

How to Pray

Biography Article
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"Prayer is entering into relationship with God so we can determine His will in the matter and call His will into existence upon the earth."
—Elisabeth Alves, *Becoming a Prayer Warrior*

CHOOSE

1. CHOOSE

2. PLACE

3. TIME

Tips for Praying

***Our prayers need to be ongoing and consistent.** Whether your work is raising a family, holding down a job, or running a ministry, carving out regular time for prayer is important.

***If possible, choose a place for praying that is quiet and free of interruptions.**

So I sought for a man among them who would stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.
Ezekiel 22:30

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"Prayer is entering into relationship with God so we can determine His will in the matter and call His will into existence upon the earth."

*Elisabeth Alves, *Becoming a Prayer Warrior* (22)*

I love this definition of Elisabeth's. It makes me feel like I'm in partnership with God by helping usher in his kingdom to the earth. Audacious work, don't you think?

Prayer can be confusing. How exactly do I go about it? What praying looks like probably differs from Christian to Christian, but I wanted to pinpoint some of the things that prayer time should include.

Consistent Prayer Time

First, our prayers need to be ongoing and consistent. See Acts 6:1-4 and Romans 12:10-12. In Acts the apostles recruited some help to free up their time for the important job of "prayer and the ministry of the word." Whether your work is raising a family, holding down a job, or running a ministry, carving out regular time for prayer is important to that work.

It helps to choose a time of day to pray and then stick to it. Part of that will be based on your own natural body clock, and the other part will be based on your schedule. It has worked

out for me to pray in the mornings because I am a morning person. I feel renewed in the mornings; I love the feeling that I have a thus-far unblemished day stretching before me, and to start it with prayer puts me in the right mindset. I also know myself. If I don't pray in the morning, the tyranny of the schedule takes over, and I rarely get back to prayer later in the day.

My college-aged daughter on the other-hand, can barely function in the mornings but comes alive in the afternoons and evenings, long after I have clocked out for the night. She likes to have her prayer time in the evenings. I also know people who pray while commuting to work by bus or car. Experiment to see what works for you.

Where to Pray

Having a special place to pray can help you focus and set the mood for prayer. In the warm months (May – October for me), my favorite prayer spot is my backyard deck. The early morning sun, birds singing, and butterflies flitting from flower to flower fill me up with God's creation, and my prayers seem to bloom right alongside the nature I'm immersed in.

In the colder months, I park on the couch by my picture window which overlooks the backyard deck. I can still see nature in the changing seasons right outside my window.

Naturally, it helps if your prayer place is relatively quiet and free of interruptions. But if you have little ones, don't be discouraged. Use the free minutes you have, and include your children when you can. What better way to instruct your children to pray than by pulling them up on your lap with you while you pray?

*Update: Special Prayer Places

I've recently discovered a church down the block from my house that has a beautiful prayer chapel that is open to the public.

Once or twice a month I love to go to this chapel for a time of in-depth, focused prayer with God. I've also found a prayer retreat center within 25 minutes from where I live. The grounds and chapel are open to the public, and they also have overnight stays that are very reasonably priced. Google *retreat centers Indianapolis* (put your city's name in place of Indianapolis) to see what may be available in your area.

Methods of Praying

Many people incorporate the **ACTS way of praying** into their prayer lives. It has been around for a long time, and is a wonderful template for a prayer time.

ACTS

- A stands for adoration. Start by praising God for who He is.
- C stands for confession. Confess your sins to God.
- T stands for thanksgiving. Thank God for the blessings in your life.
- S stands for supplication. Present your requests to God.

*Update: The Hour That Changes the World by Dick Eastman

As an update to this original post I wrote a few years ago, I am now experimenting with this prayer method by Dick Eastman outlined in his book. He breaks a one-hour block of time into 12 segments with a different emphasis of prayer in each segment. I don't use all of the 12 segments, but have tailored them to me, and my prayer life has been enriched by this method. Adding even a few of the 12 suggested segments will open up new prayer experiences for you.

Prayer Notebook

I've found it helpful to keep a **prayer notebook** of my requests. I've used many different formats over the years and am sure I will change it again, but currently I am using a 3-ring binder that I fill with graph paper. I split the graph

paper into 5 or 6 columns. Each column is assigned to a specific person, organization, church or country. I write in the things I know I need to pray for, as well as the things God brings to my mind as I pray. Sometimes I include a monthly calendar on which I have noted any upcoming prayer items that I don't want to forget. I also keep a little spiral notebook handy to record any ideas God may give me.

*Update to Prayer Notebook

My prayer notebook has changed once again. I am using a three-ring binder and have created eight tabbed sections where I record requests and answers: Monthly, Family, Friends, Strategic, Persecuted Christians, Only By Prayer, Work, and Prayer Team. Some I use more than others, with the Monthly tab getting the most use as I put the most current requests here. Tailor a system that works for you, making it as simple or as complex as you would like.

New! Prayer Journaling

I've also added **prayer journaling** to my prayer time several days a week. I have a special notebook that I use to record any insights God is giving me as I spend time in silence, listening to Him and meditating on His word. During this time, I also use colored pens and pencils to sketch out any pictures of ideas or thoughts He may put in my mind. Always make sure that these thoughts and prayers line up with what scripture says. God will not tell you things that are contrary to His Word. *(Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar. Proverbs 30:6)*

I hope these suggestions spur on your prayer life. If you'd like to explore this topic further, you may want to check out our How To Pray podcast on Praying God's Word. **What are some prayer habits you've developed? Please share them below and ...**

Pray on!

Jane