

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 24 Sept 2018)**Read - James 5: 13-18**

Someone once said “Prayer gives you wings”, but I wonder if this is true for you? or for me? So then let’s ask the question, why pray? Many, many people will answer, “If God already knows everything, then what’s the point of prayer?”

Does it sometimes feel as if our prayers disappear into cyber space somewhere? Life just seems to get busier and busier, no real time for conversation let alone reflection, there’s just not enough time to do all we need to do. We’re jumpy, frazzled, anxious, tired. *How in the world do we find time for God?* A man by the name of George Buttrick wrote “Prayer seems to be a spasm of words lost in a cosmic indifference.” IS prayer a spasm of words cast into the cosmos somewhere? Does God hear our requests? Do they seem trivial to a very busy God? Can we get through to Him? – So many questions!

FIRST- WE PRAY BECAUSE WE CAN’T HELP IT
Research tells us that over 90% of the population prays regularly. Not just the Christians, ALL of the population! Every religious faith has some form of prayer. Tribal people dancing for healing, rain, good crops, protection. Aztecs offering human sacrifices. Muslims pray five times a day to Mecca to Allah. People in AA pray for a higher power to help them manage their unmanageable lives. We pray because we’re empty, we’re grateful, scared, helpless, for answers in a test, results from a lab, for a deal to go through at work, for dad to be healed, for forgiveness, strength, peace. Everybody prays when an airplane hits turbulence!

Meditation: How healthy is your prayer life right now? Will you make an appointment with God to pray regularly?

DAY 2**Read - James 5: 13-18**

To continue, Abraham prayed, Moses prayed, David, Nehemiah, Elijah, Ruth, Mary prayed, Peter prayed, and JESUS CHRIST prayed! Over and over in the gospels we read that Jesus goes away to be alone to pray! And if Jesus felt the need to pray regularly, *that’s good enough for us*. Think about this, the ONLY thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them, *was how to pray!* - Luke 11:1

This is James 5:16 – nearly at the end of his letter - *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.* So why pray? Because it’s powerful and effective!

SECOND - WE PRAY SO THAT GOD CAN CORRECT OUR VISION.

Those of us with failing eyesight, the curse of old age, know the miracle of putting glasses on after an eye test. Oh the bliss of being able to see clearly again! Prayer does this for us, it clears our vision, whenever we get up from praying we have a sense of cleared perspectives, a proper focus on life.

Prayer enables us to see what God wants us to see. It brings back the focus! Someone once said that God only has three answers to our prayers - . Yes! - Not Yet! - and “I have something better in mind!”. Psalm 46:10 says it all ... *“Be still and know that I am God”* the phrase ‘be still’ actually means to ‘vacate’, where we get the word ‘vacation’ from.

Prayer: Lord teach me how to pray more meaningfully.

DAY 3**Read - James 5: 13-18**

Have you ever thought of what the prayer of vacation means? Perhaps it means God is telling us to take a break! to get off our activity treadmill and let God be God, instead of trying to be God ourselves! Prayer is much more than a shopping list, it’s a step back into the reality of who GOD is! I am not in the lead role, God is!

Pray! Keep company with God, stay connected to God, Stay in communication with God. Look what it says in James 5: 13-15 *Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make them well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.*

There is, though, this skewed theology out there that says if you have enough faith, you will always be immediately healed. It also says that if you’re not healed, it’s your fault, your faith is too small. I want to go on record as saying that I don’t buy that at all. Some TV preachers come along and promise us that immediate healing is always available for believers. If that were true, why do deeply committed Christ-followers wear hearing aids and suffer strokes and walk with walkers?

If great faith and fervent prayer always produced what we immediately wanted, then Billy Graham would not have had Parkinson’s disease, Mother Teresa would still be around, and Jesus would have been spared the cross. *God knows what’s best. God knows what real healing is.* Why pray? Because Jesus told us to pray, that’s why!!

Prayer: Come into my heart Lord Jesus.

DAY 4

Read - James 5:13-16

THIRD ... WE PRAY BECAUSE WE NEED SOME PLACE TO BE COMPLETELY HONEST!! ...

And we can only be honest with God because we can't kid God. HE KNOWS! Read Psalm 139: 23-24. Prayer is just opening up to God with all the *stuff* in our lives. Where does my anger come from? Why is my mind always racing? Why do I work so hard to be accepted? Why do I do the things I do? Why do I make fun of people at work/school? Why do I feel so distant from you O God? **SEARCH ME O GOD!**

Confession is not to inform God – He already knows!! – Confession is for ME to clear away the clutter in my life. AA has a saying that says “you are as sick as your secrets!!” C S Lewis said “We must lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us”

I pray because I need somewhere to go where I can be completely honest with somebody. I need to open up with the One who already knows and accepts me and loves me anyway.

I can bring not only my deepest secrets, but I can bring my joys, my gratitude. I can bring my doubts, my fears, my gripes, my complaints, my worries. I can be myself and I can bring my uniqueness and my personality and the way I talk.

If prayer is just keeping company with God - then be personal with God. Talk normally to God, Yes! you come to him with respect and honour and awe, but you come to him with confidence because he loves you. What a friend we have in Jesus!

Prayer - What a friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer

DAY 5

Read - Revelation 1:9-11a, 8:1-5

The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of God's people, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Rev 8:4-5

If you have ever felt that your prayers bounce off the ceiling and that no one is listening, this is the passage of scripture to read. John was banished by Rome to the island of Patmos. He was cut off from loved ones and not able to work. It was a position of powerlessness that many of us can identify with.

But he was praying in the Spirit, and was therefore in touch with the power of God. Prayer is not just talking and asking, it is also about practising awareness. Prayer is about getting in touch with God's purposes and initiative. It is a relationship of closeness and communication with him.

As John prayed there was silence in heaven. Heaven listens when we pray. “Hush, hush, whisper who dares! Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.” God is listening. He takes our words and our asking seriously. But then, our prayers are mixed with **incense** (incense purifies) and **fire** (the added power of the Holy Spirit) and they come back to earth with great power and effect. George Herbert called prayer “reversed thunder”. He said “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of”.

Prayer: Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me; break me, melt me, mould me and fill me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

DAY 6

Read - Matthew 6:9-13

Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer as a **prayer we can pray regularly** and often. But it is also a model for **how** to pray, and what the main **content** of our prayers should be. Let us think about the words more deeply.

Our Father in heaven – our relationship to God can be as close and intimate as it is with a good earthly father. **Hallowed be your name** – but we must never lose our sense of awe and wonder at the greatness of God. We may want a tame, manageable God but he is never tame or manageable. He is majestically free.

May your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven – It is not just about me and God. God's plan in saving you is part of his greater plan to save the whole world.

Give us today our daily bread – he supplies our basic needs one day at a time, like the Manna in the desert. We live each day by faith and in dependence on him.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive others who sin against us – No other faith teaches about forgiveness like Jesus does. We are forgiven through God's grace seen on the cross. There is a close relationship though between God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others.

Don't let us be defeated by the power of evil – we ask God to protect us from the power of evil and not to let us be tempted beyond what we can bear.

For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen – These words were added later by Christ followers as a conclusion to the prayer. They were not part of Jesus' original words.

Meditation: Pray slowly through the Lord's Prayer section by section and think about the words as they apply to your life.