

PRAYER

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION WITH THANKSGIVING LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO GOD.¹

Everyone prays. Even non-believers pray. When things get tough, the words “Please, God, help me” bubble up as our last resort. God, the One we turn to when everything seems hopeless. When nothing else we do or say is changing the outcome.

I would say that it was a good thing. Deep in the heart and soul of God’s creatures is a love and yearning that brings us always back to Him. But prayer is more than a means to implore help from God. It is a way to find a relationship with God. It isn’t a one way street – we cry out and God hears us. God speaks and we listen. It is a two way communication. It is the beginning and the foundation of our desire to develop our trust in God and to express our love, our thanks and our joy in Him.

Our prayer life is continuous – on-going for the rest of our lives. As we pray with ever increasing intimacy, sharing with God our innermost thoughts and desire, worries, hopes and pleadings, our faith becomes stronger. Our love for God and our trust in Him grows. Prayer is a spiritual skill that we need to develop and perfect just as a basketball player trains to achieve greatness on the court or a pianist practices to perform perfectly in the concert hall. I don’t know of any person who achieved greatness without discipline, perseverance, practice and hard work. We have to approach prayer with the same desire to be great. “Growing in character and virtue, learning to hear the voice of God in our lives and walking where he calls us – all require the discipline of prayer. And it is not enough simply to pray when we feel like it. Prayer requires a daily commitment.”²

Before we reflect on how to live a prayerful life, let’s understand what prayer is, exactly. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure.”³ It is our communication with God. It is speaking from the heart and listening by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Imagine your relationship with your best friend. Do you only call them when you need something? Are you excited to talk to them when things are going well – and life is moving just as you hoped it would? Don’t you spend as much time listening as you do talking? Would you define your friendship as a shared relationship – each giving to the other? That’s how your spiritual relationship with God should be. Talking and listening. Good and bad. But always from the heart. That’s prayer.

So, how do we pray? Like any great athlete, or musician, we listen to our coaches and we practice what they teach. In our spiritual life, they are the saints and the great spiritual leaders of our time. Reflect on what they have to say about prayer:

For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy. – St Therese of Lisieux

In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. – Mother Teresa

Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action. – Mahatma Gandhi

We tend to use prayer as a last resort, but God wants it to be our first line of defense. We pray when there's nothing else we can do, but God wants us to pray before we do anything at all. – Oswald Chambers

You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance. – Khalil Gibran

The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays. – Soren Kierkegaard

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God. – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-19

Prayer is a growing commitment in our relationship with God. It must become a regular and routine part of our life. We must set aside regular times for prayer every day. “We need to step aside from the rush of daily life and compose our souls before God, as Jesus did when he spent time with his Father.”⁴

This is the difficult part – but it is worth all the hurdles you must jump. Prayer as a part of my day centers me. It humbles me and it reminds me that, whatever happens in my day, I can count on my relationship with God to strengthen me. I try to continue my prayers to God throughout the day – remembering my prayers of thanks when a good thing happens and my prayers to God for guidance when I have decisions to make. My daily prayers remind me to call on God and look to Him in all parts of my life – at home, at work, with friends.

Jesus taught us to pray. Through His parables, He taught us to be persistent in prayer, to keep asking, to keep seeking. We must pray always in order to believe and we must believe in order to pray. It is the circle of our spiritual life.

Start growing in your relationship with God today. Don't wait – start now. Pray the prayers you know or read from daily meditations or just open your bible and read where your finger lands. Close your eyes, and meditate on what you have just recited or read. Then listen. Open your heart to God's voice. You will hear Him – in comfort, in peace, in joy.

Dear friends, making time for God regularly is a fundamental element for spiritual growth; it will be the Lord himself who gives us the taste for his mysteries, his words, his presence and action, for feeling how beautiful it is when God speaks with us; he will enable us to understand more deeply what he expects of me. This, ultimately, is the very aim of meditation: to entrust ourselves increasingly to the hands of God, with trust and love, certain that in the end it is only by doing his will that we are truly happy.⁵

Written by: Elizabeth Pietrantonio

¹ Philippians 4:6.

² Kelly, Matthew, and Matthew Kelly. *Rediscover Catholicism: A Spiritual Guide to Living with Passion & Purpose*. New & Exp. 2nd ed. S.l.: Beacon Pub., 2010.

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. New York: Doubleday, 1995, Paragraph 2565.

⁴ *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006, Page 491.

⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience 17 August 2011,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20110817_en.html