

Day 1

May 11



Pray | For God to help you see your prayer life clearly

LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.

While prayer is an integral part of the Christian faith, it can be challenging. Finding the right time and place to pray and keeping a consistent routine can be a struggle. We may lack words to pray or have too many to stay focused. For even the most veteran prayer warrior, some prayer times may seem to pass in the blink of an eye, while others feel like the clock stands still. Or, we may find ourselves in a prayer rut, repeating the same things over and over, or distracted by tasks and fleeting thoughts that cut our time short. With all these variables, it is easy to wonder if we are doing it right or accomplishing anything. We need practical help and practice! Who better to teach us to pray than Jesus? This week we will consider our prayer lives and look to God's Word for guidance.



Read | Luke 11:1-4



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Prayer is an integral part of your growing relationship with God. Do you struggle to know how to pray? Jesus taught the disciples when they asked him how to pray. Today, we have God's Word and the Holy Spirit to help us. Ask God to help you grow your prayer life. He will!

Whether you are a prayer warrior or just getting started, we all have room to grow. Reflect on your prayer life, or lack thereof. Ask God to give you an honest assessment, free of pride or condemnation. If you feel convicted, now is a great time to confess this growth area and to ask for God's help and guidance to take the next step.

Think about what your prayer life looks like during the Stay at Home Order. Are you praying more than ever or are you too busy to pray? How can you use this time to grow in prayer? Over the next 8 weeks our church will be training our spiritual muscles. Ask God to grow your hunger for prayer and to use this season to develop and grow in the spiritual discipline of prayer.

Day 2

May 12



Pray | To identify a regular time and place for undistracted prayer

DISTRACTION is a barrier to a regular and meaningful prayer time.

Have you ever started to pray, only to be interrupted by the very people you are praying for? Or maybe the dryer buzzer, a text message, or that one *thing* feels suddenly urgent. Even while praying fervently, our own minds distract us as fleeting thoughts become daydreams. In lives of endless distractions, we desperately need undistracted time in God's presence to rest and align our hearts with his. Perhaps that is why the Bible records Jesus purposefully getting away to pray alone. On a mountain. In the wilderness. In the olive garden. If Jesus benefited from prayer retreats away from distractions and crowds, surely, we can, too. Today we are going to look at when and where Jesus prayed and consider when and where we can pray.



Read | [Luke 5:16](#), [Luke 6:12-13](#), [Luke 22:39-42](#), [Matthew 6:6](#)



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Luke 5:16 says Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray. While God does not require a rigid prayer schedule, it can be helpful to schedule prayer time. What time(s) will you set aside to pray regularly?

Did the Stay at Home Order change your schedule? Whether you have lots of time or what feels like none, *do not wait for things to return to normal*. Commit to pray now and trust God to help you adjust when your schedule changes.

Withdrawing to pray like Jesus may not seem possible right now. Thankfully, Luke 22 and Matthew 6 reveal that our secluded place can be a room with a closed door, just a "stone's throw" away from others. To what closet, chair, or walking path can you go to pray without distraction? Ask God to show you a location to grow the habit of prayer.

Day 3

May 13



Pray | For an ongoing conversation with God

PRAYER DOES NOT HAVE TO follow a rigid schedule.

Yesterday, we focused on identifying a time and place for undistracted prayer. Prayer is a lot like getting to know a friend through a series of conversations. At times, you spend dedicated time alone talking over coffee. However, just like our relationships with friends, not all prayer conversations follow a rigid schedule or happen in seclusion. In fact, many prayers are simple, short words like *help*, *thank you*, *sorry*, or *praise God*, offered in the middle of daily life. The culmination of updates shared between friends in the hallway, quick texts, cries for help, or giving thanks knits lives together. Often, those we share with most frequently are the people we grow closest to. The same truths apply to prayer, but unlike friends, God is always available for conversation and is always engaged in your life.



Read | 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

What is your experience with having an unceasing conversation with God? Do you invite God into each situation you encounter, each problem you solve, and each conversation? Would your day look different if you prayed all day long, even in a crowded room? If you have never tried before, begin *right now*. Ask God to help you look to him and respond to him today.

Whether praying without ceasing is already how you live or brand new, will you take some time later today to reflect on how continual prayer affected your attitudes, decisions and awareness of God's work in your life? Consider recording God's faithfulness and your reflections in a prayer journal.

To whom (and in what order) do you turn to with your worries, complaints, confusion and hurts? One way to grow in prayer is to bring your complaints, frustrations, joys and hopes to God before you pick up the phone to talk or send any texts or emails. Ask God to help you learn to turn to him first!

Day 4 May 14



Pray | To resist the urge to make prayer complicated

YOU CAN'T IMPRESS GOD with fancy words or flattery, and that *is* some good news!

Many have felt self-conscious praying out loud in a group of people. This feeling can also happen when praying alone with God. Perfectionism and the misconception that our words must earn God's ear hinder our prayers because our attention is focused on our words instead of on God. If this describes you, take heart! God knows your personality, quirks and innermost thoughts; *No* words you pray will make God think less of you. On the other hand, no combination of words will make him think more of you either. God invites us to come as we are, to share honest words in his presence. There is no pressure to find the right words. God is not some cosmic teacher sitting in heaven grading prayers like a public speaking coach. He is our heavenly Father, attentively listening in a posture of welcome, delight and blessing.



Read | Matthew 6:7-13, Romans 8:26-27, Zephaniah 3:17



Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

Does not knowing what to say stop you from praying? In Matthew 6, Jesus warns against 'babbling like pagans' but also says that God knows what we need before we ask. Whether we use many or few words, God welcomes simple, honest prayers from the heart.

Because the Holy Spirit searches our hearts and intercedes for us (Romans), we can pray without pretense! God our Father is listening. What feelings or parts of your life are you holding back from God? Are you trying to earn God's approval? Trust him to receive your prayers, just as you are.

Reflecting on scripture can help us focus our hearts for prayer. How does Zephaniah 3:17 make you feel? Reflect, then respond to God in prayer.

*The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing."*

Day 5

May 15



Pray | For God's help to persevere in prayer

JUST DO IT.

This familiar Nike motto tells athletes to overcome whatever obstacles are in the way of their workout. No matter how much raw talent we may have, practice and conditioning are necessary to achieve and maintain physical fitness. In many ways, spiritual fitness is achieved with similar disciplines. We need practice. More importantly, we need to show up! Without showing up to pray, we simply cannot grow our prayer life. This week we have looked at our prayer lives and considered times and places to pray. Now is the time to commit to doing it. Some days, we will be tempted to hit the snooze button and shorten or skip prayer. Or, daily demands will make it hard to take time to pray. There will also be times when for no good reason, we just do not feel like it. No matter the obstacle, just do it!



Read | Luke 18:1, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



Reflect | Spend some time reflecting on one or more of the following:

We struggle to show up to pray but God, who *always* shows up, is not surprised. God's Word includes exhortations to persevere in prayer like *pray and not give up, devote yourselves to prayer and pray continually*. Have you struggled to show up in prayer this week? You are not alone. As we journey together as a body of believers in the pursuit of spiritual growth, will you commit to *show up* for prayer? The Holy Spirit will meet you there and is faithful to complete his good work in you.

What has this focus on prayer stirred in your heart? If you do not yet know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, today is a great day to turn to him and begin getting to know him through prayer and reading the Bible.

When you do not feel like praying and it is hard to show up, what *can* you pray? What ideas in 1 Thessalonians can help you get started? If you keep a prayer journal, look back over God's answers to prayer and past faithfulness and begin with praise and thanksgiving.

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