, God always listened.

Did you know Abraham actually bargained with God one time? When God was ready to destroy the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their wickedness, Abraham said, "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike . . . Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:23-25).

When God agreed to spare the

city if 50 godly people could be found, Abraham kept at Him. He talked Him down from 50 people to 10 and God *listened*. He didn't get angry or tell Abraham he was out of line. He listened because He knew how much Abraham loved some of those people, and what was important to Abraham was important to God.

Read Psalms and you'll find countless examples of the psalmists telling God their real feelings.

• **FEAR:** "My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me" (Ps. 55:4-5).

• **ANXIETY:** "Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught because of what my enemy is saying" (55:1-3a).

• **GUILT:** "Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me" (51:2-3).

• **DESPAIR:** "I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God" (69:3).

These aren't the words of people afraid to show their emotions!

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What kind of prayer are you?

- Are you a "food-thanker" at meals—but only when you're home and your parents insist?
 - Are you a "please heal so-and-so" prayer?
 - Are you a "gimme" prayer who talks to God mostly when you're in trouble or need a favor?
 - Are you a "bless so-and-so" prayer who asks God to bless others without telling Him specifically what you would like Him to do?
- Jesus taught His followers that there are three kinds of prayer we should include when we talk to God. To find out what they are, read today's Scripture and answer the questions.

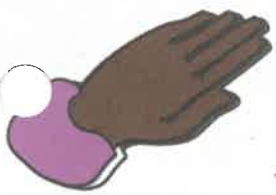
THREE

Kinds of Prayer

Request

Worship

Confess



Bible Study

1. **"Our Father in heaven."** On what basis can we call God our Father (Gal. 3:26)?
2. **"Hallowed be your name."** The word "hallowed" means holy. How do we treat God's name in a holy manner?

3. **"Your kingdom come."** When we pray for God's kingdom to come, we are asking for Him to rule as King. How does God show that He is the King?

4. **"Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."** What do you think is God's will?

5. **"Give us today our daily bread."** Why do you think Jesus included this request? What is so important about daily bread?

6. **"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."** What do you think Jesus meant by "debts"?

7. **"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."** What request is Jesus making here? Who is the evil one?

Today's Scripture

Matthew 6:9-13

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

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And of course, these people told God of their JOY and happiness as well.

"For you make me glad by your deeds, LORD: I sing for joy at what your hands have done" (92:4).

"Praise the LORD, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name" (103:1).

"May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD" (104:34).

The question is, how could these individuals approach God so boldly? You have to admit, it takes some guts to say to God, "Surely you wouldn't do such a thing!" Perhaps it was because they had a better picture of who God really is. Before He was our friend, before He was our Savior, He was our Creator—our parent. Just as your earthly dad usually knows when something is bothering you, your heavenly "Dad" always knows. There's no sense hiding it—He'd rather you be honest and tell Him about it. Psalm 139:1-2, 4 probably says it best: "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD know it completely."

Everything about you is important to God—remember that when you talk with Him. He already knows what you're thinking, but He wants to hear it from you!

Questions to think about:

- Read Matthew 6:9-13. How could you rewrite this prayer to express your particular needs and feelings?

- If God already knows what you're thinking, why is it important for you to tell Him your thoughts in prayer?

The life you will spend...



In church:

- 1-1/2 months singing
- 2 days reading The Rock
- 3 months listening to your Sunday school teacher
- 3 weeks locating and reading Bible verses
- 2 months talking before and after church

At school:

- 1-1/2 years listening to teachers
- 3 weeks taking tests
- 2-1/2 months learning English
- 1-1/2 weeks at your locker!



At home:

- 24 years sleeping
- 4-1/2 years eating
- 20 years watching TV
- 5-1/2 months combing your hair
- 9 months doing homework
- 8-1/2 months taking baths or showers
- 5-1/2 months on your phone

You've got a lot of time to give! Don't you think you could take a little of it for prayer?

every day devos

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread." Matthew 6:9b-11

Some stores stay open all night to meet the needs of their customers. Our heavenly Father, too, is someone we can always turn to with every need or problem.

Open 24 Hours

MONDAY Look at Matthew 6:11. "Daily bread" here means the necessities of life. What are some necessities that you can ask God for? List them and thank God for His provisions.

TUESDAY Look at the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13). Rewrite the prayer in your own words, making it fit your life.

WEDNESDAY Sometimes we think about only our physical needs. What other types of needs do we have? Ask God to meet those needs as well.

THURSDAY What are the needs (emotional, spiritual, physical) that you see in your family or friends. With God's help, do something to help meet each need.

FRIDAY Make a list of things you have that could not be considered needs. Include them in a spoken thank-you prayer to God for giving you things beyond your basic needs.

SATURDAY Think about how God is the wonderful supplier of your needs. Think about specific items He has given you and praise Him.