



ARTICLE

Prayer as a Spiritual Discipline

DAVID PLATT

FEB 5, 2021

There is so much to say about the spiritual discipline of prayer, more than can be covered in one article. Out of the various ways we could approach this discipline, it may be helpful to consider three different reasons why we ought to pray every day.

1. We Pray to Express the Depth of Our Daily Need for God.

Our conviction every day in prayer is that we can do nothing without Jesus. Jesus told us this in John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Prayer is the intersection between our complete inadequacy to live out the Christian life on our own and God’s complete adequacy to give us all we need as His children so that we might live in and through him. In this sense, then, there is no activity in the life of a Christian that doesn’t require a prayerful attitude, a prayerful dependence on God to do that which we cannot do ourselves.

We need God's grace, God's power, and God's provision for everything we do, every single day. So this is not even just a call to daily prayer: it's a call to continual, moment-by-moment prayerful dependence on God, which means we even need His grace to pray!

2. We Pray to Explore the Mystery of Daily Intimacy with God.

Notice what Jesus said just before he gave his disciples what we refer to as "The Lord's Prayer": "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do ... for your Father in heaven knows what you need before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:7).

God is not up in heaven with a steno pad writing down your requests, saying, "Oh, man, I hadn't even thought about that. That's a good one!" No, he already knows what you need (and he delights to meet our needs). The heart of prayer is what happens when you're in a room alone with the Father in heaven and you realize there is intimacy to be found with God. More than you're desperate for *something*, you're desperate for *Someone*.

We read in Exodus 33 that when Moses would go outside the camp to meet with God at the tent of meeting, the people would rise up and watch until Moses entered. The pillar of cloud would descend, and all the people would worship as Moses met God "face to face." After Moses had left the tent, we're told that his assistant, Joshua, "would not depart from the tent" (Exodus 33:7–11).

Imagine this scene: everyone stands in awe because a man is meeting with God. And you and I have this privilege on a moment by moment, day by day basis! Set aside a regular time and place and receive the reward your Father has for you (Matthew 6:6).

3. We Pray to Experience the Power of Daily Being Used by God.

The Bible is replete with promises from God in prayer. God has ordained prayer as a means by which we participate with Him in His purposes in the world. As we pray, He acts.

Now it's not that we're changing God's mind or changing God's plans. I don't want to change God's mind or change God's plans How ridiculous would it be for me (or you), with our finite knowledge and feeble wisdom, to say to an infinite God with unfathomable wisdom, "Here's what I think's best, so why don't you conform Your will to mine?" No, we trust God, and as we do, we pour out our hearts to Him. The design of prayer is that we would get the help and God would get the glory (Psalm 50:15; John 14:13).

Notice, then, that it's *God's* power that matters in prayer. In and of itself, prayer as an exercise is useless. All kinds of people in the world pray—Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and animists pray. So, our goal is not just to be people of prayer. What matters most is the object of our prayer. The power of people who connect with Almighty God is unstoppable.

And for those in Christ, we have the privilege of coming daily to a Father who has all authority (Matthew 6:9), is always approachable (Psalm 27:8; 55:17), and is always active in the world (John 5:17; Isaiah 40:28–31).

DAVID PLATT

David Platt serves as pastor at McLean Bible Church in Washington, D.C. He is the founder and chairman of Radical. He is the author of several books, including Radical, Radical Together, Follow Me, Counterculture, and Something Needs to Change.