

PRAYER

as a Lifestyle

LIVING IN CONNECTION WITH GOD



A PRACTICAL STUDY GUIDE



“And because we are
his children, God has sent
the Spirit of his Son into our
hearts, prompting us to call out,
‘Abba, Father.’”

GALATIANS 4:6 NLT

09:30



Annika & Fabi
Authors online



Hey Annika and Fabian!
What will we see in
this year's Study Guide?

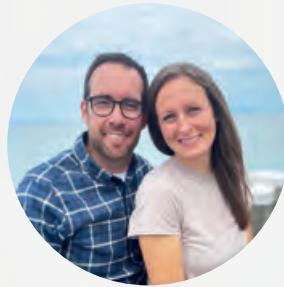
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About the Authors



Hello! We are **Annika and Fabian Looser Grönroos** from Switzerland. However, part of our heart belongs to Finland, the country where Annika spent most of her childhood and teenage years. We are outdoor people and love nature in both countries—the endless expanse of the Finnish sky as well as the imposing mountains in Switzerland. Be it here in Switzerland, in our work with the youth, couples and families of our German Swiss Conference, or anywhere else in the world, what also makes us happy is sitting around a campfire with good people, eating good food and worshipping God together through our songs.

We share our life journey with our two wonderful children, Carina (12) and Niklas (10). With their energy and joy, they invite us to see life and faith from their perspective. Our role as parents makes our hearts grow and mature every day.

And we would not be who we are today if we did not have our Heavenly Father by our side. He gives us identity, roots, and wings. Knowing that He is always there, that everything will make sense in the end, and that our lives are in His good hands—in both the good and the bad times—is worth more to us than words could ever describe. Over the past few weeks, this has become one of our favorite Bible verses: *“I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me”* (Psalm 16:8 NLT).

Introduction



Every great journey starts with excitement, anticipation, expectations and even a little nervousness. We are about to dive into the topic of prayer in this magazine, and—we can assure you—it will be an exhilarating journey! But before we begin, let us recall a promise. The New Living Translation gives it the title “Effective Prayer”.

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.”

Matthew 7:7-11 (NLT)

God does not want us to be shy nor that we come to Him like beggars; instead, He wants us to approach Him as sons and daughters who have access to their *loving* Parent all the time. If you have a healthy, safe and uncomplicated relationship with your parents, you *know* exactly what it means that your parents love you; they are always there for you and take good care of you. If you do not have this kind of relationship with your own parents, know that God is the Father of all fathers and that in Him you have exactly what you have always longed for in your own family. You can always come to Him with confidence and you will receive what you *ask* for. Keep on seeking, and you will *find*. He will open the door for you!

Be richly blessed. *God* loves you!

Annika Fabian

Annika and Fabian



PRAYER

The most important thing you can do on this journey about prayer is to do just that: *pray*. Pray that you can see God for who He really is. Pray that God will prepare your heart, so that you can sense His presence. Pray that He will use the words in every chapter to speak to you personally. Pray that He will present opportunities in your life for you to grow and develop in His likeness. Call upon the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to what you need to learn and—perhaps—change in your life so that prayer turns into (or continues to be) a lifestyle for you.

Start a prayer journal where you honestly write down where you find yourself in your prayer journey, and how you would like God to help you grow. Think about specific personal steps that you can take to grow as a follower of Jesus and share them with God. Use your prayer journal to communicate with God during this hopefully life-changing experience. In time, you will be able to go back to your journal and see how you have grown with God's help.

In each chapter, you will also find a *Prayer of the Day*, which aims to focus your prayer time on the topic of the day. This short prayer after the main text should get you started and prompt you to engage in honest conversation with God. You will also find space to write down your own prayer.



ICEBREAKER AND PERSONAL CHALLENGE

If you want to get as much as possible out of this study guide, pay close attention to both the icebreaker and the personal challenge of each chapter. The *Icebreaker* is a great starting point, because it helps you realize where you find yourself regarding the topic. A group experience is all the more valuable here because it allows you to consider more points of view and also learn from others.

After the text, the *Personal Challenge* wants to encourage you to take action. Please embrace it! Because our world will only be better if we not just learn about prayer but actually pray regularly.



QUESTIONS

The questions at the end of each chapter can be used for personal reflection or group discussion. We also hope they encourage you to ask more questions of your own. If in a group, always be respectful and loving towards others. Listen actively and respectfully share your own views.



GROUP ACTIVITY

Sharing this prayer journey with a group will make it even more enjoyable. That is why it is so great and useful to use this resource in a small group setting or as the youth week of prayer material. The group activity in each chapter is designed to help you have a spiritual experience as a *group*.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

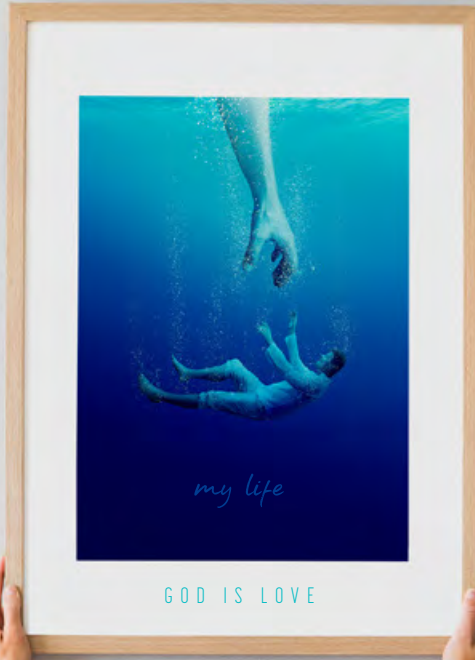
We end each chapter with a *Food for Thought* statement, quote or question. The purpose of this is to challenge you to take the topic a step further and to spend some time making sense of all that has been said and done. The idea is to foster in you the desire and practice to continually renew your mind and heart with God's help (Rom. 12:2; 1 Thess. 5:21). Because, ultimately, it is your thoughts that will give way to your actions.

This is also a great place for you to write down your final thoughts and conclusions on the chapter, set yourself practical next steps and define specific prayer requests and goals.

THE GOD WORSHIP

“But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.”

1 JOHN 4:8, 9 (NLT)



1

CHAPTER

ICEBREAKER

LET'S GO BACK IN TIME TO LAST WEEK. THINK OF THE ACTIVITIES YOU DID AND THE PEOPLE YOU MET.

WHERE DID LOVE CROSS YOUR PATH THIS PAST WEEK?

LOVE CROSSED MY PATH...

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

Dotted grid for writing responses.

NOTE:

If you are doing this icebreaker in a group setting, share one example of how you experienced love in the past week.

An Experiment that Will Leave You Speechless

Cheerful, uncomplicated and funny, Disney's *The Jungle Book* tells the story of Mowgli, a boy who was abandoned in the jungle as a baby. In the film, wild animals take him in and raise him as their own. However, this story does not exist only in fiction. In real life, something similar, called "the forbidden experiment", also took place, in at least two occasions. In the seventh century BC, Pharaoh Psammetichus I sought to discover what language children would speak if they were cut off from society.¹ To do so, he asked a shepherd to take care of two infants in a remote place, and forbid him to speak to them. 1,700 years later, King Frederick II allegedly conducted a similar experiment.² He also wanted to find out what was the original language of mankind. To this end, he took babies away from their biological mothers and gave them into the care of nurses, with strict instructions on how to raise them. Any special attention or use of language was forbidden. However—if the report is to be believed—, the king never received an answer to his questions because none of the children survived this horrific and cruel experiment.

Most people intuitively realize that we need community, love, affection, bonding, and touch to develop healthily and lead happy lives. Recent attachment research has proven that no child is spoiled by receiving too much loving attention. On the contrary, such a loving environment provides a good foundation for the child to build a free, self-reliant, and successful life.

*"Love is basic for the very survival of mankind."*³
Martin Luther King, Jr.

My Image of God

Ellen G. White begins the first book of her famous Conflict of the Ages Series with the words "God is love." The fifth and final volume of this series also ends with the words "God is love." If you were to study the Bible, and even world history, this is the conclusion at which you would eventually arrive. But what if I find it difficult to see this loving God?

*"MOST PEOPLE INTUITIVELY
REALIZE THAT WE NEED
COMMUNITY, LOVE, AFFECTION,
BONDING, AND TOUCH TO
DEVELOP HEALTHILY AND
LEAD HAPPY LIVES."*



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE GOD
IN ONLY ONE SENTENCE?



A large rectangular area with a light gray dotted grid pattern, intended for writing a response to the prompt above.

Why is it that we sometimes fail to see God as love? What misunderstandings could get in the way of me knowing Him for Who He really is?

Misunderstanding #1: God Demands Too Much

The Bible tells the story of a wealthy young man who runs after Jesus. When he reaches Him, he falls to his knees and blurts out, *“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* (Mark 10:17 NLT). In response, Jesus makes a statement about His identity. Then, He focuses on the commandments, adding a “new” one to the list. The man replies, *“Teacher, I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young”* (Mark 10:20 NLT). Isn’t it interesting and at the same time sad that it is possible to keep all the commandments and still be tormented by the question, “What



**“DIETRICH BONHOEFFER
PUT IT THIS WAY,
'SALVATION IS FREE,
BUT DISCIPLESHIP WILL
COST YOU YOUR LIFE.”**

must I *do* to ‘get to heaven’?” Apparently, no matter how much you *do*, it will never lead you to feel secure or accepted!

After this build-up, Jesus drops the bombshell, *“There is still one thing you haven’t done. Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me”* (Mark 10:21 NLT). *“Sell everything and then follow Jesus.”* Indeed, Jesus asks for a lot; following Him *does* cost something.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it this way, *“Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you your life.”*⁴

If you think Jesus is asking for too much, consider the life story of Steve Olin. Steve was born into a Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York. He was an extremely gifted athlete and could have played baseball for the Yankees, but his life took a different direction. He went into business and quickly rose to the top. God opened every door for him, he had everything you could ever desire; but, to make a long story short, he actually ended up suffering terrible panic attacks and turning to partying and cocaine to deal with them. His marriage failed and he made some bad investments. He lost everything.⁵

There was one specific moment in which Steve hit rock bottom. Picture this. The rent is due in two weeks, but he has no money to pay

it. He knows he will be homeless soon. His success story used to be in every magazine, but now no one wants to hire him because of his reputation—that he doesn't work, but just parties and does coke. It is 3:00 a.m. He is on his knees, crying out to God. "Father, why have You forsaken me?" He blames God for all of his misery, knowing full well that he has brought it all upon himself. And that night, God speaks to him and Steve accepts *Yeshua HaMashiah*—Jesus Christ—as his Lord and Savior. For the first time in ten years, he goes to bed in peace and sleeps the whole night. He knows he will end up in the streets, yet he expects nothing from God; he only seeks to survive somehow. Two days before the rent is due, the unexpected happens: a complete stranger calls him out of the blue and offers him a job in the steel industry. He signs a multi-million-dollar contract and gets a yearly salary of \$500,000 USD. He gets a fresh start and climbs the ladder again. Steve Olin ends his testimony by saying, "I had Satan's lie that money, power, fame will make you happy. It's a lie if you don't have God in your life. Without Christ... you will never be able to be at peace."⁶

**"WE DON'T HAVE
TO CONVINCe GOD,
BECAUSE HE IS ON
OUR SIDE FROM THE
BEGINNING."**

All God wants from us is our heart, to fill it with comforting and enduring peace, whether we are rich or poor, whatever circumstances we might face. His promise to us is that whatever we need to sacrifice on this earth, it will ultimately be worth it; it will set us free. Have you ever wondered what would have happened with the wealthy young man if he had accepted Jesus' invitation? Perhaps Jesus would have returned his wealth; perhaps not... but it would have for sure been the best decision ever!

Misunderstanding #2: God is Indifferent

Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference."⁷ Sometimes, it seems like God cares and is there for everyone but me. Or the wounds that life on this planet has inflicted on me lead me to conclude that God is unapproachable, cold and harsh. My scars turn into the lens through which I see and interpret life.

In Jesus' time, people also had some misconceived ideas about God, and that is why Jesus once told the following parable.

"There was a judge in a certain city," he said, "who neither feared God nor cared about people. 3 A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, 'Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.' 4 The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, 'I don't fear God or care about people, 5 but this woman is driving me crazy. I'm going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!'"

Luke 18:2-5 (NLT)



Jesus then makes His point: If a wicked man succumbs to the request for justice, how much more will the Father give a just judgment? If an unrighteous man does the right thing, how much more will *God* do the right thing? We don't have to convince God, because He is on our side from the beginning. And when the pain of this life brings us to our knees, He is by our side, collecting our tears in a jar (Psalm 56:9 TLV). Not a single tear rolls down our cheeks without God noticing.

Misunderstanding #3: God is Unfair

The parable of the entrusted sums of money in Matthew 25 might raise the question, "Is God really fair?" The first servant receives five talents; the second, two talents; and the third, only one. But if we do the math, we discover that we are talking about huge sums of money. Even the single talent is not a small worthless coin. According to Matthew 20:2, the daily wage of a worker was one denarius, and one talent is equal to 6,000 denarii! So, the third servant was also entrusted with much. If you pay attention, you realize that the rich man deals with each servant *individually*. In the end, it becomes clear that there is no room for comparison; what the others received and how they managed it is completely irrelevant. The focus is on the question: "What have you done with what has been entrusted to you?"

The first two servants were hardworking; both were able to double their talents. The third servant, however, arrives with harsh accusations, "I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you" (Matthew 25:24-25 NIV). "You are a hard man..." Really? Everything we learn in the parable points to the opposite. The rich man is generous and trusts everyone. And he doesn't have to defend himself because the whole story speaks for him. He has given *everyone* a chance and has sown even where he will never reap. God is not calculating but lavishly loving.

A Life of Love

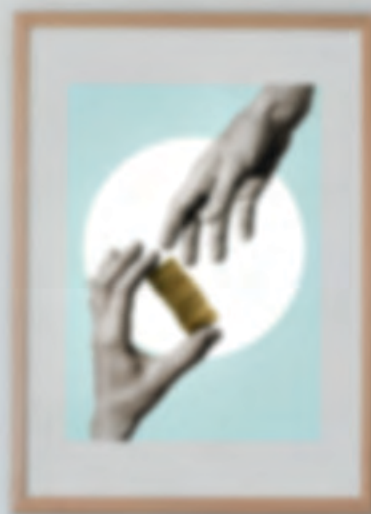
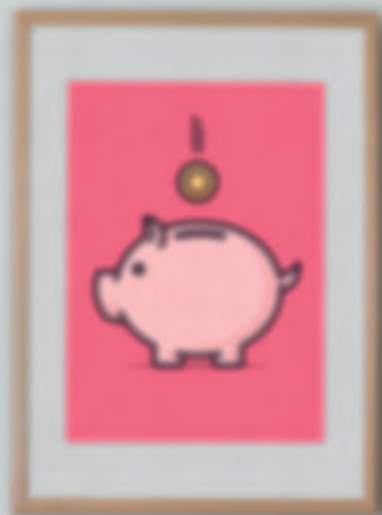
"A life without love is no life at all," Leonardo da Vinci allegedly said. We need love to live, to live *well*. And God defines Himself in the following terms, "I *am* love." He does not say I *have* love; He says I *am* love.

"I love you" are words anyone can say. For this reason, they must be followed by *actions*. Indeed, to love is a verb, an *action* word. Jesus' life on this earth and His death on the cross at Calvary prove that what God says about Himself is true. God is love.

"God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him."

1 John 4:9 (NLT)

**"WHAT HAVE YOU
DONE WITH WHAT
HAS BEEN
ENTRUSTED TO YOU?"**



PRAYER OF THE DAY



Dear Father,

With my mind, I cannot fully comprehend Your greatness and power,
but that You are love is a message that touches my heart.

Thank You for being Who You are.

Safe in Your love I can rest
and secure in Your love, I want to step boldly into life.

Your unconditional love for me is my only hope
and what heals my broken heart.

Please, let my image of You become clearer and clearer;
may my relationship with You grow.

Please, bless me as I bring Your love into this world.

I entrust my heart to You.

AMEN

My
Prayer

A large area of dotted lines for writing a personal prayer.



QUESTIONS

1. **In what areas do I find it difficult to see that God is love? Why?**
2. **What misconceptions of God come to my mind (a killjoy, a Big Brother watching you, indifferent, etc.)?**
3. **Where have I experienced God's love in my personal life?**
4. **What people or what situations have helped me get a clearer picture of God as love?**
5. **Why is love awakened by love (see 1 John 4:19)?**

A large area of dotted lines for writing answers to the questions.



Materials: flipchart sheet, colored sticky notes and pens

1. On a flipchart sheet, write the following heading: "I see that God is love when..."
2. Hand out sticky notes and ask each person to finish the sentence on their sticky note.
3. Stick the sticky notes on the flipchart sheet.
4. Share how you know God is love and end this moment with a popcorn prayer*.

***Popcorn Prayer:** Just as the kernels of corn briefly "pop" when they turn into popcorn, this prayer consists in sharing a single word or brief thought. For example, you can begin your prayer time by saying, "Dear God, thank You for being love! We see your love..." Then each person can join in the prayer by saying a word or short phrase. There is no set order; when the time is right, the prayer can be concluded with an AMEN.



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Have you ever wondered *how* to love God? In other words, what do we have to do to get it right?

Go back to the last question in the previous page. You will find the answer there: *Love awakens love*. By letting God love you, genuine love for God is awakened in your heart.

Today, find three clues that show you that God loves you!

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“It’s impossible to please God apart from faith. And why? Because anyone who wants to approach God must believe both that he exists and that he cares enough to respond to those who seek him.”

Hebrews 11:6 (MSG)

In this magazine, we are going to learn about prayer. But it is impossible to approach and worship God wholeheartedly if I do not understand God, if I do not trust Him, or if I am not sure that He has my best interest at heart.

Therefore, before we move on, tell God everything that comes between you and Him (don’t worry too much about the words, He already knows anyway)!

Let Him hear your questions, see your disappointments, feel your pain... Tell Him your frustrations. Do not hold anything back. God does not want us to wear masks before Him. Our relationship with Him can withstand our insecurities and uncertainties because it is real and secure.

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Why Pray?



KEY
TEXT

"Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'"

LUKE 11:1 (NLT)




Chapter 2




Chat Now



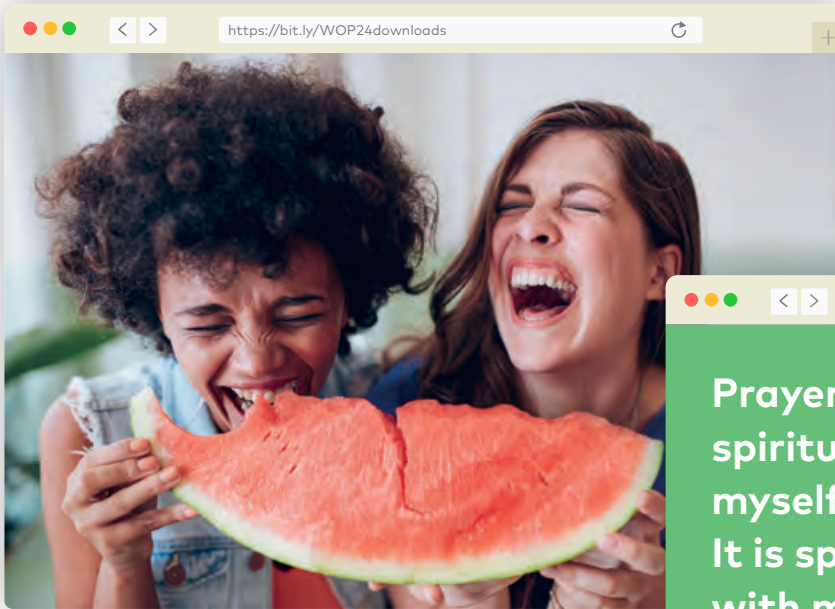
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1. If God already knows everything, why should I pray? 

Large dotted grid for writing.

2. If God is sovereign, why should I pray? 

Large dotted grid for writing.



Prayer oxygenates my spiritual heart. It is finding myself in God's presence. It is spending quality time with my best Friend. It is my encounter with God Himself.

For What Purpose?

What childhood stories do you tell as a family? Our children love to look back—we tell them what we did together as a family when they were little, and we look at old photographs and movie clips. In fact, this is how we usually start Sabbath in our home; it has become our own special family tradition. The stories, the photographs and the movies are the same, but our children never get tired of it. Why is that? Because we look back not for the purpose of sharing information, but as an expression of love and appreciation. This is what strengthens the connection within our family.

There are things we do just once. When we pay a bill, we scan the QR code with our bank app and confirm the payment. After that, it's done and we can check it off our to-do-list. We don't have to pay the bill a second time. However, when it comes to relationships, we are never really done. Because we keep saying "I love you;" we spend time together; we confide in each other; we share in each other's lives; we give each other glimpses into our hearts; we forgive; and we dare to do it over and over again. In contrast with one-time events, relationships are about the constant repetition of elements that always remain the same.

Prayer is like a relationship. It is not about informing God, but about entering into a relationship with Him. Ellen G. White once wrote:

"Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul be preserved. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Well-spring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience."

Prayer oxygenates my spiritual heart. It is finding myself in God's presence. It is spending quality time with my best Friend. It is my encounter with God Himself.

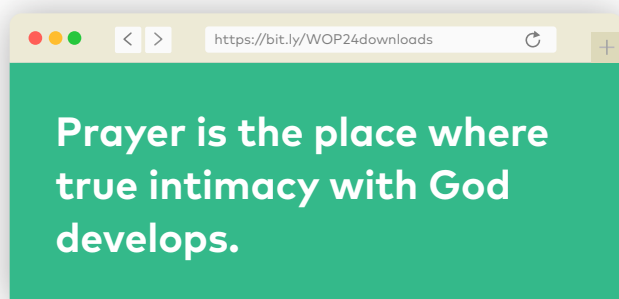
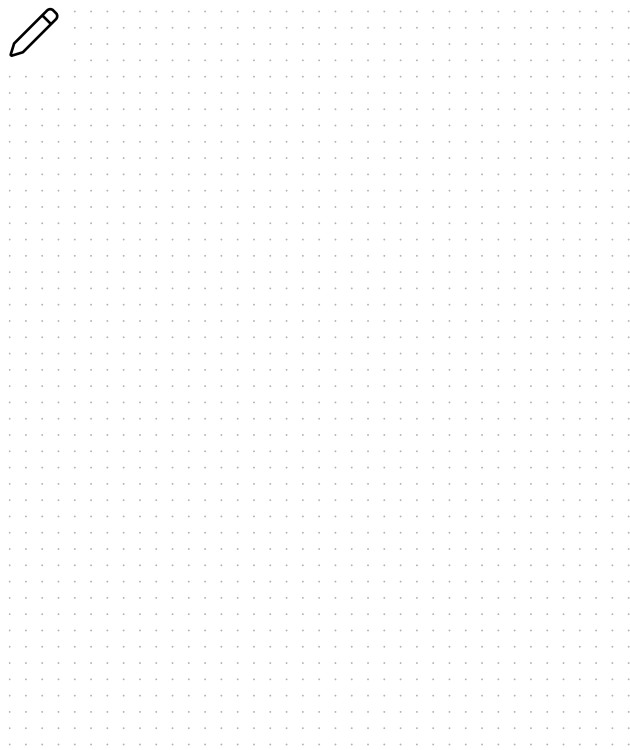
Think about an experience in which you felt close and connected to someone (whether God or someone else). How does this memory stand out among your other life experiences and why?



That's what prayer is all about. Prayer is about nurturing your relationship with God; it is communication; it is the place where true intimacy with God develops.

Does Prayer Make a Difference?

Is it possible to influence God? Put bluntly, the question would be, can we *manipulate* God? Put gently, it would be, can we *persuade* God? How would you answer these questions?



Our lives are fragile and uncertain. On a global scale, we are threatened by wars, pandemics, environmental disasters, and economic crises. In our personal lives, we suffer from disease, pain, loss, and loneliness. The Bible speaks into our reality and describes God as sovereign. Sovereignty has to do with God's greatness and the fact that God is completely independent and free. At the end of the day, no one can thwart His plans and purposes, not even sin. Whatever God wants to do, He does.

*“Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.”*

Psalm 115:3 (ESV)

Four years ago, NASA created a short clip about the dimensions of our Milky Way Galaxy.



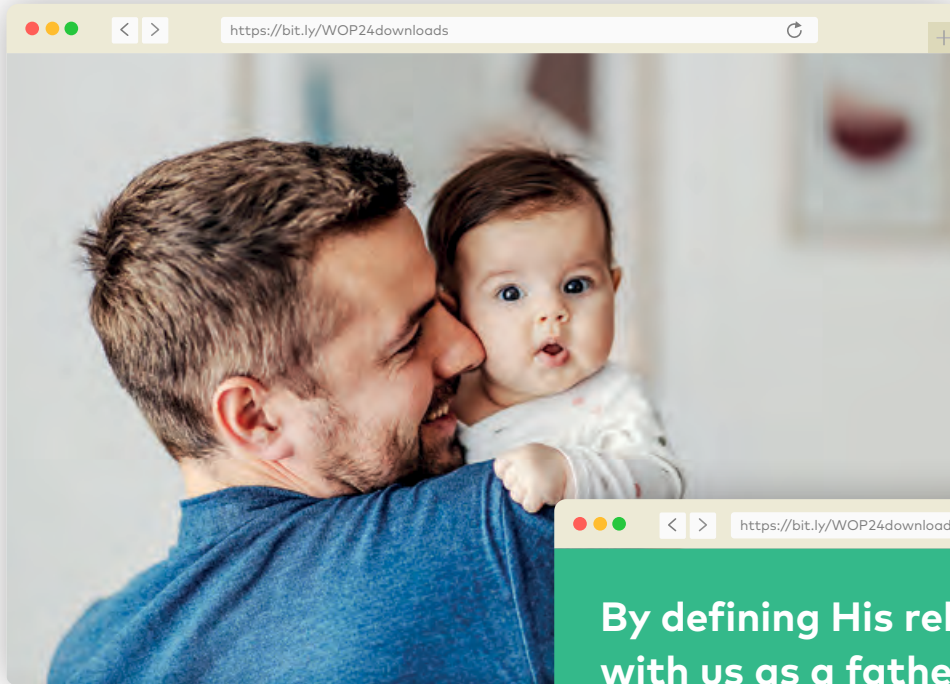
If you're curious, you can watch it here:
<https://bit.ly/NASAMilkyWay>

The video shows the distances between different elements within our home galaxy, but we quickly reach the limits of our imagination. The dimensions are simply too great. Current technology allows us to observe more than 50 billion galaxies from Earth. If the universe as we know it is that big, how big must God be?

We humans sometimes overestimate ourselves and think we can win God over and put ourselves at the same level as Him. Given how great God is, worship is probably the more appropriate response for us humans (more on that in chapter 3).

Now, there is one thing that our sovereign God never touches, and that is our free will. Freedom is one of the greatest goods in the universe, and God grants it to every being. The fact that God created a world on the principle of freedom says a lot about Him. Because freedom can only be granted when one is completely sure of what one is doing. Because freedom entails risk. This path has no guarantees; love can be either reciprocated or rejected. Yes, the greatness of God amazes us and leaves us speechless, but when we experience what He is truly like, our hearts are transformed and we inevitably respond with worship.

So, why pray if God is sovereign? As we shared in chapter 1, we do not need to convince God at all; He is on our side from the



By defining His relationship with us as a father-child relationship, God conveys His warmth, protection, care, interest, and intimacy.

beginning and has only our best interest at heart. His plan for our lives is good, and He pursues it consistently. Interestingly, despite His greatness, God cares for us (see Psalm 8:4) and He wants to *communicate and connect* with us human beings as His *children*. And when we pray, God listens. Prayer is never ineffective! There are some things that we cannot fully grasp with our three-dimensional brains, like the reality that God is three in one, or that Jesus is both God and human. And the fact that prayer does make a difference—even though God is sovereign—is a mystery we may never fully understand either.

Jesus' Masterclass on Prayer

When we think of prayer, we quickly think of all the things we want to ask for. Our requests are certainly good, but prayer is more than bringing our “holy wish list” to God. Jesus was a man of prayer, and one day, when He came back from praying, one of His disciples asked Him, “*Lord, teach us to pray*” (see Luke 11:1). Jesus' way of praying must have inspired this disciple. He gladly responded to this request and taught His disciples the Lord's Prayer.

“Our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9 NLT)

The prayer begins with the word *Father*. By defining His relationship with us as a father-child relationship, God conveys His warmth, protection, care, interest, and desire for intimacy. This beginning of the prayer suggests that praying is about nurturing a relationship; it is about having a real conversation and not about presenting my wish list.

“May your name be kept holy” (Matthew 6:9 NLT)

The first petition expresses a deep desire to meet God with honor. God is holy. He is not one among many but One above all. This desire reflects the essence of the first three commandments.

“May your Kingdom come soon” (Matthew 6:10 NLT)

Life on this planet is no longer as God originally created it. This petition expresses a longing for God's true world. To pray in this way is to ask God to use us to accomplish what He envisions and thus build His kingdom.

“May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10 NLT)

This request was already made by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, “*Not as I will, but as You will!*” (Matthew 26:39, 42 NKJV). This is a desire to see God's vision, values and principles implemented in my life and in this world.

“Give us today the food we need” (Matthew 6:11 NLT)

The first part of the Lord's Prayer focuses exclusively on God and His purpose. Believers are to worship and adore God, and submit to His will. Only then are personal requests expressed.

This petition for daily bread is about more than food; it is about acknowledging that everything I need in order to live comes from God. And making this request reminds me not to take good things for granted, but to be grateful for them.

“And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us” (Matthew 6:12 NLT)

This petition is about our relationship with God and with others. Confession of sins is necessary, and it is linked to extending forgiveness to our neighbor. Holding a grudge against others is not an option if we want to be right with God. Jesus explained this idea in a parable, *“I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?”* (Matthew 18:32, 33 NLT).

“And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13 NLT)

It is not God who tempts us (James 1:13). In this petition, the believer clings to God, asking for both deliverance from evil and help not to succumb to temptation. The believer looks to God for everything, including daily provision and strength in the spiritual life.

If you would like to dive deeper into each element of the Lord’s Prayer and connect it with your daily life, use the following QR code to access some questions for personal reflection.



Reflecting on the Lord’s Prayer

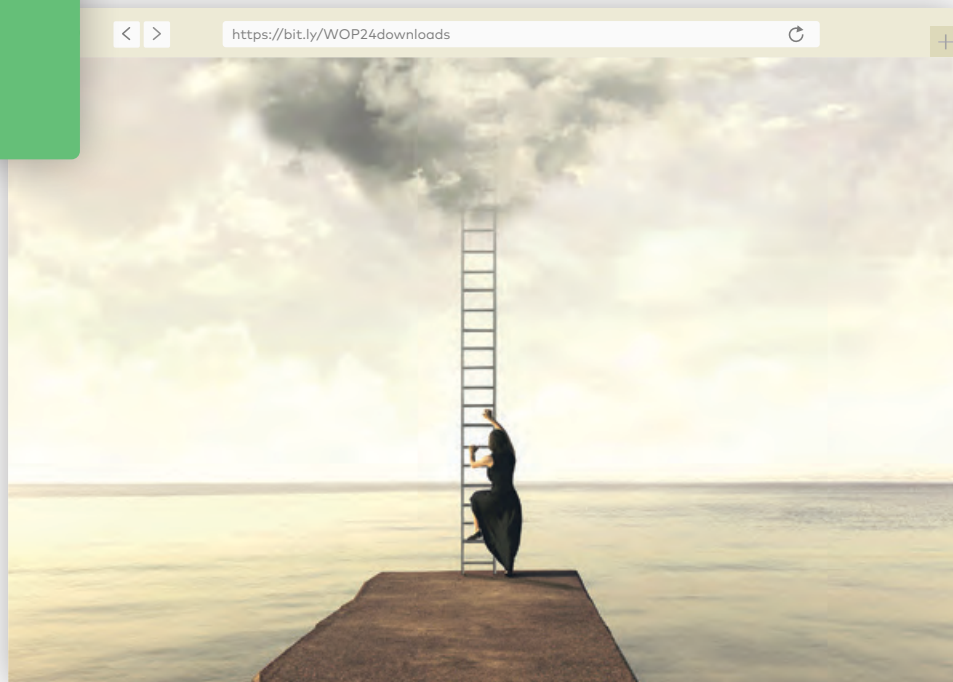
<https://bit.ly/WOP24downloads>

Prayer as a Lifestyle

Prayer is not a chore that we—as followers of Jesus—must perform; rather, praying is seeking to connect with the heavenly Father. Just as the people of Israel could not store manna in the desert, but had to gather a fresh portion every day (except for Sabbath), so our life with God depends on integrating good spiritual habits, such as prayer, into our daily lives.

Successful people often have different habits from the people around them. The same happens with people who belong to Jesus; they are different from those around them. Not because they are holier or better than everyone else, but because they have a different lifestyle—a lifestyle that consistently puts God first and integrates a connection with Him into everyday life.

Praying is seeking
to connect with the
heavenly Father.



PRAYER OF THE DAY

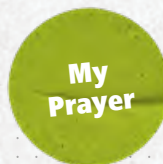


Dear Father,

*"For everyone who asks, receives.
Everyone who seeks, finds.
And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."
Luke 11:10 (NLT)*

Thank You for this promise.
I want to see my prayer time as an open door
that leads directly to Your presence.

I entrust my heart to You.
AMEN



A large rectangular area with a light gray background and a fine grid of small dots, intended for writing a personal prayer.



QUESTIONS

1. **What does it mean to me that God is sovereign? How does this belief affect my view of prayer?**
2. **Are there things that I don't like to talk to God about? What prevents me from inviting God into these areas of my life?**
3. **How can prayer become the "breath of the soul" for me?**
4. **In terms of prayer, what would I like to learn from Jesus?**
5. **Why do I actually pray? (Be completely honest!)**

A large area of dotted lines for writing answers to the questions.

GROUP ACTIVITY

As human beings, we were never meant to be alone. God gave us a family to grow up in. He gives us friends, neighbors, classmates, and coworkers. We have the privilege of being part of His church. We need each other, we learn from each other, and we have much to gain from each other.

Today, for our group activity, we are going to focus on what we call "Best Practice". Share with the group what has helped you the most when it comes to prayer.

If you would like to share your tips with a larger community, you can write them down here:



**Best Practice Tips
for the Community**
<https://bit.ly/WOP24downloads>



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Follow the example of the great prophet Daniel, who prayed three times a day (see Daniel 6:10). Make prayer a regular practice in your daily routine. Consider what time is best for you. Also, think about how you will remind yourself to pray. For example, you could write a card and hang it on your bathroom mirror, or set an alarm on your phone.

For the next seven days, be consistent and make prayer a regular habit in your daily routine.

Time of day I will pray:

.....

Reminder/s I will set for myself:

.....



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Intimacy is taking the risk of voluntary defenselessness”

Author unknown

Why is it that intimacy is such an important part of one’s prayer life?

What moves you personally to seek an intimate relationship with God?

A large rectangular area filled with a light gray dot grid pattern, intended for handwritten notes or reflections.

My Attitude When I Pray

Chapter 3



KEY
TEXT

“Oh come, let us
worship and
bow down;
Let us kneel
before the Lord
our Maker.”

PSALM 95:6 (NLB)

ICEBREAKER

The purpose of today's icebreaker is to get you to think about the attitude of a prayerful person.

Sometimes, we make promises that we never keep. Or we do the right thing for the wrong reasons. This is where attitude comes in. Attitude is the intrinsic motivation that comes from within and reflects outward. It is possible to describe the inner attitude of a person, but it is much more exciting and inspiring to see that attitude in action!

Think of people around you—they can be public figures too—or in history or in the Bible. Who embodies the following for you?

Forgiveness

[Dotted grid for writing]

Courage

[Dotted grid for writing]

Gratitude

[Dotted grid for writing]

Perseverance

[Dotted grid for writing]

Compassion

[Dotted grid for writing]

Share why you chose the people you chose with your group.
What inspires you about these people?

“We seek
to encounter God—
in prayer—because
we like Him
and we want to be
close to Him.”

When Love Is What Drives Us

Love is awakened by love. We worship God because of who He is. He is Love. That’s why we seek Him; that’s why we want to be like Him. And that is exactly the principle by which little Murtaza Ahmadi lives. In 2016, when he was five years old, Murtaza rose to fame because of a photograph. In it, we see a radiant little boy wearing a T-shirt of his hero, Lionel Messi; the only thing is the T-shirt is made of plastic. His family is too poor to afford a soccer T-shirt, but his older brother knows exactly how to help. He takes a plastic bag with light blue and white stripes, cuts out some holes for the arms and head and writes “Messi 10” on it. Voilà: his brother is in for a treat!

But he is about to experience even greater joy! Messi, the world-famous soccer player from Argentina, learns that he has a young fan in Afghanistan. So, he sends Murtaza a signed T-shirt and a soccer ball. About a year later, when FC Barcelona is playing in Doha, Murtaza meets his hero in person. He gets to accompany Messi onto the pitch. He doesn’t want his dream to end; he doesn’t want to leave Messi’s side. He doesn’t even leave the pitch after placing the match ball, but runs straight back to Messi.



You can watch this touching encounter here:
<http://bit.ly/Murtaza-Messi>

Little Murtaza is a great source of inspiration for us. He seeks to be close to his hero, Messi, because he likes him and wants to be like him. The same is true for our relationship with God. We seek to encounter God—in prayer—because we like Him and we want to be close to Him.



Let God Do the Fighting

In times of trouble, prayer is usually at the forefront of our minds. In times of acute danger, we send nudging prayers to heaven. When a situation prolongs itself, we bring our petitions to God for months. “Take away,” “save,” “deliver,” “heal,” and “intervene” are often the themes of our petitions when we are under pressure. And we are in good biblical company when it comes to crying out for help and asking God to intervene.

Jehoshaphat was king in Judah when the kingdom was divided. One day some men told him that the hostile armies of the Moabites and Ammonites were approaching (see 2 Chronicles 20). How would the king respond? Some biblical kings would send messengers to a prophet, others would contact their allies, and many would turn to God, including Jehoshaphat.



“Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.”

2 Chronicles 20:3 (ESV)

Jehoshaphat recognizes the seriousness of the situation; he is afraid, so he seeks God. Even though I live in a different time, even though I face different threats, I can learn a lot about the attitude of a praying person from this short verse: my approach should be to seek God. The focus is not on the problem, but on *seeking* God. And then the king says these words:

“O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.”

2 Chronicles 20:6 (ESV)

Jehoshaphat remembers *who* God is; He reflects on God’s greatness. Even today, the problem in front of me is never greater than the God who has my back, and realizing this brings peace. I know that no matter what I face in life, God is never surprised by the situation. God always has a good plan that nothing and no one can interfere with. And God is a God who works miracles out of broken pieces and wounds. When I look at my challenges from this perspective, it may be that my circumstances remain the same, and yet everything is different because I have a faith that is founded on the Rock. If you want to know how the story ends, read 2 Chronicles 20.

Even if you have not read the story of Jehoshaphat, you probably have an idea of how it will end. God tells His people that it is not they who must fight, but that He will fight for them. Even today, God fights for me at school or college, at work, and within my own family. When life hurts, when I am ashamed of my own behavior, God wants to fight for me.

Pray and Guard

Martin Luther King said, “Never make prayer a substitute for work and intelligence.”¹ This means that those who pray are proactive because prayer influences both thought and action. It means that we have a responsibility to be God’s hands in this world; it is often through us that God loves and impacts people.

“The problem in front of me is never greater than the God who has my back.”

Nehemiah was a high official in the Persian court. He was also a Jew, and his heart was with Jerusalem. His beloved city had been in a wretched state—completely defenseless—since the Babylonian exile, and this troubled Nehemiah deeply. Even the king noticed that something was wrong with Nehemiah, “*Why are you looking so sad? You don’t look sick to me. You must be deeply troubled*” (Nehemiah 2:2 NLT). Nehemiah then pours out his heart before him. The king gives him permission to go to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city—which he does, even though his enemies put many obstacles in his way.



“We have a responsibility to be God’s hands in this world; it is often through us that God loves and impacts people.”

Ask yourself, “With what attitude do I approach prayer?”



A large, light-colored circular area with a dotted grid pattern, intended for writing or reflection.

We find the following verse in the middle of the story of the rebuilding of the city wall, *“But we prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves”* (Nehemiah 4:9 NLT). They built the wall, they prayed, and at the same time they posted soldiers to guard it from their enemies. Some people would say that posting guards after praying shows a lack of faith, but we find no word in the text condemning Nehemiah for this practice. There are situations in which the right thing to do is to let go of the reins completely, as Jehoshaphat did, but there are other times in which it is perfectly justified to pray and *act*. (You will have a chance to think about this point further in the Questions’ section.)

The Prayer Hand

⁶ *“Come, let us worship and bow down.
Let us kneel before the Lord our maker,
⁷for he is our God.
We are the people he watches over,
the flock under his care.”*

Psalm 95:6, 7 (NLT)

“Come, bow down and kneel before the Lord, your Creator.” A call to worship. Think of little Murtaza and how he would love to be close to Messi again.

To pray is to open myself to God, to engage with Him, to worship Him, to give Him glory, to give Him thanks, to confess my sins and ask for forgiveness, to ask Him to change me, to invite Him to rearrange my priorities, to give Him space in my life. And to pour out my heart to Him, to tell Him what I want and what I need.

Do you know the prayer hand? It is an image that helps to keep different elements of prayer in mind as we pray.

Praise and Worship (thumb)

"I will praise the Lord at all times. I will constantly speak his praises" (Psalm 34:1 NLT).

"For this, O Lord, I will praise you among the nations; I will sing praises to your name" (2 Samuel 22:50 NLT).

Thanksgiving (index finger)

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57 ESV).

"Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms" (Psalm 95:2 NKJV).

Confession of Sin and Repentance (middle finger)

"Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14 NLT).

"Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy" (Proverbs 28:13 NIV).

Intercession (ring finger)

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them" (1 Timothy 2:1 NLT).

"We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly" (1 Thessalonians 1:2 NLT).

Personal Requests (little finger)

"And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22 NKJV).

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done" (Philippians 4:6 NLT).

Although your attitude when you pray is always key, this Prayer Hand can be helpful during your quality time with God; it will guide you through prayer and help you focus.



Download the Elements of Prayer here:
<https://bit.ly/WOP24downloads>

PRAYER OF THE DAY



Dear Father,

I worship You because

.....
.....
.....
.....

I have never thanked You for the following things and I would like to make up for it now:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Lord, You know the moments of my life I am ashamed of:

.....
.....
.....
.....

You know every single moment of failure:

.....
.....
.....
.....

and all these painful experiences I now bring to You at the foot of the cross and I ask for forgiveness.

Lord, in my personal life, this is my greatest concern at the moment:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank You for Your loving forgiveness! Thank You that I am Your child, even when I don't perform brilliantly.

I don't want to ask just for me, but I also bring _____
to You in prayer. Please bless _____
and _____.

You already know that and I thank You for it. Thank You that I can present my request to You once again today and entrust it to You. Please make my relationship with You grow deeper. I want to be near You. Let's stay in conversation, even after I say amen.

I entrust my heart to You.
AMEN



QUESTIONS

1. **When praying, is the attitude of the person more important than the words they use? Give reasons for your answer.**
2. **What do I like about God? How does this affect my attitude when I pray?**
3. **How do I know if I should let God fight for me or if it is the time to pray and guard?**
4. **What does it mean to me that God fights for me? (See, for example, Zechariah 4:6 and Isaiah 30:15. What other texts come to mind?)**
5. **What inspirational quotes do you know about prayer? Here is one of our favorite ones: "When life gives you more than you can stand... kneel" (author unknown).**

A large rectangular area of dot grid paper for writing answers to the questions above.



Buy or make your own cards with the message "You are precious and infinitely loved."

Distribute the cards in a shopping mall or stick them on the mirrors in the restrooms at school or at work.

Pray together for the people who will see or receive each card. Pray that they will receive the assurance of God's love in their hearts.



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Keep a gratitude journal!

Every night, record five things for which you are grateful and give thanks to God. Do this for at least two weeks.

Did you know that, over time, it is almost impossible to sustain feelings of fear, envy, or anger when your heart is filled with gratitude?

A large rectangular area with a light gray background and a grid of small dots, intended for writing a gratitude journal entry.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*“Customer service is not a department;
customer service is an attitude.”²*

Carsten K. Rath (German entrepreneur and author)

Could we also say that prayer is not a Christian activity, but an attitude? How so?

A large rectangular area filled with a light gray dot grid pattern, intended for handwritten notes or reflections.

WHEN I **DON'T** FEEL LIKE PRAYING



KEY
TEXT

“KEEP YOUR HEART WITH ALL VIGILANCE,
FOR FROM IT FLOW THE SPRINGS OF LIFE.”

PROVERBS 4:23 (ESV)

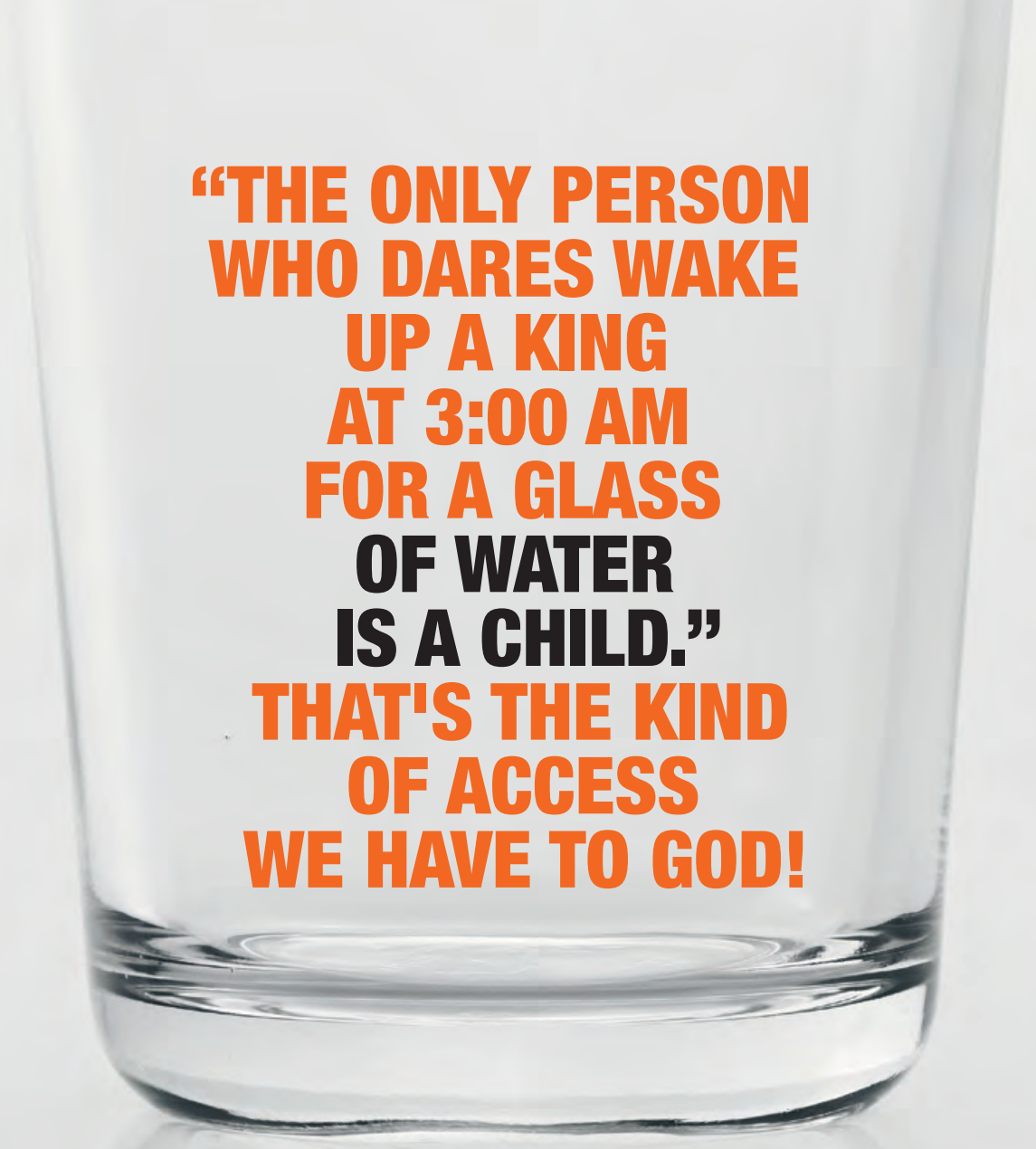
ICEBREAKER

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOU WOULD DO IF YOU INHERITED A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF MONEY TODAY?

Handwriting practice area with a grid of dots.

WOULD THERE BE ANY REASON FOR SOMEONE NOT WANTING TO RECEIVE AN INHERITANCE? IN OTHER WORDS, WHY WOULD SOMEONE DECLINE AN INHERITANCE?

Handwriting practice area with a grid of dots.



**“THE ONLY PERSON
WHO DARES WAKE
UP A KING
AT 3:00 AM
FOR A GLASS
OF WATER
IS A CHILD.”
THAT'S THE KIND
OF ACCESS
WE HAVE TO GOD!**

A Missed Opportunity

Did you know that there are people all over the world who never collect the money they won in the lottery? In 2021, a prize of 11.3 million euros was left unclaimed in Germany.¹ How is that even possible? Some people simply don't check if they won, and others lose their ticket.

Could it be that something similar happens to us when it comes to prayer? Could it be that we get a little confused? We think of it as a chore instead of seeing it as a privilege or a gift. Timothy Keller once wrote, “The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 AM for a glass of water is a child.”² That's the kind of access we have to God! No, God doesn't sleep, Tim is just using a metaphor here, but God is the greatest and most powerful being in the whole universe and we get to talk to Him 24/7. This is unique; we find nothing similar in the world we live in.

Do you remember the passage in which Jesus had just come back from praying? Interestingly, his disciple didn't ask, “Do we have to pray now?” No! He says, “Jesus, please *teach* me. I *want* to pray like you!” Prayer is not a burdensome duty, but a heartfelt desire. Jesus frees us. When in His presence, people flourish; because His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30).

When Prayer Becomes a Must

Every believer is probably familiar with the following thought, “I should pray every day!” There is nothing wrong with this statement in itself, but it is not very helpful. Since we no longer live in paradise and sin has broken something within us, our first thought is often, “I just have to try hard enough and I'll make it.” But this is actually self-righteousness, which assumes that we must be good by our own efforts. Jesus gave us a remedy to address this issue:



GOD'S PLAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN FOR ME TO BE HIS CHILD AND TO BE CONNECTED TO HIM.

"...without Me you can do nothing."

John 15:5 (NKJV)

This is part of a statement Jesus made using an image from nature. He said that apart from the vine (Himself), branches can bear no fruit; grapes can only grow when they are *attached* to the vine.

The good news of the gospel is that I don't have to, because the fact is I can't. I will never make it on my own. God's plan has always been for me to be His child and to be connected to Him.

Is prayer a good habit? It is, without a doubt! But when "must" and "should" take center stage, I can forget why I want to pray in the first place. So instead of thinking, "I need to pray more," try asking yourself these questions:

- ✓ Why do I want to pray?
- ✓ What do I really long for?
- ✓ What am I painfully missing in my relationship with God right now?

Motivation Needs a Strong Partner

We often start out highly motivated and with the best of intentions, like when we decide to exercise more. But as time passes, motivation wanes and good intentions fade. Someone once told me (Annika) that motivation is never there when you really need it, so you can't rely on it. Instead of feeling frustrated that motivation won't see us through, let's give motivation a *strong partner*.

*"Motivation is what gets you started.
Habit is what keeps you going."*³

Attributed to Jim Ryun

Motivation is a wonderful thing, and we need it to get started, but we also need to establish good habits from the get-go so that our efforts are not just a flash in the pan. Think about what *time* of day is best for you to pray. And then ask yourself *where* would be a good place to pray. Often, we pray in bed at night and fall asleep, or we bring our cell phones into our time with God and get distracted. How about setting up a nice place to pray, such as a reading chair by the window, or maybe outside in nature? It is important to *integrate* prayer in your daily routine so that you don't have to ask yourself, "Do I feel like praying now?"

By the way, sometimes it feels like our prayers don't get past the ceiling. We pray and nothing changes, and this reduces our motivation to pray, because prayer that "doesn't work" doesn't last long. (If this sounds like you, we want to tell you that, in chapter 5, we will share a personal experience on this subject. Stay tuned!)

IT IS IMPORTANT TO INTEGRATE PRAYER IN YOUR DAILY ROUTINE SO THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF, “DO I FEEL LIKE PRAYING NOW?”



Due for a Remake?

Make sure you frame the moment of prayer so that you look forward to meeting your Best Friend. Prayer is time with God that allows me to be present, to open up, to be loved, and to be strengthened. We worship a wonderful God who is really there beside us!

*“For the Lord your God is living among you.
He is a mighty savior.
He will take delight in you with gladness.
With his love, he will calm all your fears.
He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.”*
Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT)

Maybe your prayer life could use a breath of fresh air. Follow people on social media who make prayer a top priority and be inspired by their experiences. Read an inspirational book on prayer. Keep a prayer journal and record your prayer requests, as well as what you experience with God and how He answers your requests. Try something new, like a prayer walk. And if you just can't pray, read a prayer written by someone else (see below) or ask someone you trust to pray with and for you.

Take Good Care of Your Heart

*“Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.”*
Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

Remember the quote from Ellen G. White about prayer? Here is the second part of the quote.

“Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul be preserved. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Well-spring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience. Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and you lose your hold on God. The spiritual faculties lose their vitality, the religious experience lacks health and vigor.”⁴

If prayer can bring so many blessings into my life, if my heart and how I connect with God can benefit so much from it, what is stopping me from praying?



When I Have No Time to Pray

Life is often busy; we live under pressure, and stress seems to be our most faithful companion. We may end up thinking, "I don't have time to pray." However, if we stop and think about it for a minute, we quickly come to the quiet suspicion that not taking time for our relationship with God is not really going to cut it.

*"I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."*⁵

Martin Luther

In God's kingdom, things are upside down (although from God's perspective, it is probably us who are upside down). Even if I work day and night, if I rely on my own strength, I will never accomplish what God can do in the blink of an eye. On the other hand, if I give my body the rest and balance it needs, and if I live my life not by my own strength, but united with God, then I will find myself on a sustainable path in life.

Prayers-To-Go

Sometimes, in spite of having all knowledge, in spite of having the right attitude and heart, we simply have no strength to pray. Be assured that in these desert times, God is there! *"Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me"* (Psalm 23:4 NLT).

On those days when prayer just won't come out of your mouth, you can read a pre-written prayer and pray that way.



On-the-Go Prayers

<https://bit.ly/WOP24downloads>



**EVEN IF I WORK DAY AND NIGHT,
IF I RELY ON MY OWN STRENGTH,
I WILL NEVER ACCOMPLISH WHAT GOD
CAN DO IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY



Dear Father,

My heart wants to cling to You
but You know that the strength
and motivation to do so is sometimes lacking.

Thank You for being with me
and for holding me every moment.

I entrust my heart to You.
AMEN





QUESTIONS

1. **Why is it so easy to spend thirty minutes on Tiktok, Instagram, and the like, and so hard to set aside five minutes to pray?**
2. **What am I missing out on when I do not pray?**
3. **Is praying easy or hard? Give reasons for your answer.**
4. **How did I get out of desert times in the past (times when I hardly prayed)?**
5. **What is my best prayer habit?**

A large rectangular area with a light gray background and a fine grid of small dots, intended for writing answers to the questions listed above.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Take a selfie of you as a group and send it to those who didn't come today.

Write a personal message to let them know that you miss them and that they are in your prayers.

After sending your message, pray for each person missing.



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Challenge 1: Connect with God

Create your own personal chill-out zone. Clean up a bit. Cook or order a meal you really enjoy. Light a candle and then go to your spiritual music playlist and listen to your favorite song. Enjoy the moment and let the message of the song sink deep into your heart.

.....

Challenge 2: Create Your Own Prayers-to-Go

Search for Bible texts that can be a prayer-to-go for you in those moments in which your spiritual life feels "dry". You can even search for texts by theme, such as trust, hope, strength, sadness, and joy.

.....



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?”⁶

Corrie Ten Boom



WHEN GOD IS SILENT



KEY
TEXT

“MY GRACE IS ALL YOU NEED.
MY POWER WORKS BEST IN WEAKNESS.”

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 (NLT)

ICEBREAKER

IMAGINE YOU ARE 90 YEARS OLD
AND YOU ARE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY
TO MAKE A WISH LIST.
WHAT FIVE THINGS WOULD BE ON YOUR LIST?

Grid for writing the wish list.

IF YOU WERE TO WRITE YOUR WISH LIST NOW, IN THE PRESENT DAY,
HOW WOULD IT DIFFER FROM THE ONE OF YOUR FUTURE SELF?

Grid for writing the comparison question.

“WHY DOES IT HURT SO MUCH
WHEN GOD SAYS NO OR
REMAINS SILENT?
THIS REALITY OF LIFE
WITH GOD IS NOT SOMETHING
WE CAN GLOSS OVER
OR SUPPRESS.”



When It Hurts

Many Christians write about their prayer experiences, and if you were to put them all together, you would fill shelves upon shelves with their stories. But how many journals could we fill with all the unanswered prayers? And why does it hurt so much when God says no or remains silent? This reality of life with God is not something we can gloss over or suppress; we need to deal with it somehow.

That is probably why unanswered prayers are so painful, because they shake my trust in God. Is God there? Is He really good? Why doesn't He intervene? All this leads us head-on to the question of suffering: how can a good God allow all this evil to happen? God *is* there and He *is* love, but we live in enemy territory, outside of paradise. Life on this planet is unfair, right from the start. Resources and opportunities are unjustly distributed. And the suffering of people is often just senseless. This is the actual state of the world I live in.

Remember Murtaza, the little Messi fan? His big dream came true, but only for a moment. The little boy and his family have been through a lot in recent years. Their lives have been scarred by war, displacement and fear. Many in Afghanistan assumed that the professional soccer player had given the family a large sum of money, but that was not the case. Nevertheless, Murtaza is in constant danger, hoping for a ransom. Life can be so painful, and not even a big star like Lionel Messi can save or change the world.

If we were to write a full stop at this point, our situation would be completely hopeless. But the story goes on, thanks to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, and it has a happy ending. God has always been at work, pulling the strings in the background, and His love is constantly infiltrating enemy territory to reach and heal hearts.

God Chooses Faith

God could have chosen to leave evidence of His existence, love, justice, and care on this Earth in such a way that there would be no ambiguity—but He did not. Instead of proof, God chooses faith.

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)

This means that I have the opportunity to choose faith and trust, knowing that in the end everything will make sense. That’s not easy to do! God asks a lot from us, but He does so because He chose to give us free will. He wants us to be free. He does not manipulate, even if it would serve a good purpose. God can choose this way because He is absolutely certain of His cause, because He knows that, in the end, all human history will show that He is a loving, caring and just God.

Sometimes we think it would have been easier if we had lived in biblical times or if we had known Jesus personally, because there were so many miracles back then. But the Bible actually includes examples of both realities: the miraculous rescue of Daniel and his friends and the answered prayer of childless Hannah; and at the same time, we read about how John the Baptist and Stephen died as martyrs. Paul asked God to deliver him three times and God’s answer was “No” (see 2 Corinthians 12:8).

*“My grace is all you need.
My power works best in weakness.”*

2 Corinthians 12:9 (NLT)

God could say, “Answered prayers are all you need,” but He says, “My grace is all you need!” That God is there, that He is working, and that He is lovingly caring for us is all we need.

*“You don’t always have to tell
your side of the story. Time will.”¹*

Attributed to Toby Mac

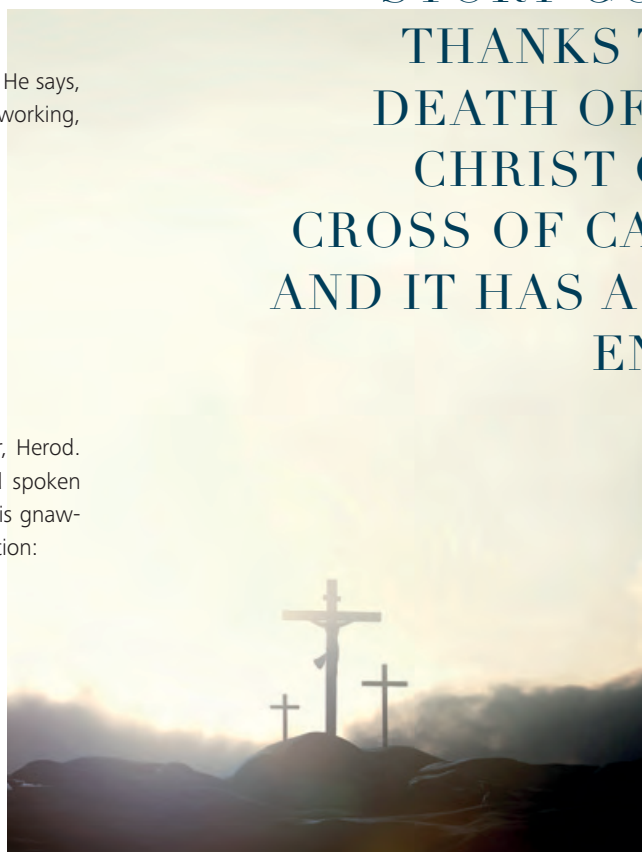
Proving God Right

John the Baptist is in prison for rebuking the local ruler, Herod. Though he had baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17) and spoken clear words about Jesus’ identity (John 1:29-34), doubt is gnawing at him, so he sends his disciples to Jesus with a question:

*“Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting,
or should we keep looking for someone else?”*

Matthew 11:3 (NLT)

**“IF WE WERE TO
WRITE A FULL STOP
AT THIS POINT, OUR
SITUATION WOULD
BE COMPLETELY
HOPELESS. BUT THE
STORY GOES ON,
THANKS TO THE
DEATH OF JESUS
CHRIST ON THE
CROSS OF CALVARY,
AND IT HAS A HAPPY
ENDING.”**



“WE WOULD
DECIDE JUST
AS GOD DOES,
IF ONLY WE
HAD ALL THE
INFORMATION.”



Even great heroes of faith are sometimes beset by doubt! What would you expect Jesus to do at this point? How should Jesus respond? It would be nice if Jesus would visit John now to comfort him and lift him up, or he could at least send an angel. But you know what Jesus does? He sends John's disciples back with a Bible verse from the prophet Isaiah, with a promise about the Messiah. Jesus is reminding John of what he already knows. We too sometimes wish that Jesus would sit with us and take us in His arms, or that He would at least send an angel, but God doesn't always choose this way. Sometimes, He simply reminds us of what we already know and thus strengthens our faith.

The life of John the Baptist ends tragically; he is beheaded. God does not intervene, but allows his cruel death. Do you know the words with which Ellen G. White closes the chapter on John the Baptist in her book, *The Desire of Ages*?

“God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning. [...] Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon.”²

What love and what appreciation for John! And what a promising perspective to know that we would decide just as God does, if only we had all the information. Right now, *faith* is what is needed, but the day will come when I will *know* all that God sees today, and I will understand and affirm all His decisions.

Choose Trust

Sometimes you just need some distance to see things more clearly. When we're in the thick of it, some situations feel terrible, but over time we see how God heals and turns painful experiences into something beautiful. Listen to the song "Blessings" by Laura Story and reflect on the lyrics:



<https://bit.ly/SongBlessingsLauraStory>

Now, reflect on the lyrics of the following songs. Don't focus on the music but on the words themselves.



"Trust in You" by Lauren Daigle

<https://bit.ly/WOP24downloads>

See on YouTube:

<https://bit.ly/YouTube-Trust-in-you>

What stood out for you from these lyrics?



A large area of dotted lines for writing, intended for the reader to reflect on the lyrics.

PRAYER OF THE DAY



Dear Father,

Today I would like to focus my prayer on a passage that is thousands of years old and that many of my brothers and sisters in faith have prayed before me.

*"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.
Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.*

*Then you will experience God's peace,
which exceeds anything we can understand.
His peace will guard your hearts and minds
as you live in Christ Jesus."*

Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT)

I entrust my heart to You.

AMEN





QUESTIONS

1. **Why do unanswered prayers hurt so much?**
2. **In what experiences do I see, in hindsight, that God has guided everything for good?**
3. **What questions do I still have today?**
4. **Why does God choose trust and faith and not (always) proof and answered prayers?**
5. **God's plans cannot be thwarted by anyone, just look at the story of Joseph (see Genesis 37-50).
How can his experience help me when it comes to unanswered prayers?**

A large rectangular area of dot grid paper for writing answers to the questions listed above.

**GROUP
ACTIVITY**

As a group, walk or drive somewhere you have never been before. On this new street, new neighborhood, and new place, think about how God knows every place on this earth. Just because something feels new, unfamiliar and even different to us, it doesn't mean that God isn't aware of it.

In this new place, thank God because everything is in His hands. The familiar and the unknown, the easy and the challenging.



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Sometimes God says "YES", sometimes He says "LATER", and sometimes He says "I HAVE SOMETHING BETTER FOR YOU."

Find examples in your own life for each of these three areas:

God said YES

.....

God said LATER

.....

God said I HAVE SOMETHING BETTER FOR YOU

.....



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“You can only heal a broken story by integrating it into the grand narrative. That is the only healing there is.”

Daniel Duda

What healing needs to take place in your life?

A large rectangular area filled with a light gray dotted grid pattern, intended for handwritten notes or reflections.

ALWAYS BE THANKFUL!

Really?

CHAPTER

6

KEY
TEXT

*“Always be joyful.
Never stop praying.
Be thankful
in all circumstances,
for this is God’s
will for you who belong
to Christ Jesus.”*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18 (NLT)



ICEBREAKER

What's something enjoyable you get to experience every day that you've come to take for granted?

Handwriting practice area consisting of a grid of small red dots on a light-colored background.

What's a hard lesson that you were grateful to learn?

Handwriting practice area consisting of a grid of small red dots on a light-colored background.

Gratitude in Action

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”

Philippians 4:8 (NLT)

Our first reaction might be to think, “Oh, how exhausting!” But when we see what happens when these noble qualities are put into action, our hearts give in and cry out, “I want to live like that!”

The Royal Road to Happiness

The focus of today’s chapter is the invaluable quality of *gratitude*. “Gratitude is something like the royal road to happiness. It can be many things: wonder, appreciation, the realization that a negative experience can have its good sides,”¹ says Sonja Lyubomirsky, a U.S. psychology professor who has devoted most of her career to doing research on happiness.

“Gratitude does not see other things, but sees things differently.”

Author unknown

Gratitude is an attitude toward life; a happiness that I carry within me. Gratitude does not mean that everything is perfect, or that I have to give up all my dreams and desires and resign myself to the status quo, but that I feel a deep appreciation for all the good present in my life:

I live because God wanted me to.

I am His design.

I am forgiven. I am redeemed. I am richly blessed.

*All that I am, all that I have,
all the good that I experience
comes from my heavenly Father.*

*“Gratitude is something like
the royal road to happiness.”*



“Our hearts give in and cry out, ‘I want to live like that!’”

Psychologist Dirk Lehr shares another reason why gratitude is so good for us. He explains that there is a difference between positive emotions like appreciation or joy and gratitude because gratitude *acknowledges* the role or contribution of another *person* in our lives.

Superhuman Commandments

“Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NLT)

Some commandments are not only difficult, but almost impossible to keep. And maybe that’s the way it’s supposed to be. Maybe the commandments are meant to make us realize that we simply cannot make it on our own. Maybe the commandments are meant to make us realize that we need a Savior who dwells in us through His Spirit.

After these three stark admonitions, Paul immediately reveals the solution by saying, “...you who belong to Christ Jesus.” The connection with Jesus is what makes all the difference. As we live with Jesus, we will become people who intentionally choose joy, prayer, and gratitude.

To “*always be joyful*” does not mean that you need to suppress your feelings, learn to put on a cheerful face, and avoid feeling sad. Paul is writing to believers who are grieving for their loved ones (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) and to a church that has been through difficult times (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4). Still, he urges them to *rejoice* because their faith, the fact that they belong to God, is the foundation of their joy. They have a choice: they can focus on the challenges and throw themselves a pity party, or they can focus on God. Their joy and gratitude are a matter of attitude.

“*Do not stop praying*” means that prayer should be our highest priority. People who connect with heaven through prayer are basically saying that they do not want to live by their own strength and wisdom. They acknowledge their dependence on God and trust Him. It is not easy to live this way, and yet it is always just a decision away.

Gratitude Wins

Two sisters enter their new “home” knowing full well that they will probably not make it out of this horror place alive. Everything has been taken from them. From now on, they will live in one of the most terrible and evil places in the history of mankind: the Ravensbrück concentration camp. These two Christian sisters from the Netherlands were arrested because they were suspected of harboring Jewish refugees (which they were, but the six people who hid in Betsie and Corrie’s home were never found).

Corrie lies silently on the bed, contemplating her fate, when suddenly something bites her. She jumps to her feet, trying to get away, but her whole body is covered with fleas. “How can we live here?” she shrieks at her sister. And Betsie knows exactly how to respond. She remembers something they read in the Bible that morning. “Be thankful in all circumstances.”

Corrie’s reaction is understandable, “What in the world is there to be thankful for in this place of horror?” “That we are together and not separated,” Betsie replies. “Oh yes, thank You, Jesus,” says Corrie. “That we were able to sneak in the Bible. And since we live so close together, a lot of women will hear us reading it.” Betsie looks at Corrie expectantly and encourages her to join in. “All right, all right... thank You for this crowded, cramped, stifling place,” Corrie says. “And thank God for the fleas,” Betsie adds. “The fleas?! Betsie, this is too much. It makes no sense that God

would want me to be thankful for the fleas,” Corrie retorts. “Be thankful in all circumstances,” Betsie quotes. “We are not to be thankful only when circumstances are good. The fleas are part of the place in which God has put us.”

In the evening, after the soup is served, Corrie and Betsie shyly begin to read the Bible at the back of the huge dormitory. They read the text in Dutch, translate it into German, and then hear the women repeat the words in French, Russian, Polish, and Czech. Waves of hope and light make their way through this dark and desolate place. The guards are everywhere and every night the two sisters fear being discovered. But it is as if God has stretched a protective net around them. One day Betsie realizes what the net is made of; she finally understands what it is that allows them to continue their illegal activities night after night. It is the fleas! For fear of getting fleas themselves, no guard will set foot in the dormitories. With this new realization, Betsie goes to her sister and gives her an “I knew it from the beginning” smile. There *is* a reason to be thankful even for the fleas.

It’s easy to be thankful on the good days. But to be thankful in all the mess, all the setbacks, all the hurt... that’s an entirely different league! We don’t have all the information. We don’t see the big picture. At this point, all we have left is trust. Trust that God is in control, that He makes no mistakes and that He leads us well.

Betsie Ten Boom did not survive the concentration camp. But her hope inspired Corrie, who left a trail of blessings throughout her life.

It's easy to be thankful on the good days. But to be thankful in all the mess, all the setbacks, all the hurt... that's an entirely different league!



*“Every experience God gives us ...
is the perfect preparation
for a future that only He can see.”²*

Corrie Ten Boom



PRAYER OF THE DAY



Dear Father,

I ask You to help me put on my glasses of gratitude;
I ask that You plant the seed of gratitude in my heart.

I want to appreciate the good things in my life
and see that all the good I experience comes from Your hand.

And on the days when life is painful,
I want to choose gratitude,
because I know that You are good and mean well.

I entrust my heart to You.
AMEN

**My
Prayer**



QUESTIONS

1. **When do I find it hard to be grateful?**
2. **Why is gratitude called “the memory of the heart” (phrase attributed to Jean-Baptiste Massieu)?**
3. **Why is gratitude also an attitude of the heart and not just a spontaneous reaction?**
4. **How does gratitude impact my faith? And my love for God?**
5. **Is it possible to choose joy, prayer and gratitude in every situation? How so?**

A large rectangular area of dot grid paper for writing answers to the questions listed above.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.”*

Psalm 136:1 (NLT)

Thirteen years before John Wesley gave his life to Jesus, he had a life-changing conversation with the porter of his college. That brief exchange gave him an inkling that there was more to Christianity than he had previously thought. The porter only had one coat and had not eaten anything all day, yet he was deeply grateful to God. Intrigued, Wesley asked him, “You thank God when you have nothing to wear, nothing to eat, and no bed to lie on? What else do you thank Him for?” “I thank Him,” the porter replied, “that He has given me my life and being, a heart to love Him, and a desire to serve Him.”³

What do you thank God for?

A large rectangular area filled with a light gray dotted grid pattern, intended for writing a response to the question above.

HOW TO PRAY



KEY
TEXT

"BUT EACH DAY THE LORD POURS HIS UNFAILING LOVE UPON ME, AND THROUGH EACH NIGHT I SING HIS SONGS, PRAYING TO GOD WHO GIVES ME LIFE."

PSALM 42:8 (NLT)

ICEBREAKER

**IF YOU COULD FIND SOMETHING THAT YOU ONCE LOST,
WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

A large rectangular area with a light gray background and a grid of small, faint dots, intended for writing answers to the question above.

**IF YOU COULD GET SOMETHING THAT YOU'VE NEVER
OWNED BEFORE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

A second large rectangular area with a light gray background and a grid of small, faint dots, intended for writing answers to the question above.



What Do I Really Long For?

What is your greatest desire for your prayer life? How would you like your relationship with God to grow? Whatever you long for, whatever your heart beats for, know that God's plans are even higher.

"For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:9 (NLT)

God cannot be blindsided; He is always at least one step ahead, and His thoughts and ways are always higher than ours. And this God is on our side and has very high desires and plans for our lives and for our relationship with Him.

Living Purposefully

It is Christmas 1938 and Nicholas Winton, a Briton who had planned to go skiing in Switzerland, has accepted an invitation from friends to travel to Prague. Although the Second World War had not yet officially begun, the situation in Europe had escalated and Prague was overcrowded with refugees. Being of Jewish descent himself, Nicholas senses the gravity of the situation. Back in London, he arranges for 669 children with Jewish roots to escape the Holocaust. But in the decades that follow, he never speaks of what he had done.

It was not until 1988—when his wife found an old suitcase full of documents in the attic—that the public learned how Nicholas had helped all those children. And in December 2003, when Nicholas

was over 90 years old, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his service.

You can see the moment when Sir Nicholas Winton meets some of the rescued children for the first time here:



<https://bit.ly/NicholasWintonReunion>

Why did he never talk about the fact that he was the one who made it possible for all those children to escape? Well, he didn't seek fame or glory; he just wanted to do the right thing. "He was one of the humblest people I ever met," says Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines, one of the 669 children rescued.

Jesus explained that when we approach God in prayer, we should have a similar attitude: we should approach God in humility and in private.

"But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."

Matthew 6:6 (NLT)

Sir Nicholas lived a meaningful life. No one had to force him to do the right thing. His attitude is inspiring and contagious. If we applied it to our prayer life, this would mean that we do not pray because we *have* to, but because we have come to know who God is, how He relates to us, and how much He cares for us. That is why we like to be close to Him and seek to communicate with Him. Because prayerful people live meaningful lives.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR PRAYER LIFE WITH GOD? [SEE PSALM 42:8 FOR INSPIRATION.]



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Real Communication

Prayer is having a conversation with God. Sometimes this happens spontaneously because our hearts are bursting with joy; or out of fear and sadness because we don't know what to do. When we pray in the moment, we come before God with all our emotions; we share everything that is in our hearts. And even when we pray "out of habit", we should always take our hearts into prayer, because communicating with God is not just a matter of the mind.

Allow God to see you. Be comfortable in your own skin. Take off your masks; you don't have to fool Him (you can't fool Him anyway). God created you and if anyone understands you, it's Him, because He knows your whole journey. He knows everything you've been through and understands why you are who you are today. And God loves that person with all His heart! So be real when you talk to God.

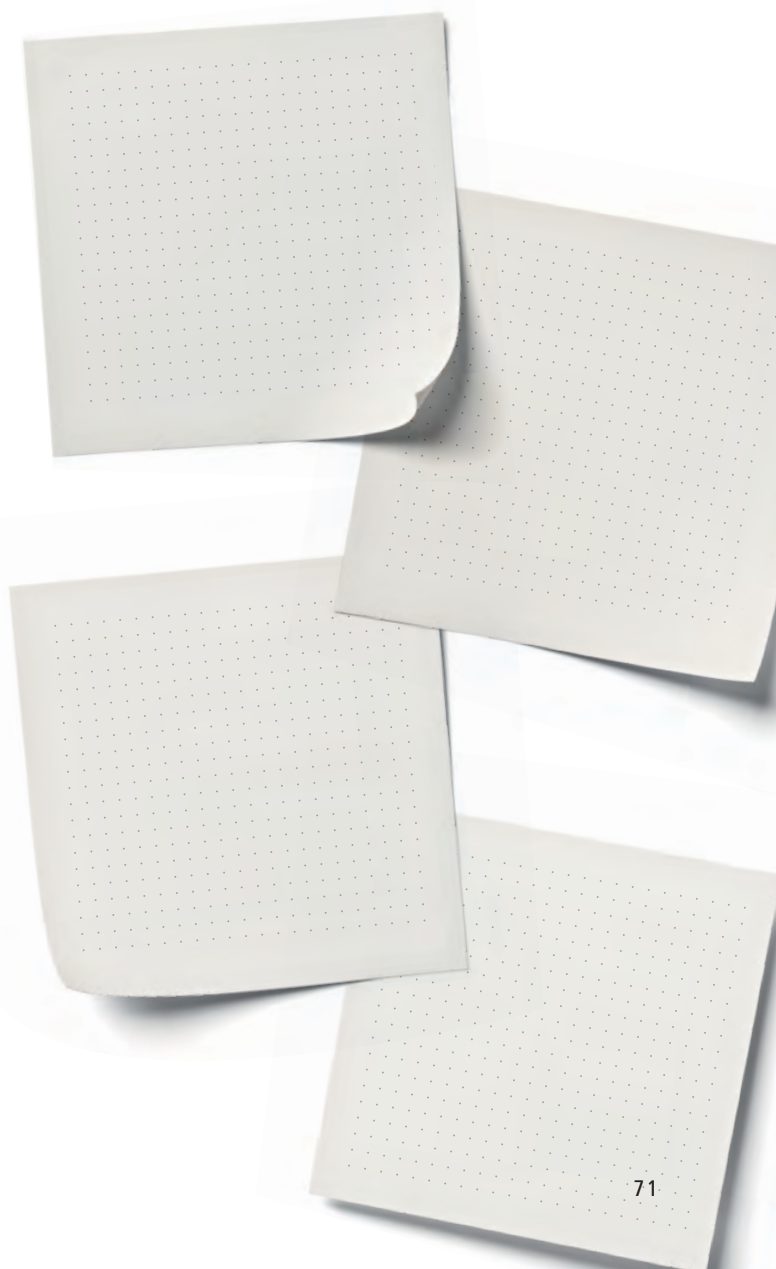
Creative Prayer Time

We have already talked about the Lord's Prayer (see chapter 2) the different elements of prayer (see the Prayer Hand in chapter 3) and the attitude of the person who prays (see chapter 3), so now it's time to think about what prayer can *look like*. Here are some creative ideas:

For your private prayer time:

- ✓ Flip through an album from your childhood (or scroll through the photos on your smartphone) and thank God for how He has led you so far.
- ✓ Go for a prayer walk in nature.
- ✓ Pray for different groups (your neighborhood, your church community, your work colleagues, your classmates, the government, people who are no longer part of your circle of friends, etc.).
- ✓ Try the lightning praise prayer. Light a sparkler and praise God for who He is for as long as it burns.
- ✓ Sit in silence for 10 minutes before you begin to pray.
- ✓ Pick up your smartphone, open your contacts app and pray for the people on your contact list.
- ✓ Pick a song that is addressed to God and sing along wholeheartedly.

Write down your own ideas for your private prayer time:



For groups:

- **Tower of Hands.** The first person places their fist on the table with their thumb pointing up and names one quality they admire about God. Now it's the next person's turn; they grasp the first person's thumb with their hand, point their thumb up and name the quality they like most about God. Continue until everyone's hands are part of the tower, then count down from ten. When you reach zero, everyone says, "Amen!"
- **Closing the Circle** One person begins to pray for someone in the group. Next, the person who was just prayed for, prays for someone else in the group. Continue doing this until everyone has been prayed for.
- **I Pray for You.** Each person is given a blank piece of paper on which they can write their name and/or specific prayer request. Collect the pieces of paper, shuffle them and hand them out. Everyone takes a piece of paper home and for seven days they pray for the name and prayer request. In this way, everyone will pray and be prayed for.
- **Colorful Thanks.** Place a package of colored chocolate candy and an empty glass or jar on the table. Now say a prayer of thanksgiving. Each person takes a colored chocolate, gives thanks to God for a specific thing, and then places the chocolate in the glass or jar. Watch as it fills up and rejoice about all the good that is present in our lives.
- **Prayer Post.** Each person writes a prayer and puts it in an envelope addressed to themselves. One person takes all the envelopes home and mails the prayer letters after two months.

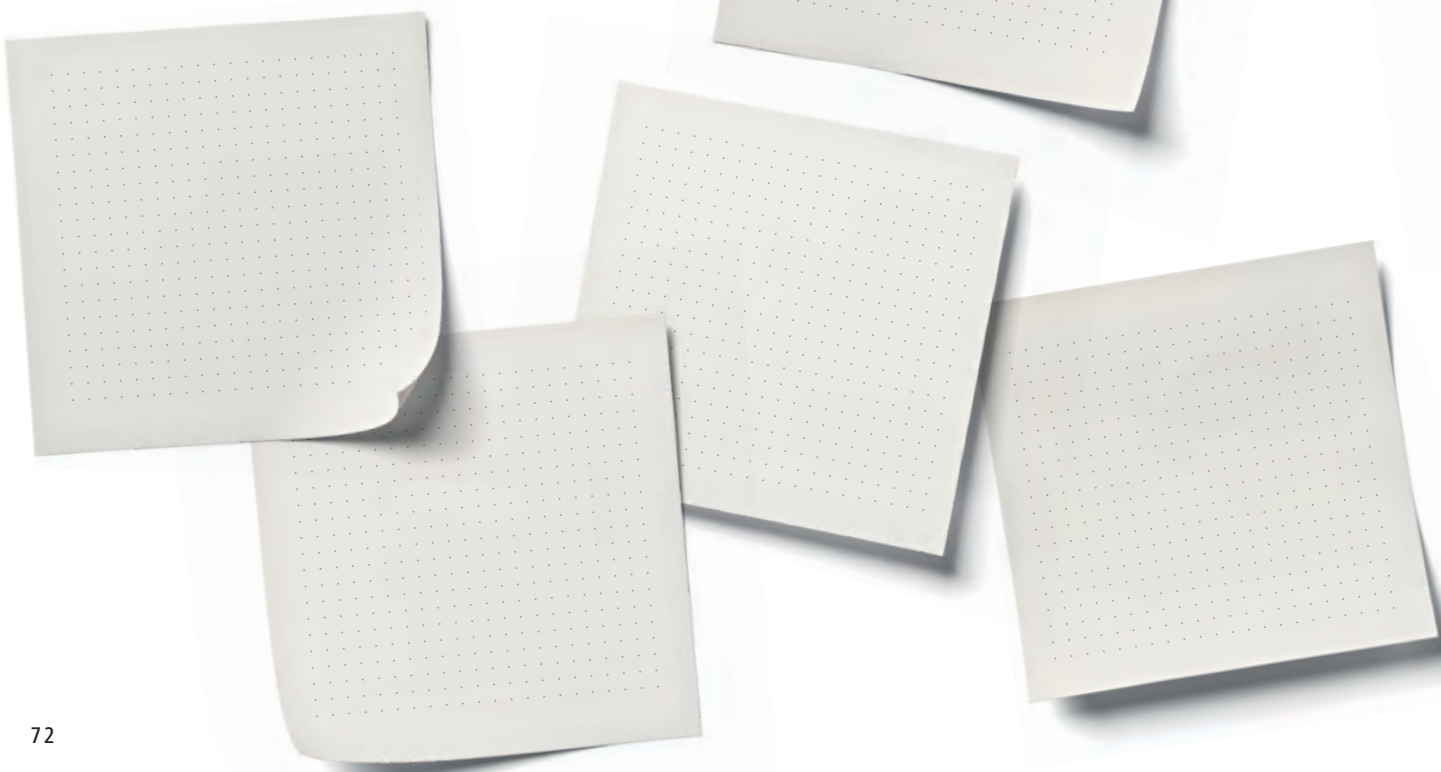
Write down your own ideas for group prayer:

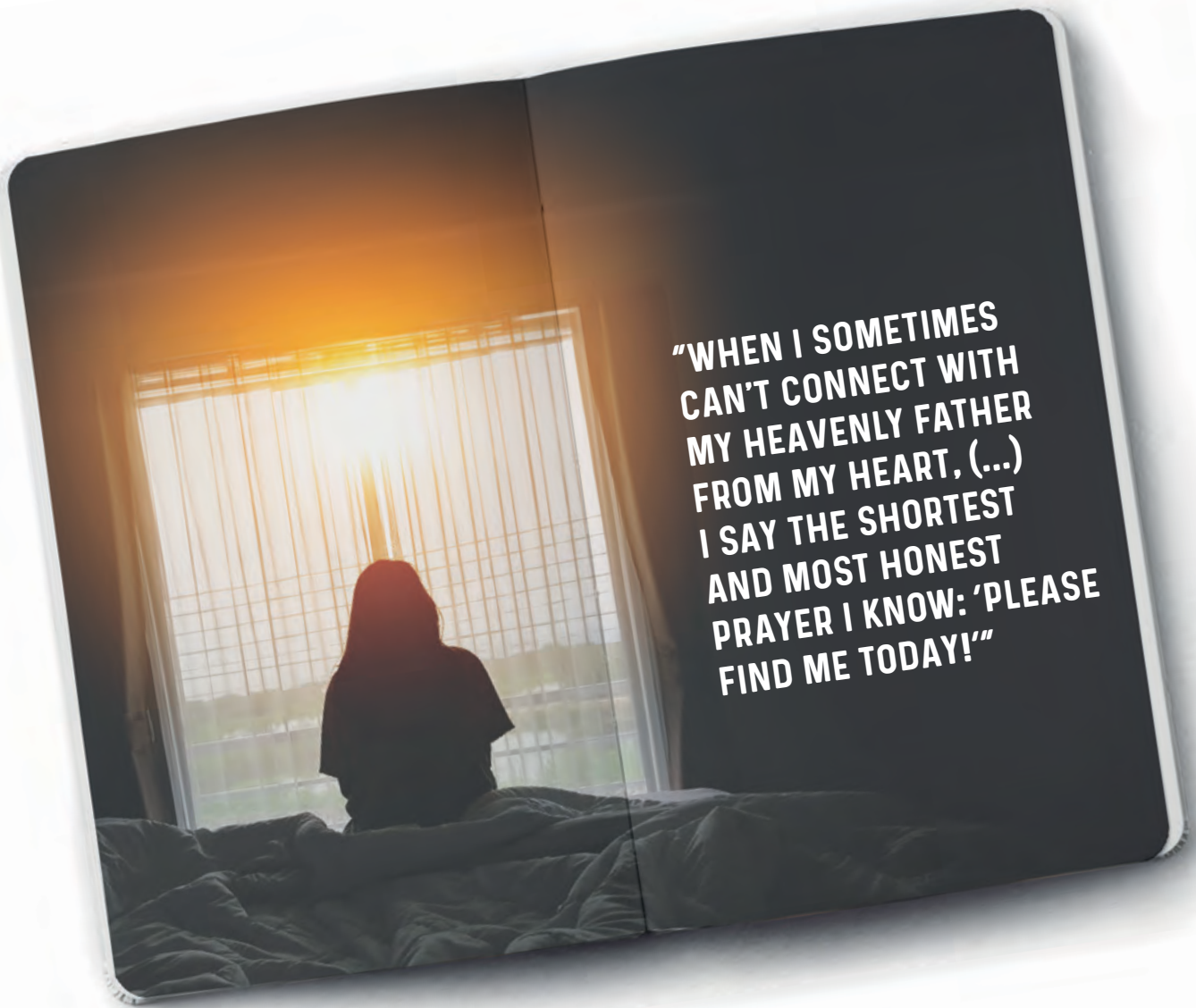
Our Prayer Experience

At this point we would like to briefly share with you some examples from our own personal prayer life.

It was not until I (Annika) was an adult that my prayer habit really took hold and became a daily thing. And in time I realized that the more important prayer is to me, the more I see God's handwriting in my daily life. God has always been there, but the more I am willing to connect with Him, the more I perceive Him.

Every Monday morning, I (Fabian) go on a prayer walk. I lay out the new week before God, all my appointments, projects and challenges, as well as all my goals and dreams. I also walk past our children's school and pray for their classes and teachers. On my prayer walk, I consciously choose not to live by my own strength, but to invite God into every area of my life.





When I (Annika) sometimes can't connect with my Heavenly Father from my heart, even after a quiet time with Him, I say the shortest and most honest prayer I know: "Please find me today!" And God always hears and answers.

For many years I (Fabian) have had a small prayer book and the moment I record a request in it, I consciously hand the situation over to God, because I no longer want to try to manage the whole thing on my own.

I (Annika) have a beautiful notebook in which I write down all the things that I experience with God. Some time ago, I started filling the book also from the back, with all the situations that have hurt me. I do that because I don't want to hold on to the pain; I want to tell God about it, so that I can be free to forgive.

We would now like to invite you to connect with the community of prayer we have started here. We would love for you to share how your prayer life is going and what prayer experiences you are having with God! Use this link to share your experience with others and with us:



Share Your Prayer Experience
<https://bit.ly/WOP24downloads>

PRAYER OF THE DAY



Dear Father,

You know the desires
that I have for my prayer life.
You know exactly what my heart longs for.
But Your ways and Your thoughts
are even higher.

Thank You for letting me dream big dreams with You!

I love to be with You.

I entrust my heart to You.
AMEN





QUESTIONS

1. **What is my most beautiful prayer experience?**
2. **If I wanted to change my prayer life, what would be my first step? When can I take my next step?**
3. **What does it mean to me personally to live purposefully?**
4. **How can I bring my emotions and all that I am, in other words, my whole heart, into the time I spend with God?**
5. **Who is my personal role model when it comes to prayer?**

A large rectangular area of graph paper with a light gray grid pattern, intended for writing answers to the questions listed above.

GROUP ACTIVITY

Materials: Colored sticky notes and markers.

Why do we sometimes associate prayer with words like boring, difficult, or monotonous?

As a group, think about how you can make prayer a highlight both in a group setting and in your personal lives. Write each idea on a sticky note and place the colored notes around the youth group room. Take a photo of the ideas and keep it as a reminder.



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

We often use the same phrases when we pray and we follow more or less the same structure. That can mean that prayer has become a habit, which is great news!

But today, try something different: Pray a prayer that you have never prayed before!

A large rectangular area filled with a light gray dotted grid pattern, intended for writing a personal prayer challenge.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*“I sought the Lord, and He heard me,
and delivered me from all my fears.”*

Psalm 34:4 (NKJV)

If you were to start writing a prayer journal today, what would its title be?
What would your first entry be?

A large rectangular area filled with a light gray dotted grid pattern, intended for writing a journal entry.



Jesus,

A MAN OF PRAYER

KEY
TEXT

**"ONE DAY SOON AFTERWARD JESUS WENT UP
ON A MOUNTAIN TO PRAY, AND HE PRAYED
TO GOD ALL NIGHT."**

LUKE 6:12 (NLT)

ICEBREAKER

IF YOU HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACCOMPANY JESUS DURING ONE DAY OF HIS LIFE HERE ON EARTH, WHICH SCENE FROM HIS LIFE WOULD YOU CHOOSE AND WHY?

A large rectangular area filled with a grid of small dots, intended for writing an answer to the question above.



*"Not even the Son
OF GOD TRUSTED
IN HIS OWN STRENGTH."*

Being like Jesus

To have physically met Jesus and personally witnessed how He lived would certainly have been a unique experience!

We will now take a look at the Gospels to learn more about Jesus' prayer habits. If we want to be like Jesus, we do not achieve this by desperately trying to do everything right, but by connecting with Him and seeking to be close to Him.

Let's see how Jesus lived His life and be inspired by the connection He had with His heavenly Father!

Seeking God's Perspective

"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there."

Matthew 14:23 (NKJV)

The events leading up to this passage give us the idea that things are about to get really interesting. John the Baptist has just been beheaded and Jesus tries to retreat to a deserted place. But the crowds follow Him, so He spends the day with them, heals their sick, and even performs a miracle to feed them.

The people are impressed by Jesus; they realize that He must have been sent by God and they want to make Him king (John 6:14-15). Jesus had once been offered all the kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8-9), but He knows that His mission is different and so He seeks time alone to be in conversation with His Father.

Jesus in Prayer – Prayer is important every day, but Jesus' actions seem to indicate that it is precisely when discouragement, temptations, or challenges are too great that prayer increases in importance and urgency. Matthew mentions Jesus praying only in this passage and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Refueling in the Quiet

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there he was praying.”

Mark 1:35 (CSB)

Jesus goes to a quiet place, away from the crowds, to spend time alone. The use of the imperfect tense indicates that this was a sustained, ongoing prayer. Charles Spurgeon once said, “Look no one in the face until you have seen the face of God. Speak with none until you have had speech with the Most High.”¹ Encountering God enables us to encounter our fellow human beings differently.

Jesus in Prayer – Not even the Son of God trusted in His own strength. In silence, in prayer with his Heavenly Father, He let Himself be equipped for the day ahead.

Praying Again and Again

“However, he continued his habit of retiring to deserted places and praying.”

Luke 5:16 (ISV)

The tense of the verb emphasizes that this is a habit. Some transcriptions add the words “again and again” for this reason. “Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going”² (attributed to Jim Ryun). We don’t have to motivate ourselves to pray every day, but we can create habits that make prayer a part of our daily routine.

**PRAYER IS NOT
A MATTER OF TIME,
BUT A MATTER
of priority.**

Jesus in Prayer – The demands of life can make you think, “I don’t have time to pray!” But Jesus demonstrated that prayer is not a matter of time, but a matter of priority. His example encourages us to make connecting and communicating with our Father the first priority in life.

Enabling the Encounter with God

“My house will be called a house of prayer.”

Matthew 21:13 (NIV)

The temple had become such a marketplace that Jesus had to clean it up. When the merchants, the money changers and their customers left the temple, the blind, the lame and the children were able to enter. After Jesus got involved, the temple did not become a holy place where only whispering was allowed—no, on the contrary, much *life* entered it (Matthew 21:14-16). On that day, the temple became a place where people could meet Jesus and God—and that is what prayer is all about. Because prayer is not a chore (something that you *have* to do) but quality time with your Best Friend.

Jesus in Prayer — Where Jesus is, the way to the Father is paved. Where Jesus is, there is restoration and healing. If Jesus were to come to your church today, what do you think He would call it? (Notice how He called the temple a “house of prayer”.) Is there anything in your church that He would need to remove or change?



**WHERE JESUS IS,
THE WAY TO THE
FATHER IS PAVED.
WHERE JESUS IS,
THERE IS**

*restoration
and healing.*



Asking for Guidance

“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”

Luke 6:12 (NKJV)

This is another passage that shows us how much Jesus prayed. If we look into the context, we discover that Jesus will call His twelve disciples the next day. He spends the night in prayer before this important decision. Luke shows us that both in the life of Jesus and in the early church, important decisions or times of crisis were marked by times of prayer.

Jesus in Prayer – God promises that He can be found if we seek Him sincerely and from the heart (Jeremiah 29:12-14). And Jesus Himself put it this way: *“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you”* (Matthew 7:7 NKJV). By spending the night in prayer before making His decision, Jesus showed that He took God at His word and that He lived what He preached. He put all His trust in the Father.

Putting God First

“He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, ‘My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.’”

Matthew 26:39 (NLT)

The life of Jesus was marked by prayer, and as we approach the climax of His mission, we find the Savior of the world on His knees once again. While the eyes of His disciples failed to stay open over and over again that night, Jesus made the same request to His heavenly Father three times, each time adding, *“Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.”*

Thanks to Jesus’ example, we learn to cling to God even when...
...we are afraid of the task before us.
...His plan does not fit our logic.
...our feelings tell us otherwise.

And when we fail, we have a faithful prayer warrior on our side (see Luke 22:32).



JESUS HAS PRAYED *for you!*

die with His Lord. Jesus knows how bitterly disappointed and ashamed Peter will feel in a matter of hours. The painful experience of his own weakness could send him on a downward spiral, but Jesus prays that Peter's faith will not fail. And Jesus goes even further. Even after having failed, he has a new mission for Peter. Once he overcomes this crisis, he is to return and strengthen his brothers and sisters in the faith.

Jesus in Prayer – This prayer shows the unconditional love of Jesus. He loves sinful people, He forgives, He sets us on the right path, He restores us and He gives us new confidence. Jesus remains the faithful God by our side in every situation of life! (See 1 John 2:1.)

Jesus' Prayer List

Perhaps this leads you think, "Good for him, good for Peter! But what about *me*?" We too long to be prayed for, to have the Son of God pray for us.

And Jesus made provision for that! Before He left this earth, He prayed His great prayer of consecration, recorded in John 17. He knew that His time on earth would soon be over, that He would return to heaven, and that His disciples would have to do without His physical presence. But He did not want to leave them on their own, so He prayed this great prayer for them. And in the middle of this prayer, we find the following verse:

"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message."

John 17:20 (NLT)

Jesus thought of every person who would ever believe in Him—including you. Jesus has prayed for *you*! He not only invites you to be a praying person; He has already included your name in *His* prayer list.

Jesus in Prayer – "Jesus, when preparing for some great trial or some important work, would resort to the solitude of the mountains and spend the night in prayer to His Father. A night of prayer preceded the ordination of the apostles and the Sermon on the Mount, the transfiguration, the agony of the judgment hall and the cross, and the resurrection glory"³ (Ellen G. White).

Fighting for Others

"But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

Luke 22:32 (NKJV)

These are the compassionate words Jesus said to the impulsive Peter who would next claim to be ready to go to prison and even

PRAYER OF THE DAY



Dear Father,

I really want to be connected to You.
You know my heart and my desires.

Sometimes I am bold and determined;
I consistently put You first.

But sometimes my priorities are upside down.

Thank You because I am your child. Always.

Thank You for allowing me to be a blessing to those around me,
even through my prayers.

I love You and
I entrust my heart to You.
AMEN



Large dotted area for writing a personal prayer.



QUESTIONS

1. **What do Jesus' prayer habits tell me about Him?**
2. **How can I tell that God cares about me (for the big things in life, as well as the small and seemingly insignificant things)?**
3. **What influences or affects the quality of my prayer time?**
4. **How can I ensure that good prayer habits do not become empty or monotonous?**
5. **How can prayer become a precious encounter with my best Friend?**

A large rectangular area of the page is filled with a light gray dot grid pattern, intended for handwritten notes or answers to the questions listed above.



**GROUP
ACTIVITY**

We have reached the end of this **STUDY GUIDE ON PRAYER** and this is a reason to celebrate! Not because everything is over (because it is not), but because we have been able to experience God's blessings in a very special way **THROUGHOUT THIS TIME TOGETHER.**

It is good to share the good that we receive. God's blessing flows through our hands and on to others. We ourselves are not left empty-handed even as we share. Receiving makes us happy, but so does giving.

So do something good as a group! Make a purchase for a family that is short on money. Give your time to someone who is lonely and visit them. Offer to help fix a bicycle, clean out the basement, clean the kitchen, etc. Brainstorm ways you can be a blessing as a group, and save the date on your calendar right away.

And through it all, pray.



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Today you can choose between several challenges:

1. Find a prayer partner!

It's easier to maintain good habits if we implement them with someone.

2. Key Takeaway

What is one thought or idea that you would like to keep and never forget?

A large rectangular area with a light gray dotted grid pattern, intended for writing a key takeaway.

Now hold on to it and read it every day for the next seven days!

3. Pray, right now!

Pour out your heart to God. Tell Him all that you experienced **AS YOU WENT THROUGH THIS RESOURCE**. Ask Him how your journey should continue now.

4. Become a prayer mentor

With whom can you share what you have experienced so far? Who can you help rescue old prayer habits or perhaps find a whole new approach to prayer?

5. Prayer in action

Organize one of the following for your youth group, small group or community:

- ✓ An evening of prayer
- ✓ A prayer room
- ✓ A prayer challenge in your community
- ✓ A prayer walk
- ✓ A prayer chain

(fill in this space with your own idea)

6. Spend 30 days in prayer using these prayer cards.



30-Day Prayer Challenge

<https://bit.ly/WOP24downloads>

7. Start a prayer journal.

8. Read one of the books in the Recommended Resources (see page 88).

9. Stick the "Prayer is a Lifestyle" sticker somewhere visible to remind yourself to keep prayer center-stage in your life.

Contact youth@eud.adventist.org to get your sticker.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

“Prayer oxygenates my spiritual heart. It is finding myself in God's presence. It is spending quality time with my best Friend. It is my encounter with God Himself.”

BOOKS

- ✓ Richard W. O’Fill. (1999). *Transforming Prayer: Praying to Become Rather Than to Receive*. Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association.
- ✓ Timothy Keller. (2014). *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- ✓ John C. Maxwell. (1996). *Partners in Prayer: Support and Strengthen Your Pastor and Church Leaders*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- ✓ Chrystal Evans Hurst. (2020). *The 28-Day Prayer Journey: A Daily Guide to Conversations with God*. USA: Zondervan. See related resources on <https://chrystalevanshurst.com/pray/>
- ✓ Karen Holford. (2003). *100 Creative Prayer Ideas for Kids — And Grown Ups Too*. USA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- ✓ Melody Mason. (2015). *Daring To Ask For More: Divine Keys for Answered Prayer*. USA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.
- ✓ Ellen G. White. (2002). *Prayer*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association. Available on <https://egwwritings.org>.
- ✓ Jana White (Ed.). *The Lord's Prayer: A Study in Matthew Chapter 6*. USA: The Daily Grace Co. Available at: www.thedailygraceco.com.

WEBSITES

- ✓ <https://www.adventist.org/prayer/>
- ✓ <https://www.adventist.org/are-there-different-types-of-prayers/>

RESOURCES

- ✓ Prayer Cards for a 30-day prayer challenge.



30-Day Prayer Challenge
<https://bit.ly/WOP24downloads>

- ✓ Prayer: Daily Conversations with God (YouVersion Bible plan)



<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/21810-prayer-daily-conversations-with-god>

- ✓ Online Study:



<https://watch.studygateway.com/28-day-prayer-journey>

MY FINAL THOUGHTS

MY PERSONAL FAVORITE QUOTE ON PRAYER IS:

.....

HOW CAN PRAYER BECOME A VALUABLE ENCOUNTER WITH MY BEST FRIEND?

.....

YOU MIGHT ALSO WANT TO CREATE YOUR OWN PRAYER QUOTE! WRITE IT DOWN HERE.

.....

MY NEXT STEPS TO GROW IN MY PRAYER LIFE ARE:

.....



***Prayer as a Lifestyle: Living in Connection with God.
A Practical Study Guide.***

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This resource is recommended to be used as the Youth Week of Prayer for 2024.

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CHAPTER 1 THE GOD I WORSHIP

- ¹ <https://bit.ly/PsammetichusExperiment>
- ² <https://bit.ly/FrederickExperiment>
- ³ Martin Luther King, Jr. *Sermon at Temple Israel of Hollywood*, delivered 26 February 1965. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/MLKsermon>
- ⁴ <https://byfaith.org/2023/02/06/the-cost-of-discipleship-by-dietrich-bonhoeffer/>
- ⁵ <https://bit.ly/SateveOlinStory>
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ <https://bit.ly/IndifferenceElieWiesel>

CHAPTER 2 WHY PRAY?

- ¹ Ellen G. White. (1915). *Gospel Workers*, p. 254. Retrieved from: <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p35.1299&index=0>

CHAPTER 3 MY ATTITUDE WHEN I PRAY

- ¹ <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/misuse-prayer>
- ² <https://bit.ly/KundenserviceHaltung>

CHAPTER 4 WHEN I DON'T FEEL LIKE PRAYING

- ¹ <https://bit.ly/UnclaimedLotteryPrize>
- ² <https://bit.ly/TimKellerKingChild>
- ³ <https://bit.ly/motivationandhabit>
- ⁴ Ellen G. White. (1915). *Gospel Workers*, p. 254. Retrieved from: <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p35.1299&index=0>
- ⁵ <https://bit.ly/MLimportantceofprayer>
- ⁶ <https://medium.com/@katiebeth0/the-power-of-prayer-df2f1e34c6e0#:~:text=Corrie%20ten%20Boom%20once%20asked%2C%20%20%20prayer%20your%20steering%20wheel,your%20answer%20to%20that%20question.>

CHAPTER 5 WHEN GOD IS SILENT

- ¹ <https://bit.ly/YourSideoftheStory>
- ² Ellen G. White. (1898). *The Desire of Ages*, p. 224. Retrieved from: <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p130.1043&index=0>
- ³ Timothy Keller. (2014). *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, pp. 228, 230.

CHAPTER 6 ALWAYS BE THANKFUL! – REALLY?

- ¹ <https://bit.ly/GratitudeRoyalRoadtoHappiness>
- ² <https://www.booklistqueen.com/the-hiding-place-by-corrie-ten-boom/>
- ³ <https://bit.ly/JohnWesleyandporter>

CHAPTER 8 JESUS, A MAN OF PRAYER

- ¹ <https://bit.ly/SpurgeonSeekGod>
- ² <https://bit.ly/motivationandhabit>
- ³ Ellen G. White. (1905). *The Ministry of Healing*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, p. 509. Retrieved from: <https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p135.2689&index=0>.

This study guide on prayer is an invitation for you to connect with God like never before.

As you go through the eight chapters included, it is our prayer that you see and experience prayer as the “breath of your soul” (Ellen G. White). Because prayer is like oxygen to your spiritual heart. Prayer is spending quality time with your Best Friend. Prayer is genuine conversation with God. Every single day of your life.

Allow this prayer journey to be life-changing. Open your heart to the presence of God Himself.

*Ask, and it will be given to you;
seek, and you will find; knock,
and it will be opened to you.*

Love, Abba

