

Daily Readings

Please note: As we continue our sermon series on prayer, these passages include references to the act of prayer as well as some of the basic instruction from the New Testament. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

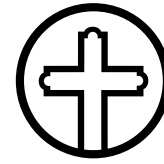
Monday, November 17 – Read Matthew 6:1-8. These words from Jesus are from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is giving specific instructions concerning the attitude of prayer. What is your attitude when you pray? Are you sincere?

Tuesday, November 18 – Read Psalm 139. This prayer is one of the great prayers of King David. Pray this Psalm as your prayer for the day. What part of your heart does God need to search and purify?

Wednesday, November 19 – Read James 5:13-18. This great passage from the New Testament reminds us of the power of prayer. Have you ever experienced the prayer of a righteous person

Thursday, November 20 – Read Psalm 22. This Psalm includes some of the final words of Jesus, “My God, my God why have thou forsaken me?” We usually consider these words as an indication of the human suffering of Jesus. Look closely at Psalm 22. Although there are words of despair and resignation, the Psalm ends with a word of great hope, victory and anticipation. Is there some are of your life that you need hope? Can you offer this to God and accept whatever answer God gives?

Friday, November 21 – Read Job 40. This prayer by Job, reminds us of the goodness of God’s providence. In what ways has God been a help and deliver?



TRIETSCH

November 16, 2008
Study Guide & Daily Readings

Fuel *Week 2 of 3*

“Running on Empty”

The Word from the Bible (New Living Translation)

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

Philippians 4:4-7

The instruction to rejoice is one of eleven references to rejoicing and joy in this letter to the church at Philippi. When reading Paul’s letters it is not unusual for Paul to encourage an outward expression of the inward joy of God’s presence. Paul is writing this letter from the dismal conditions he is experiencing in the Mamertine Prison in Rome. He wants to make sure that the Philippians face every circumstance with the same confidence and peace that he is facing his own time of trial.

In verse five Paul reminds the reader, “...the Lord is coming soon.” The significance of this verse is that Paul believes that the Lord is near. When we compare this to similar passages in I Corinthians 15 and Thessalonians 4, Paul clearly expected to see the return of Jesus in his life time.

In verse 6 Paul turns to the subject of prayer. Paul says pray about everything. In I Thessalonians 5, he says pray without ceasing. Prayer is a vital part of his understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ. Without prayer, the Christian life becomes empty and void of the confidence and power that comes from believing. Specifically, for Paul thanksgiving for what has been already given is a solution to anxiety. This counting your blessings comes as a reminder of what God has done, can do, and will do in the future. God’s peace exceeds anything we understand because it is given in the midst of difficulties.

Joy and Peace

In a world of great stress and anxiety, the qualities of joy and peace are somewhat fleeting. Everyone is trying to find the kind of peace and joy Paul speaks in his letters. They look in relationships, self-help groups, meditation, and the like to find relief from the pressures of today. In extreme cases this search leads to self destructive and escape patterns that only make matters worse.

Paul is recommending prayer as an antidote for the out of control world in which we live. Prayer brings us into alignment with God's will for our lives. Prayer provides the way for us to find the God intended person we were made to be.

Obstacles

In John Maxwell's book, Partners in Prayer, he list 10 obstacles or what he called 'prayer killers'. This is not an exhaustive list, but represents the many ways we sabotage the discipline of prayer. Not unlike the same lack of discipline that undermines our efforts to live a healthier and more fit live style modern day health and fitness trend, these obstacles stand as excuses or rationalities for something we want and need to do. These hindrances could include unresolved guilt, laziness, apathy, self-reliance, bitterness, or lack of understanding of prayer. Everyone has their own set of reasons and each reason leads to the same result – frail spirituality that weakens our relationship with God.

ACTS – Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication

Many new Christians use this formula as a reminder of the basic elements of prayer. In the early stages of learning to pray, using these four elements are important in our prayer life. The prayer begins with a phrase of adoration to God. Second we reveal ourselves to God through a time of confession. Third, we thank God for the many blessing that are ours as forgiven followers of Christ. Fourth and finally, we make our request known to God.

As our prayer life matures, we no longer need this structure as our prayers flow out of a genuine relationship with God. Our prayers become a time of listening as well as speaking. Prayer finally becomes like a conversation with someone who loves us and we are returning that love.

Other Suggestions

Calendars –

Many Christians put reminders in their calendar and PDAs as a way to make sure a busy schedule does not impede their prayer disciplines. These reminders come not just as a time to stop and pray, but also a time to remember God in the current activity that is underway. We can even use the activity as a means of prayer. For example, while driving, we might pray, "God as I drive my car, keep me safe and may you not only control the ways of my car but also the ways of my life."

Prayer Partners -

Prayer Partners are accountability partners as wells as another prayer to lift up. Usually, prayer partners have certain times during the day, week or month that they pray. Often these prayers are shared over the phone.

Prayer Groups -

Prayer Groups are weekly are monthly groups that meet to study some aspect of prayer and to pray for each other as well as specific prayer concerns. Members of these groups hold each other accountable for the practice of prayer.

Traditions –

Traditions come in many forms. Family traditions might include prayers around daily events like meals, bedtime and leaving for work or school. Some families take extra care in sharing blessing and concerns as part of those prayer times. Holidays and special occasions like birthdays are other times to build traditions around prayer. Traditions hold us accountable as a group to repeat these efforts daily, weekly, monthly, or seasonally.

Praying the Scriptures -

Praying the scriptures is a long time practice of using the scripture as prayers. Some passages, like the Psalms, were meant for this purpose.