

I. THE PROBLEM THAT EXISTS

It just might be that the people of God have never suffered from as much *prayerlessness* as now exists in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The problem: we can pray very repetitive prayers -- praying the same old things about the same old things.

We believe in prayer (yes, of course we do!) -- and the Spirit of God prompts us to pray, but because we always say the SAME old things about the same OLD things, it can seem though all we do in prayer is simply 'HEAP UP EMPTY PHRASES'.

We often can fall prey to some of the tools that Satan uses to KEEP Christians from praying powerful prayers...

[in other words, what are some cunning deceptions of Satan?]

- 1. Satan fuels the spirit of rugged individualism** -- by keeping Christians independent of each other, they are thus independent from God and find themselves frustrated in their individualistic prayer lives.
- 2. Satan digs ruts of boring prayer.** When believers sometimes try to pray together, the prayer meetings are surely based more on human needs than on God's power. Indeed, these prayer meetings actually foster boredom, gossip and even they create a sense of passionless, boring 'prayer' times.
- 3. Satan delights to cultivate theological orthodoxy without spiritual passion.** Yes, it's mighty and powerful to get Bible loving Christians to delight in theological precision and correctness without spiritual intimacy with Christ.
- 4. Satan encourages idle preaching on prayer.** Sure, any preacher can preach on praying more. but they often fall on deaf ears, especially when the leaders themselves do not model passionate prayer (privately and publicly). Satan loves to keep pastors content with *talking about prayer* rather than leading their people in extraordinary prayer gatherings.
- 5. Satan promotes a 'success mentality' in the ministry.** Indeed, there is a subtle cancer that can grow deep down where a church can PROMOTE church growth as a replacement for real revival. This is simple: it happens when the interest focuses more on numbers, activities, ministries, strategies, events. This keeps people away from brokenness, repentance, and a passion for God's presence.

Wanna know the solution?

"Open the Bible
Start reading it
Pause at every verse
Turn it into a prayer." (John Piper)

Selected Scriptures — “Help for Your Prayer Life: How to Pray the Bible & Make God’s Words Your Words”

John Piper: "I have seen that those whose prayers are most saturated with Scripture are generally most fervent and most effective in prayer. And where the mind isn't brimming with the Bible, the heart is not generally brimming with prayer."

"Prayer is best experienced with an open Bible" (Daniel Henderson)

II. THE REASONS TO PRAY THE WORD

1) Biblically

2) Personally

“Pray over the Scriptures. Christians just setting out on the path of prayer sometimes pray for everything they can think of, then they glance at their watches, and discover they have been at prayer for all of 3 or 4 minutes! This experience sometimes generates feelings of defeat, discouragement, even despair. A great way to begin to overcome this problem is to pray through various biblical passages" (DA Carson).

**First, hear FROM God (=Bible)
Then, talk TO God (=prayer)**

III. HOW TO PRAY THE WORD

SO -- WHERE TO START?

A Simple Guide to Praying Scripture:

1. Read the **passage** slowly (a verse)
2. **Repeat** a phrase
3. **Turn** the words into a prayer
 - The 3 R's:
 - ✓ **Rejoice** [I praise you because...],
 - ✓ **Repent** [Forgive me for...],
 - ✓ **Request** [I ask that you would...]
4. Pray that **verse** until you're done. Then **go** to the next verse. (If that verse is unclear to you or of nothing comes to mind, go to the following verse.)

“Praying the Bible isn’t complicated. Read through a few verses of Scripture, pause at the end of each phrase or verse, and pray about what the words suggest to you.”

—Don Whitney

Some Simple Helps (from Don Whitney)

- ▶ If you’re praying through a psalm...
- ▶ you simply read that psalm line by line, talking to God about whatever thoughts are prompted by the inspired words you read.
- ▶ If your mind wanders from the subject of the text, then take those wandering thoughts Godward, then return to the text.
- ▶ If you come to a verse you don’t understand, just skip it and go to the next verse.
- ▶ If you don’t understand that one, move one.
- ▶ If you do understand it but nothing comes to mind to pray about, go to the next verse.
- ▶ If sinful thoughts enter in, pray about them and go on.
- ▶ You may read 20 or 30 verses in a psalm and yet on a given day you have only 5 or 6 things come to mind. No problem.

IV. AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO PRAY THE BIBLE

V. WORKSHOP: PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Some possible psalms:

- ✓ Psalm 1
- ✓ Psalm 19
- ✓ Psalm 27
- ✓ Psalm 31
- ✓ Psalm 34
- ✓ Psalm 42
- ✓ Psalm 63
- ✓ Psalm 100
- ✓ Psalm 103
- ✓ Psalm 130
- ✓ Psalm 139
- ✓ Psalm 119*

Another plan: start tomorrow with Psalm 1, then Psalm 2 the next day & work your way thru *God’s prayerbook*.

Example from George Mueller:

Man of faith; cared for 1,000’s of orphans in the 19th century in England:

- Mueller noted that for years he began to pray without starting in the Bible in the morning. Inevitably, his mind wandered sometimes for 10, 15, even 30 minutes.
 - Then when he began to start each morning with the Bible to nourish his soul, he found his heart being transformed by the truth, resulting in spontaneous prayers of confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and supplication. This became his daily experience for decades, resulting in great personal growth and power for life & ministry.
- **In his autobiography, Mueller noted that this kind of Scriptural praying is...**
 - "Not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts. When we pray, we speak to God. Now, prayer, in order to be continued for any length of time in any other than a formal manner, requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire, and the season, therefore, when this exercise of the soul can be most effectually performed is after the inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us, to encourage us, to comfort us, to instruct us, to humble us, to reprove us"
- **He continues...**
 - "The difference, then, between my former practice and my present one is this: formerly when I rose up (in the morning), I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer ... But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often, after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first 10 minutes, or quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I ONLY THEN really began to pray.
 - **BUT NOW (having adapted this new practice) -- Mueller writes:** "I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. FOR MY HEART BEING NOURISHED BY THE TRUTH, being brought into experimental (today: "experiential") fellowship with God, I speak to my Father and to my Friend (vile though I am and unworthy of it) about the things THAT HE HAS BROUGHT BEFORE ME IN HIS PRECIOUS WORD. It often now astonishes me that I did not sooner see this point."

William Gurnall, 17th c. Puritan wrote:

"Prayer is nothing but the promise [of God] reversed, or God's Word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again..."

"Furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers, and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith, when strengthened, will make thee fervent, and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer ... The mightier any is in the Word, the more mighty he will be in prayer..."

Additional Quotes:

- ✓ "Scripture is the best support for a vibrant prayer life" (James & Joel Beeke)
- ✓ We need to grow in a "greater dependence on the Holy Spirit & a lifelong pattern of praying Scripture promises & Scripture truth" (Joel Beeke)
- ✓ "Do you need instruction in how to pray? Encouragement to keep on praying? Guidance in how to pray, what to pray for? The words to express your desires? Look to Scripture, and learn to pray. Seek the Spirit's wisdom to pray with Scripture" (Joel Beeke)
- ✓ "One reason your prayer life may be drooping is that you have neglected the Holy Scriptures. Prayer is a two-way conversation. We listen to God, not just to talk to Him. We do not listen to God by emptying our minds and waiting for a thought to spontaneously come to mind. That's non-Christian mysticism. We listen to God by FILLING our minds with the Bible because the Bible is God speaking in written form" (Joel Beeke)

TIPS FOR PRAYING THE WORD OF GOD

1. Realize that there is a direct connection between the degree to which our minds are shaped by Scripture and the degree to which our prayers are answered. Jesus said, “If you abide in me *and my words abide in you*, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7).
2. Remember that, as D. M. McIntyre says, God only answers petitions that his Son has had a hand in formulating. “If we ask anything *according to his will* he hears us” (1 John 5:14).
3. Note that the early church prayed Scripture. For example, the prayer of Acts 4:24–30 quotes Psalm 2. Also Old Testament prayers like Ezra’s prayer in Nehemiah 9:6–37 are rehearsals of biblical history and biblical texts.
4. Praying the Word means reading (or reciting) Scripture in a spirit of prayer and letting the meaning of the verses become our prayer and inspire our thoughts.
5. There are many possible ways to do it, not just one. It can be done alone or in groups. You can pause after each phrase, or each sentence, or each paragraph, or each chapter.
6. I would suggest the following **procedure** as a starter:
 1. Find a quiet time and place.
 2. Begin with a brief prayer like, “O Lord, I need you, I come seeking you and needing help. Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of the word” (Psalm 119:18).
 3. Read a chapter of an epistle quickly to get the gist of it. The reason for this is that the meaning of the individual sentences is controlled by their context. We must not make a verse mean anything we like.
 4. If anything has “jumped out” as especially relevant to you, dwell on it and let it inspire and shape your prayer even before you go back to read a sentence at a time.
 5. If you bump into difficulties you can’t understand, make a mental note of it for later thought and research. Be honest. But then move on to what does seem clear.
 6. Now go back to the first sentence and read it with the question: If this sentence were to become a prayer about my life, what would it sound like? It may convict you and lead you to a prayer of confession and repentance. It may inspire you to pursue a new act of obedience and lead to a prayer for power and enablement.
 7. Try running the verse through your day and seeing its relation to breakfast and work and leisure plans. Try seeing it in relation to different people at home, work, and church. You will find one verse can produce a half hour of prayer when viewed from a dozen different situations and relationships.
 8. Try to build biblical ways of speaking into your head and heart. Especially important here is the need to enrich our vocabulary of *praise*. The psalms are great for this.
 9. If this all seems difficult, try the simplest form of praying Scripture first; namely, praying Scripture prayers, like Acts 4:24–30; Ephesians 1:16–23; 3:14–19; Philippians 1:9–11; Colossians 1:9–14; 1 Thessalonians 3:11–13; Hebrews 13:20–21; Revelation 4:8, 11; 5:9–10, 12–14, etc. All you need to do here is pretend that you are the biblical author and then read it as your own, perhaps changing some pronouns.
 10. If you have a list of concerns that you want to pray for, read the chapter a third time for clues as to how these things should be prayed for.

John Piper

Praying For Missionaries

Mt 13:38.....Father, I pray for those out in the mission fields,
 Mt 13:38.....spreading the good news of the Gospel,
 Mt 24:14.....in this country and around the world.
 1Jn 3:17.....They have seen their brothers' needs
 1Jn 3:17.....and have not shut up their hearts from them,
 3Jn 1:7.....but have faithfully gone forth into all the earth.
 2Tim 1:9.....Thank you that they are called with a holy calling,
 2Tim 1:9.....not according to their works,
 2Tim 1:9.....but according to Your own purpose, Father.
 1Jn 3:16.....Out of love they have laid down their lives
 Jas 1:25.....and determined to be doers of the work, not hearers only.
 Act 16:24.....I pray for those in prison for their beliefs.
 2Tim 1:8.....Not being ashamed, they share in the sufferings for the Gospel,
 2Tim 2:10.....and endure all things for the sake of those sovereignly chosen for salvation.
 Heb 6:10.....Do not forget their work and labor of love.
 2Tim 4:17.....Stand with them and strengthen them.
 2Tim 4:18.....Deliver them from every evil work and preserve them.
 Phil 1:12.....Cause all the circumstances which have happened to them actually
 Phil 1:12.....turn out for the furtherance of the Gospel.
 Phil 2:16.....Help them to hold fast to the Word of life
 Eph 5:10.....proving what is acceptable to the Lord,
 Eph 5:11.....exposing the unfruitful works of darkness,
 Phil 2:15.....and shining as bright lights in a dark world.
 2Thes 3:8.....Let their hard work be an example to us,
 1Thes 3:2.....as we send fellow laborers and ministers of God
 1Thes 3:2.....to encourage and establish them concerning their faith,
 1Thes 3:3.....so that they will not be shaken by afflictions.
 1Thes 2:2.....Give them the boldness to speak the Gospel in the midst of conflict
 1Cor 2:4.....in demonstration of the Spirit and power through the going forth of the Word
 Col 4:17.....and help them to fulfill the ministry they have received in the Lord.

Praying For Your Church

1Pet 5:6.....Heavenly Father, we humble ourselves under Your mighty hand.
 1Jn 1:9.....Forgive us for our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 Heb 10:22.....Let us draw near to You with a true heart in full assurance of faith,
 Heb 10:22.....having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,
 Heb 10:22.....and our bodies washed with pure water.
 Col 3:16.....Let Your Word dwell in us richly.
 Col 1:9.....Fill us with the knowledge of Your will,
 Col 1:9.....in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,
 Col 1:10.....that we may live and conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of You,
 Col 1:10.....fully pleasing You, and being fruitful in every good work.
 Eph 4:23.....And, by being renewed in the spirit of our minds,

Selected Scriptures — “Help for Your Prayer Life: How to Pray the Bible & Make God’s Words Your Words”

Col 3:12.....that we put on tender mercies, kindness, humility,
 Col 3:12.....meekness, longsuffering: bearing with and forgiving one another.
 Eph 4:13.....That we dwell together in the unity of the faith,
 1Thes 5:12.....recognizing those who labor among us,
 1Thes 5:13.....esteeming them highly in love for their work's sake.
 1Cor 1:10.....I pray we all speak the same thing, with no divisions among us,
 Phil 1:27.....standing fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith.
 Heb 13:9.....That we're not carried about with various and strange doctrines,
 2Tim 2:15.....But we study, rightly dividing the word of truth.
 Jude 1:16.....That we're not murmurers, complainers, walking after our own lusts,
 1Tim 6:18.....but are rich in good works, ready to give and willing to share.
 Eph 4:16.....I pray that the whole body be knit and joined together,
 Eph 4:16.....and that every part does its share causing growth to the body.
 1Pet 4:10.....As each one has received a gift, let him minister it,
 Phil 2:4.....looking out for the interests of others.
 1Pet 1:22.....Let us all fervently love one another with a pure heart,
 2Jn 1:8.....so that we do not lose the things we have worked for.
 1Pet 4:7.....Let us become serious and watchful in our prayers,
 Eph 5:16.....redeeming the time, for the days are evil.
 Heb 12:1.....Running with endurance the race that is set before us,
 Col 3:2.....setting our minds on things above and not on things on the earth.
 Phil 3:14.....But pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God.
 Eph 6:11.....Putting on the whole armor of God that we may stand against the devil.
 Acts 4:29.....That we will speak forth Your Word with great boldness to the lost world.

Praying For Your Pastors

Ps 31:23.....Father, I thank You that our pastors are faithful,
 Ps 31:23.....and that You preserve them.
 Prov 28:20.....That they abound with blessings,
 Gal 6:9.....and do not grow weary in well doing.
 Phil 1:6.....That You who began a good work in them will perfect it.
 Eph 2:10.....They are Your workmanship created in Christ Jesus,
 Heb 13:21.....and equipped in every good thing to do Your will.
 Heb 13:21.....Work in them that which is well-pleasing in Your sight.
 2Cor 9:8.....Let all grace abound toward them, having sufficiency in all things,
 2Cor 9:8.....and an abundance for every good work.
 2Cor 9:6.....Because they have sowed bountifully, they will reap bountifully,
 1Cor 3:6.....and whether they plant or water, Father, You give the increase.
 2Cor 2:14.....I pray that they continually triumph in Christ,
 2Cor 2:14.....diffusing the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.
 Ps 32:8.....Instruct them and teach them in the way they should go;
 1Cor 2:10.....reveal the deeper things of God to them by Your Spirit.
 2Tim 2:21.....Let them be vessels of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master,
 2Tim 2:21.....prepared for every good work.
 1Pet 5:2.....Shepherding the flock willingly, eagerly, and being an example to them.

Selected Scriptures — “Help for Your Prayer Life: How to Pray the Bible & Make God’s Words Your Words”

1Cor 2:4.....Their speech and preaching is in demonstration of the Spirit and power.
 2Tim 4:2.....And they are instant in season and out of season to preach the Word.
 Deut 31:6.....They are strong and of good courage for You, Lord, go with them.
 Ps 27:14.....They wait on You, and You strengthen them in their heart.
 Titus 1:5.....Help them set in order things that are lacking,
 Titus 1:5.....and appoint elders in every city.
 2Cor 10:4.....I tear down the strongholds over the pulpit.
 Gal 3:13.....They are redeemed from the curse of the law.
 Cor 12:11.....Father, let the gifts and anointings on their lives come forth.
 Luke 1:45.....Birth the things that You have spoken to them in their hearts,
 Acts 6:4.....as they continually give themselves to prayer
 2Tim 4:2.....and the faithful preaching ministry of the Word.

Praying For The Children

Acts 19:20.....I thank you Father that Your Word prevails over our children.
 Isa 54:13.....That they are taught of the Lord and continue to be
 Prov 13:1..... the fruit of godly instruction and correction.
 Isa 54:13.....Great is their peace and undisturbed composure.
 Prov 2:6..... Father, give us counsel and wisdom in bringing up our children.
 1Pet 1:14..... Grow them, please, to be obedient, not conforming to the things of the flesh,
 1Pet 1:15..... but holy, in all conduct.
 1Pet 2:2..... desiring the pure milk of the Word that they may grow thereby.
 Jas 1:19.....That they are swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.
 Heb 13:5..... Let their conduct be without covetousness,
 Heb 13:5..... and that they would be content with what they have.
 Heb 13:16..... That they would not forget to do what is right and to share.
 2Pet 3:18..... I pray that they grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord,
 1Thes 4:1..... and abound more and more in how they should walk and please You.
 1Pet 5:5..... That they submit to their elders, and to one another,
 1Pet 5:5..... being clothed with humility.
 1Pet 5:7..... That they cast their cares upon You, Father, for You care for them.
 Philem 1:6.....Let them be those who effectively share their faith.
 2Tim 1:7not having a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.
 2Tim 1:9.....Father, Please work in them to save them and call them with a holy calling,
 2Tim 1:9not according to their works, but according to Your own purpose.
 2Tim 4:18.....Deliver them from every evil work and preserve them.
 John 10:5They will by no means follow strangers (evil teachers), not knowing their voices.
 2Tim2:22They abide with others who call on the Lord out of a pure heart,
 Jas 3:10and cursing comes not out of their mouth.
 1Jn 5:18Because Jesus keeps His elect safe, let them believe & be preserved by grace.
 Ps 91:11.....Give Your angels special charge to accompany, defend, preserve
 Ps 4:8.....and provide safety for them, day and night.
 1Jn 2:5Because they keep Your Word, Your love is being perfected in them.
 1Jn 2:15They do not love the world or the things in the world,
 3Jn 1:11.....and they do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.

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1Jn 1:7They walk in the light as You are in the Light,
 Jas 4:8cleansing their hands and purifying their hearts,
 2Tim 2:22They follow after righteousness, faith, love, and peace.
 Heb 13:18.....They have a good conscience and desire to live honorably,
 Prov 3:4having favor and high esteem with God and man.

Praying For The Nations

Joel 3:12.....Let the nations be awakened!
 Isa 1:2.....Let the earth hear the voice of the Lord!
 Ps 9:20.....Judge the nations in Your sight, Father, and put them to fear,
 Ps 9:20.....that they might know themselves to be but men.
 Rom 8:22.....Father, the whole creation groans and labors
 Rom 8:21.....to be delivered from the bondage of corruption,
 Rom 8:21.....into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
 Jn 15:26.....Send forth Your Spirit of Truth to bear witness of You,
 Jn 16:8.....and to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.
 Eze 14:6.....Cause them to repent and to turn from their idols.
 Hag 2:7.....Shake the nations, so they will come to the Desire of All Nations(Jesus).
 Num 23:24.....Father, cause Your people to rise up.
 Joel 3:11/Eph 6.10.....Gather Your mighty ones to prepare for war.
 Jer 49:14.....Send Your ambassadors into all the nations.
 Col. 4:3.....Open to them a door for the Word, to speak the mystery of Christ,
 Mt 24:14.....that the gospel of the kingdom may be preached in all the world.
 Ps 111:6.....You have declared to Your people the power of Your works,
 Ps 111:6.....in giving them the heritage of the nations.
 Phil 2:10.....Let every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord!
 Isa 61:11.....Cause righteousness and praise to spring forth.
 Hab 2:14.....Let the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory
 Hab 2:14.....of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
 Isa 43:9.....Father, gather the nations together,
 Ps 22:27.....that they may worship Thee,
 Ps 46:10.....and exult Thee in all the earth.
 Gal 3:8.....Let all the nations be blessed through Your people.
 Isa. 49:6.....Send forth Your salvation to the ends of the earth,
 Mk 12:36.....and make Your enemies to be Your footstool.

EXHORTATION TO PRAYER (WHAT VARIOUS HINDRANCES)*To the tune of: “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us”*

What various hindrances we meet,
In coming to the mercy-seat!
Yet who that knows the worth of prayer,
But wishes to be often there?

Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love;
Brings every blessing from above.

Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian’s armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.

While Moses stood with arms spread wide,
Success was found on Israel’s side;
But when, through weariness, they failed,
That moment Amalek prevailed.

Have you no words? ah! think again;
Words flow apace when you complain,
And fill your fellow-creatures’ ear
With the sad tale of all your care.

Were half the breath thus vainly spent,
To heaven in supplication sent,
Your cheerful song would oftener be,
“Hear what the Lord has done for me.”
—William Cowper

DEAR SHEPHERD OF THY PEOPLE, HERE*To the tune of: “Amazing Grace”*

Dear Shepherd of thy people, here
Thy presence now display;
As thou hast given a place for prayer,
So give us hearts to pray.

Show us some token of thy love,
Our fainting hope to raise;
And pour thy blessings from above,
That we may render praise.

Within these walls let holy peace,
And love, and concord dwell;
Here give the troubled conscience ease;
The wounded spirit heal.

May we in faith receive thy word,
In faith present our prayers,
And, in the presence of our Lord,
Unbosom all our cares.

And may the gospel’s joyful sound,
Enforced by mighty grace,
Awaken many sinners round,
To come and fill the place.
—John Newton

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and
griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in
prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless
pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in
prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load
of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in
prayer.
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the
Lord in prayer!
In His arms He’ll take and shield you; you will find a
solace there.

—Joseph Scriven