

7. Practical Prayer (2Q 2026 Growing in a Relationship with God)

Biblical material: 1 Kings 19:1–18; Matt. 6:5–8; Luke 11:2–4. Matt. 6:5–15; Dan. 9:4–19; Rom. 8:26, 27; Psalm 62:8.

Quotes

- Every Christian needs a half-hour of prayer each day, except when he is busy, then he needs an hour. *Francis De Sales*
- I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer. *Martin Luther*
- There is a mighty lot of difference between saying prayers and praying. *John G. Lake*
- I'd rather be able to pray than to be a great preacher. Jesus Christ never taught his disciples how to preach, but only how to pray. *D. L. Moody*
- Why is it so important that you are with God and God alone on the mountain top? It's important because it's the place in which you can listen to the voice of the One who calls you the beloved. To pray is to listen to the One who calls you "my beloved daughter," "my beloved son," "my beloved child." To pray is to let that voice speak to the center of your being, to your guts, and let that voice resound in your whole being. *Henri Nouwen*
- Some of God's greatest gifts are unanswered prayers. *Garth Brooks*
- Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire? *Corrie Ten Boom*

Questions

How can we make our prayer lives more meaningful? What is Paul mean by "pray without ceasing"? What is to be our objective when we pray? How personal and intimate are our conversations with God? To what degree should we let others know of our prayers on their behalf? How can we avoid misuse of prayers, especially for others?

Bible summary

1 Kings 19:1–18 is the story of Elijah's depression after Jezebel's threats and God's encouragement that he still had 7,000 followers. Jesus gives counsel on how to pray in Matthew 6:5–8 and Luke 11:2–4. Matthew 6:5–15 includes the Lord's prayer. Daniel 9:4–19 is Daniel's prayer to God on behalf of his people. Romans 8:26, 27 tells us that the Holy Spirit intercedes with us. "My people, always trust in him. Pour out all your thoughts to him, for he is the one who looks after us." Psalm 62:8.

Comment

If Jesus felt the need to pray, then what about us? Jesus understood the importance prayer, and spent much time talking to his Father. While he wished to minister to everyone, he also recognized that this was physically impossible. He drew lines—he preached from a boat when the crowd was too large, and he chose to separate himself and his disciples in order to rest, and he spent time alone in prayer, gaining strength from his Heavenly Father.

Prayer is much misunderstood. The formalism that has invaded prayer, turning it into chants and mantras, familiar phrases and repetitive lines, means that we often "do" prayers than really mean what we say! Imagine how one of your friends would react if you said you were going to "do" a conversation with him/her...

In John 14 Jesus describes the heart of his mission—to show us the Father. Once we see God in Christ, then we can have confidence in such a trustworthy God, and want to spend time learning from him and sharing our lives with him.

"Come let us reason together," God tells us. For this is what our prayers are meant to be, talking to God as to a friend. God's desire is that we understand—and that's what we gain through our thoughtful prayers.

The concept of a mediator is often mentioned in connection with prayer. How do you understand the term? Could it be that we think of Jesus as the mediator because we have a poor view of our heavenly Father and want to have someone in-between? Certainly this has been the view of some, even perhaps the majority, all down through history... In fact, could this be the reason for prayers to Mary or the saints, because God is seen as too holy/distant/hostile? We need to make sure that we realize it was not that God the Father needed reconciling. In fact it was his desire for us to come home, to be reconciled, that led to Jesus' coming to earth in the first place.

As we talk to our loving Lord as to a friend, let us take these words seriously and practice what we preach. For what is the point of going through all the rituals, "saying" prayers, when we miss the wonderful opportunity of conversation with the God of the Universe?

"The prayer of Christ to His Father, contained in the seventeenth chapter of John, is to be our church creed." Ellen White, *Lift Him Up*, p.296. Instead of 28 Fundamentals, choose John 17, says Ellen White! Quote a contrast to what we usually hear...

In John 17 Jesus prays for his disciples, that they may be one—and we can apply this to the church. As is often mentioned, unity is not uniformity. We are all unique individuals, with all the diversity that God delights in. We do not think the same thoughts and we see things differently. But this should not destroy the unity we have together in Christ. As Galatians 3:28 states, we are all one in Christ Jesus, though we have different ethnicity, social position, and gender.

We are encouraged to live a life worthy of our calling. Our calling is to the one hope in Christ. In this hope we are united; we recognize that there is no other way, no other future apart from God and his promised hope. Here we see the unifying power of this hope to which we have been called, and how God leads through the motivating power of hope. We also understand that we are to share this hope, especially with our family and friends. Our goal must be the sharing of hope in the best way; not sensationalizing our expectations but putting hope in the best context. Our message must not be based on fear but on love, not promoting anxiety but providing assurance. We are to be a "spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men," as God's ambassadors at the end of time.

Ellen White Comments

Jesus lived a life of prayer; after toiling all day, preaching to the ignorant, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, feeding the multitudes, evening after evening He went away from the confusion of the city, and in some retired place, poured forth supplication to his Father with strong crying and tears. At times the bright beams of the moon shone upon his bowed form, and again clouds and darkness shut away all light. While bowed in the attitude of a suppliant, the dew and the frost of night rested upon Him. He frequently continued his petitions through the entire night. If the Saviour of men felt the need of prayer in our behalf, how much more should feeble, sinful mortals feel the necessity of prayer—fervent, constant prayer—on their own account! {BEcho February 1, 1893}

In His prayer to the Father, Christ gave to the world a lesson which should be graven on mind and soul. "This is life eternal," He said, "that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." John 17:3. This is true education. It imparts power. The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God. {COL 114}

Say to your heart, "God has invited me to come. He has heard my prayer. He has pledged His word that he will receive me, and He will fulfill His promise. I can trust God; for He so loved me that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for me. The Son of God is my Redeemer." {FE 299}

Pray with humble hearts. Seek the Lord often in prayer. In the secret place, alone, the eye sees Jesus and the ear is opened to Jesus. You come forth from the secret place of prayer to abide under the shadow of the Almighty. {HP 86}

As you pray, speak to Christ as you would to a trusted, much-loved friend. Maintain a sweet, free, pleasant dignity, as a child of God. {6T 323} Prepared April 30, 2025 © Jonathan Gallagher 2025