



PRAYER AS A HABIT

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is one of the most profound ways a person communicates with God. Through prayer, gratitude is expressed, sin is confessed, wisdom is sought, and a deeper relationship with the Lord is formed. Like all relationships, connection with God is built on communication, and prayer is central to this process. However, cultivating a habit of prayer is not always easy.

Throughout history, even devoted believers have spoken about the difficulty of prayer. Dallas Willard once said, “Prayer is talking with God about what we are doing together.” Yet he also acknowledged that establishing this kind of dialogue requires intentionality and perseverance.

Despite its challenges, prayer is vital to the Christian life. When Jesus came to earth, prayer surrounded His ministry (Luke 3:21; 23:46). He spent intentional time in prayer, both with others (Matthew 11:25–26; Luke 3:21; John 11:41–42; John 12:27–28) and in solitude (Matthew 14:23; 26:36–46; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). In the same way, Paul’s ministry was marked by prayer. He prayed for clarity in hardship (2 Corinthians 12:8–10), gratitude for others (Romans 1:8–10), spiritual growth in others (Philippians 1:9–11), and he regularly asked others to pray for him (Colossians 4:2–4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1–5).

Followers of Jesus are called to be people of prayer in all circumstances. As Paul instructed in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, “pray without ceasing.” Developing prayer as a discipline requires consistency and intentionality. Like the disciples in Luke 11:1, believers can ask Jesus to teach them to pray. He has provided a guide in Matthew 6:5–15, showing not only a pattern for prayer but also the posture and motivation behind it.

THE CHALLENGE OF PRAYER

Prayer is vital, but it is also difficult. Many great thinkers and prayerful believers throughout history have acknowledged this struggle. C.S. Lewis remarked, "Prayer doesn't change God; it changes me." This transformation, though essential, often requires persistence and effort.

Henri Nouwen noted, "Prayer is not what is done by us, but rather what is done by the Holy Spirit in us." This reminds believers that prayer is not about eloquent words or perfect routines, but about surrendering to God's work in the heart. Cultivating a habit of prayer involves showing up, even when it feels difficult. As Oswald Chambers wrote, "Prayer does not fit us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work."

These reflections reinforce that the effort required for prayer is worthwhile. Developing a consistent prayer life takes discipline, but the results are deeply transformative.

THE POSTURE OF PRAYER (MATTHEW 6:5–8)

In Matthew 6:5–8, Jesus emphasizes humility in prayer. He contrasted two men in Luke 18:9–14. One, a religious leader, boasted about his righteousness, while the other, a tax collector, humbly acknowledged his need for mercy.

Jesus teaches that prayer is not performative but personal. "When you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret" (Matthew 6:6a). Prayer is meant to be authentic and vulnerable, reflecting the true intentions of the heart. God does not need to be impressed with words, for "Your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8).

THE TEMPLATE FOR PRAYER (MATTHEW 6:9–13)

Jesus provided a model for prayer that includes five key elements:

ADORATION (VERSE 9)

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

Prayer begins with acknowledging who God is. Addressing Him as Father emphasizes intimacy, while hallowed recognizes His holiness. Beginning with adoration shifts focus from personal needs to God's greatness and reminds the heart of His power and love.

CONSECRATION (VERSE 10)

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

This is a prayer of surrender, placing God's will above personal desires. It reminds believers that His ways are higher and calls them to live for His purposes. Aligning with His kingdom acknowledges that life belongs to Him.

SUPPLICATION (VERSE 11)

"Give us this day our daily bread."

After recognizing God's greatness, needs are brought before Him. This request reflects daily dependence on God for provision. James 4:2c says, "You do not have because you do not ask." Prayer is a means through which God meets needs and deepens reliance on Him.

INTERCESSION (VERSE 12)

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

This is a prayer for forgiveness, both received and extended. Recognizing personal need for grace helps cultivate a willingness to forgive others. Jesus illustrated this in Matthew 18:21–35, reminding believers of the great debt that has been forgiven.

PROTECTION (VERSE 13)

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

This is a prayer for guidance and protection. While God does not lead into sin, believers ask for protection from the subtle schemes of the enemy. The Holy Spirit empowers obedience and strengthens the ability to resist temptation.

DEVELOPING PRAYER AS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Developing a habit of prayer requires intentional effort, but the process shapes believers into the image of Christ. It is helpful to set aside a consistent time and place for prayer, even if it feels unfamiliar at first. Using the pattern Jesus provided in Matthew 6 can help guide prayer, and distractions or struggles should not lead to discouragement.

One helpful practice is journaling prayers, which provides focus and allows reflection on God's faithfulness over time. Another approach is praying Scripture, using passages such as Psalm 23 or the Lord's Prayer as a foundation.

Prayer is not about perfection but about presence. Again, it was Dallas Willard who said, "The most important thing in your life is not what you do; it's who you become. That's what you will take into eternity." Prayer is one of the primary ways God shapes His people into who He created them to be.

CONCLUSION

Prayer is both a privilege and a challenge. It requires discipline and intentionality, yet it remains one of the most transformative aspects of the Christian life. Through prayer, believers communicate with God, align their hearts with His, and experience His grace, provision, and guidance.

As the habit of prayer is cultivated, the examples of Jesus and Paul serve as reminders of lives marked by continual communion with the Father. The words of those who have gone before also encourage perseverance, reminding believers that the effort is worthwhile. Like the disciples, the prayer remains, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1), trusting that through prayer, hearts will be drawn closer to Him.



Download more resources at
D6HomePoint.com

©2026 D6 Family (Revised July 2026)