

Prayer as a Healing Path

I don't know about you, but for me and many others, prayer is tricky. How do I exert consistent prayer that actually reaches farther than my bedroom ceiling? Especially when I'm exhausted, discouraged, depressed or just not feeling 'in-tune'.

I believe that none of us have signed up for the easy life. Life is hard – by design. We are designed to make mistakes. It is through making mistakes, call it sin if you like, but by making mistakes we can learn, grow and progress. I remember years ago visiting with someone who was very wealthy. She shared with us some of her artwork, her Steinway Grand piano and her lavishly decorated home and then declared "I have everything I want. I have no need for God". Thank God, my life is such that I need God. Like you, I've had challenges, set backs, disappointments and heartbreaks. I believe part of Gods brilliant plan is that we are put into situations that are beyond our capability to get out of by our own wits and determination.

Isn't it interesting how others perceive us as opposed to how we see ourselves? A recent survey of "the popular kids" revealed that they each felt like they didn't fit in. I find that most of us feel the same. We feel like outsiders to a greater or lesser degree. Our goal and purpose with prayer is not only to commune with God but to experience a closeness, even a sense of belonging and becoming part of God, his daughters and sons.

Here are a couple of effective strategies I have discovered on my journey in my relationship with God.

I often teach my patients what I refer to as the 3-word prayer. For me this is one of the most basic of contacts with deity. In times of distress, weakness and angst, I simply cry out from my heart – GOD HELP ME! When this brief prayer is expressed, I imagine a fine filament of light connecting from Gods heart to mine. I repeat it again – God help me. And another strand of light connects us. Some days this prayer erupts from my soul 20, even 30 times. This prayer helps. As time passes your connection with God will strengthen. Give it a try.

Another type of prayer that can be profoundly beneficial is the written prayer. In the culture I grew up in, prayer is expected to be spontaneous. If I were asked to offer a prayer in church and pulled out some notes before I began it would create a stir or a least some disapproving conversation. In learning to pray, I was taught to follow a certain pattern and generally wing it or to ultimately be so in tune with the spirit that the words would be given to me as they flowed effortlessly from my mouth. Sorry, but I'm not often 'in tune' enough or eloquent as I'd like to be. Of course, I need to express myself. Pour out my heart, definitely. But most often, my words are not so carefully expressed that they adequately convey the intent of my heart. Admittedly most of my praying is spontaneous, but there are times I want a bit more. Have you ever revisited a conversation or prayer and wished you had said something differently or better?

I had an experience years ago journaling. I decided to write my prayer to God. By writing, the words came much slower than speaking. And as a result, for me, they seemed to flow less hurried and were more reflective and guided by the spirit. As this prayer flowed on, I felt inspired to say and express myself much better than I had previously. You may want to consider a prayer journal. An inexpensive lined and bound school notebook for under a dollar. Make an effort to write by hand

rather than type on a computer. There is something about forming each word by hand that lends itself to a better connection to God and spirit than by typing. That is what I have experienced.

Finally, the Recited Prayer. While many Christians rely on memorized or recited prayers (ie. The Lords Prayer), others classify recited prayers as vain repetition (with negative connotation). Many churches have some set prayers that are recited verbatim and others not so much. I have discovered that a carefully worded prayer that is written down and then recited from memory or read can guide me through the process. To be honest when I have a specific desire or challenge I am working through, I tend to fade in my consistent prayer efforts after a few days. If I have a prayer that truly expresses my desires, I have found great benefit in using the same prayer repeatedly. Of course, in my personal and intimate prayer sessions, I am free to wander wherever the spirit may guide me. But repeating a prayer day in and day out for many days will draw out of my soul a deeper and much more profound experience. It can become a much more meditative and meaningful experience. It is like memorizing a favorite piece on the piano. By playing the same piece again and again, I can uncover the secrets hidden within and between the notes. In fact, it is not until I have examined every nuance, phrase and intonation of the piece, that I discover the richness of it. I believe the great and inspired music can touch our soul with Gods. This is my listening repeatedly to a masterful piece of music can be so enriching. So too, prayer that is meticulously pondered and expressed can reach heights and depths unavailable to the casual practitioner.

I have also discovered that when I read a prayer that may have been scripted by someone else, it can express and convey words and meanings that are put better than me. It is like when someone says something and it just resonates with me and I find myself thinking, “yeah, me too – that’s how I feel”. Better yet, I can copy a prayer, tweak it to my own needs and desires and rewrite it making it mine. The process definitely evolves and rewrites are rewritten time and again. Then focus can shift and the process can begin anew.

I have really enjoyed the writings of John Eldredge. He is a Christian writer that has written extensively on many topics. On his webpage (www.ransomedheart.com), he offers many prayers that can be used verbatim or as a template in crafting your own unique that expresses your hearts desire. I invite you to go to this link and explore some of these prayers.

<https://www.ransomedheart.com/pray>

People have been offering prayers since time began. We yearn to belong. We ache for connection. Yet we struggle. Prayer is the path. But a casual or half-hearted approach will produce only lack luster results. If you are in need of healing dedicate a prayer specific to that purpose. If you haven’t yet offered a specific prayer to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, repeat this prayer – try it daily for a few weeks. If you seek freedom from addiction or unwanted behaviors, craft a specific prayer for that. **Pray and ask God what you should pray for**, then follow the quiet whisperings that come. If all you can muster at this point is the 3-word prayer – God Help Me! Then begin there. I promise, you will become a better man, a better woman. As our intent to draw closer to God is true, God will not dis you or reject you because you aren’t doing it right. But as you pray, vocally or silently, you will receive strength, hope, comfort and knowledge from the very eternal father of your soul.

Blessings,
Dr Kyle Christensen

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