

Why Prayer?

Building Your Relationship With God



In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me... says the LORD. JEREMIAH 29:12-14a

Think about someone that you cherish... a best friend, a spouse, a parent, or any person you care for deeply... what characterizes your relationship with them? What contributes to it being meaningful?

Of the many things that come to mind, one that stands out to me is that relationships require mutual engagement, with both parties equally invested. Thinking about this, I'm reminded of a person I met a few years ago. She was fun and dynamic and I enjoyed listening to her stories; yet every time we hung out together, it ended up being one-sided, where she talked and I listened. After many such times, I began to realize that we didn't have a real relationship. While I enjoyed getting to know her, she didn't know me at all.

Thankfully we don't have to worry that God doesn't know us... the God of the universe, who created each of us in God's own image (Gen. 1:26), knows **everything** about you and me, and calls us each by name (Ps. 139). Some people wonder, if God already knows everything about us, why should we pray? Because God doesn't just want to know us; God wants us to **know him back**. Prayer is one of the ways through which we're invited to know God... to talk to God, to hear from God, to be in a real relationship with God.

"To understand the purpose and power of prayer we need to understand that faith is a relationship with God who comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is the way we can regularly communicate with God. Like any important relationship, we need to open our hearts and lives to our beloved through honest communication. If a relationship is important, then we desire frequent, intimate, face-to-face conversation. Prayer is how we open ourselves to God. It's how God's love can become our love. Prayer is how we become channels of God's love for the world."¹

Putting It into Practice

An important part of getting to know God and building your relationship with God is through an increased awareness of all the ways in which God is at work in our lives. In prayer, one of the ways we do that is by remembering, thanking, and praising God for who God is and how God has worked in our lives and in the world. Keeping a prayer or gratitude journal is one way to do this.

I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing the praises of your name. PSALM 9:1-2

Keeping a Prayer/Gratitude Journal: “A gratitude journal creates a record of God’s blessings which can remind us of God’s faithfulness and care for us. A heart of gratitude glorifies God and invites his presence into our lives. Gratitude takes our focus off our own worries and struggles, and turns our focus to God who pours out his love on us, fills us with joy, and comforts us with peace.”²

Grab a notebook, write down the date, consider these prompts, and pray:

- Today I’m thankful for...
- Prayers & praise...
- Answered prayers...

Taking It Further

Listening for God: One of the ways we hear from God is through scripture and using it in our prayer time. **Dwelling in the Word** (lectio divina) is an ancient spiritual practice which combines scripture, meditation, and prayer to facilitate our hearing from and knowing of God better.



While you may use any scripture, it can be helpful to pick a digestible section (approx. 10-15 verses). If you’re not sure where to begin, the Psalms are an easy place to start.

1. Quiet yourself... ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you.
2. Read the scripture passage once and let God’s word seep into you.
3. Read the passage again and listen for a specific word or phrase that stands out to you.
4. Read the passage a third time, and reflect upon what action God might be calling you into.
5. Pray... speak back to God, with a humble heart, your thanks and requests.