

A note from Pastor Steve

A loving, living relationship with God is impossible without prayer. We cannot know the mind and heart of Christ, receive God's direction, hear God's voice, or respond to God's call without this means of grace. We may enter God's kingdom without the benefit of some other disciplines but not without prayer. Prayer is so important that Jesus left even the needy crowd to pray (Mark 6:31). His entire life and ministry were set in the context of prayer. Those who choose to follow him can do no better than to take up his example.

Christ's prayer was not in the least for himself. There was not the slightest trace of selfishness in Christ's prayer: "If for the redemption of humankind, it is necessary that I should be killed, I am willing to go to my death." This attitude is the foundation of the life of faith. To pray as Christ is not always easy, but when we pray in this spirit, we can gain the victory."

This October we are going to be calling the church to have an intentional month of prayer. Where we take time out each day to pray for God's movement among us. This month's focus on prayer is centered around seeking God's guidance to teach us to pray. So as we enter into a season of prayer our minds are open to the movement of the Spirit in our midst.



*Raising up followers who demonstrate
Christ's love!*

Teach Us to Pray

As far as we know, the disciples never asked Jesus to teach them how to fish, preach, teach, communicate, or multiply loaves. They did ask him to teach them how to pray. Was it because they didn't need to make a living, teach, catch fish, or communicate: Probably not! Perhaps the disciples saw the remarkable relationship that Jesus enjoyed with his Abba and wanted something like it in their own lives. They too wanted to know the confidence, peace, security and love that Jesus found in this relationship with God.

Perhaps the disciples also noted that prayer was a priority for Jesus; in fact. His whole life seemed to be built around this priority. In crisis, in need, and when perplexed and weary, Jesus could be found praying. Prayer was not an additive to life; it was a way of life for Jesus.

Perhaps too the disciples saw dramatic results as the consequences of the life of prayer that Jesus lived. They did see loaves multiplied, individuals healed, storms stilled, and peace descending on many. Whatever the reason, the disciples apparently believed that praying was one of their most important lessons to be learned.

The benefit of that teaching is available to us today as we reflect on the words and life of Jesus. And the relationship with God that enriched and sustained the life of Jesus is available to us as well. I desire the trust, serenity, confidence, and deep peace that seemed to flow from the life of Jesus at every moment. Teach me to pray.



- Rueben Job

It takes practice to learn not to censor our prayer. But trying to keep secrets from God is like the three-year-old who covers her eyes and declares, “You can’t see me.” God sees into our hearts more clearly than we do. Indeed, God is the one who prompts us to look at what we have swept under the rug of our repressions and rationalizations. The spirit awakens us to what lies hidden within—sometimes gently, sometimes with a jolt, but always so God can work with our conscious consent to free us for growth.

- Marjorie Thompson

The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists in shoving it all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other, larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in.

C. S. Lewis

It was your Lord who put an end to longwindedness, so that you would not pray as if you wanted to teach God by your many words. Piety, not verbosity, is in order when you pray, since He knows your needs. Now someone perhaps will say: 'But if He knows our needs, why should we state our requests even in a few words? Why should we pray at all? Since He knows, let Him give what He deems necessary for us.' Even so, He wants you to pray so that He may confer His gifts on one who really desires them and will not regard them lightly.

Augustine.

Scripture

Luke 11:1-13

Jeremiah 33:1-9

John 17:1-11

Matthew 6:1-15

Psalm 118:1-9

Matthew 7:7-11

Ephesians 6

Nehemiah 1:1-11

John 15

Colossians 1

James 5:13-20

Teach Us to Pray

If this idea that prayer consists of attention to God seems strange to us, perhaps it is because we have given up the discipline and no longer really know how to pray. In most of our praying, our attention is neither focused nor on God. What we attend to is largely our own selves, and this in a rather generalized and ambiguous way. Prayer, both public and private, tends to be almost totally prayer of petition. We have some need, and we pray that it will be met. We are in some trouble, and we pray that God will take it away. Even when we do pray prayers of praise, thanksgiving, and confession, we do so with our attention turned to what we are pleased with, thankful for, and guilty of. We find it extremely difficult to allow our praise, thanks, confession, petition, and intercession to be formed by attention to God, and awfully easy to allow the God to whom we pray to become a mere reflection of our own concerns. At least this is what I experience myself as a prayer and what I perceive in most public worship. “Simple attentiveness” is most difficult. It is also very important.

—Craig Dykstra



Many of us have absorbed tacit or explicit taboos about what we are permitted to bring into prayer. We may have learned, for instance, that doubt, anger, hatred, or despair were inappropriate to express to God. Yet we know what happens to human relationships when negative feelings are suppressed. Communication becomes artificial or breaks down; the two parties become emotionally estranged; intimacy becomes impossible. Why should we imagine it is different with God? In prayer, we need to speak whatever truth is in us: pain and grief, fear and disappointment, yearning and desire, questions and doubt, hope and faith, failure and weakness, praise and thanks, despair and sorrow, anger and, yes, even hatred.

—Marjorie Thompson

To pray well I must first find out where I am. Self-knowledge is never procured cheaply. To pray well I need to face up to realities about myself, that I would prefer to ignore: my anxieties, fear, private griefs, failures, lovelessness, my utter lack of resources. To accept the truth about what I am, as also the truth about other human beings, demands courage. If I do not pray well, it is usually because I lack that kind of courage.

- Michael Casey

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Most of us pray that God will do something **to** us or **for** us, But God wants to do something **in** us and **through** us. That can be done only through our cooperation, through our yielding to God in Receptive Prayer, First in quietness; then in action. God can give himself to us for his purpose only as we give ourselves to him. God does not ask for a death of self but for the death of self-centeredness. He asks for the self's surrender and its offering to be used in his service.

- Grace Brame

Prayer is not primarily saying words or thinking thoughts. It is, rather, a stance. It's a way of living in the Presence. It is, further, a way of living in awareness of the Presence, even enjoying the Presence. The full contemplative process is not just aware of the Presence, but trusting, being open, allowing, submitting and delights in it.

—Richard Rohr

Praying for Boldness

Dr. Helen Roseveare, missionary to Zaire, told the following story. "A mother at our mission station died after giving birth to a premature baby. We tried to improvise an incubator to keep the infant alive, but the only hot water bottle we had was beyond repair. So we asked the children to pray for the baby and for her sister. One of the girls responded. 'Dear God, please send a hot water bottle today. Tomorrow will be too late because by then the baby will be dead. And dear Lord, send a doll for the sister so she won't feel so lonely.' That afternoon a large package arrived from England. The children watched eagerly as we opened it. Much to their surprise, under some clothing was a hot water bottle! Immediately the girl who had prayed so earnestly started to dig deeper, exclaiming, 'If God sent that, I'm sure He also sent a doll!' And she was right! The heavenly Father knew in advance of that child's sincere requests, and 5 months earlier He had led a ladies' group to include both of those specific articles."

A friend of mine spent the last year in and out of the hospital; the combination of a failing heart and cancer was almost too much to bear. His courage and determination caused him to bounce back from the edge of death, and he and his wife were able to celebrate Christmas together at home. I suggested we celebrate Communion in their home on Christmas Day. Just before the appointed time, they called and asked if we could wait another hour because their grandson, his girlfriend, and her two boys from a previous marriage would like to take Communion as well. I walked into their small home to find everyone seated at the dining room table—Grandma and Grandpa filled with anticipation; Grandson, girlfriend, and two boys noticeably nervous.

After placing the bread and wine on the table, I asked if there were any questions before we started. The eleven-year-old boy, Joshua, asked if he could sit in on the Communion. "Of course," I said and checked to see if his mother agreed. She did. After the words of institution, I began to pass the bread and wine around the group.

“May I take Communion?” Joshua asked.

“Sure, “I said. “ Do you understand what all of this means?”

The grandson interrupted, “Yes he does. I explained it to him.”

Joshua took the body and blood of Christ, and as I was preparing to say the final prayer, Joshua blurted out, “Sir, how can you hear God speak to you?”

Where this question came from I have no idea. I paused for a minute and said, “Well, Joshua, if you listen very carefully, you will know when God speaks to you. It may not be an audible voice, or it might not happen right away. But if you really listen, you will hear God speak.” The trouble with children is they believe you. Immediately Joshua squeezed his eyes, scrunched his body into listening mode, and started listening. I had given Joshua the adult answer to his question, never expecting him to put the answer to the test so soon.

“I heard Him!” Joshua yelled. “I heard God speak!”

I honestly do not think any of us in the room really believed Joshua heard God speak. We were trying to be nice, but we were not expecting God to actually show up. “What did He say?” I asked. I was patronizing him, fully expecting some childish response.

Joshua looked straight into my eyes, his own eyes wide with wonder. “He said, ‘Don’t forget me!” A boy’s risky curiosity had brought him into the presence of God.

For there is nothing that makes us love a person so much as praying for them. When you can once do this sincerely for anyone, you have fitted your soul for the performance of everything that is kind and civil toward that person. This will fill your heart with a generosity and tenderness that will give you a better and sweeter behavior than anything that is called fine breeding and good manners.

- William Law, *Total Devotion to God*

A woman went to Andrew Murray with the problem of feeling she couldn't pray. He said, "Why then, do you not try this? As you go to your inner chamber, however cold and dark your heart may be, do not try in your own might to force yourself into the right attitude. Bow before Him, and tell Him that He sees in what a sad state you are, and that your only hope is in Him. Trust Him, with a childlike trust, to have mercy upon you, and wait upon Him. In such a trust you are in a right relationship to Him. You have nothing -- He has everything." The woman later told Murray that his advice had helped her. She discovered that her trust in Christ's love for her could help her pray, even when prayer did not come easily.

Worship Service Schedule

This Month we will be looking at the ten commandments that God gave to the Hebrew people in the wilderness. The list of ten commandments that have helped to shape the world as we know it. Pastor Steve will begin again having video online of our weekend messages for those that are unable to worship with us in person. We will also be having Rev. Shannon Smith share via video with us on Sept. 26 for our Faith Promise Weekend.

- Sept 5— Ten Commandments : Context
- Sept 12— Ten Commandments : Shall
- Sept 19— Ten Commandments : Shall Not's
- Sept 26— Faith Promise Sunday (Missionary Shannon Smith)