

Prayer FAQs

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We all have questions about prayer.



We all have questions about prayer. They range from basic questions to deep theological ones. This page is designed to answer questions about prayer that come up most often as we travel to churches all over the nation.

We encourage you to review the questions below. Some of the questions are linked to a longer answer; however, it is important to know that we are trying to answer in as short and simple a way as we can in this context. When possible, we will try to link you to additional resources for a more in-depth study on the topic.

If you have a question that you would like us to address here, please feel free to send it to: info@harvestprayer.com. If we feel it is a question that many could benefit from, we will post the answer here!

Click to reveal the answer to the question.

How does prayer actually work?

The best and simplest answer we have ever heard to this question involves a wonderful graphic developed by Dr. Alvin VanderGriend. It shows clearly how all prayer begins and ends with God. Follow the directions below to get a good visual as we walk through the amazing miracle called prayer!

Do this quick exercise with a paper and a pencil or pen:

The Cycle of Prayer

1. Draw a circle on your paper.



2. At the top of the circle write GOD.

3. Going clockwise, to the right of the circle write HOLY SPIRIT.

4. Continuing clockwise, at the bottom of the circle write BELIEVER.

5. Continuing clockwise, to the left of the circle write JESUS.

Next, we will work our way around the circle beginning at the top:

- **God** – prayer begins in the heart of God. He is the Creator and has designed prayer as a means of accomplishing His plans and purposes on earth as it is in heaven. Prayer is also how we commune with and communicate with our Heavenly Father.
- **Holy Spirit** – The Holy Spirit knows the mind of God. When God wants to communicate something that is on His heart to His people, the Holy Spirit, who is our Helper, brings it to us! And, when we don't know how to pray, the Holy Spirit, knowing what is on our hearts, prays on our behalf!
- **Believers** – We have a significant role to play in prayer!

In an amazing way, God has, to a large extent, limited the working of His power to the prayers of His people. He has things to accomplish that won't happen unless we pray. And there are things that God doesn't want to have happen that *will* happen if His people *don't* pray! This is why prayer is so much more than a simple devotional exercise! We pray because God's power and purposes for His kingdom are tied to prayer!

- **Jesus** – When we pray, we take our prayers through the powerful name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. This doesn't mean simply tacking on "In the name of Jesus" to every prayer like a magic formula. It means we are taking our request from the heart of God, revealed to us by the Spirit, back to our Father because Jesus, the Spirit and the Father are One. Because of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection, and because we believe He lives now and forever, and that HE is coming again, we have been given open and continual access – a direct line, if you will, to God.

Looking at prayer in this way, it is easy to see where the weak link is! Prayer is 3/4ths God and 1/4th His people! When the cycle is broken or weak, it is not because of God – it's

because we need to do better at prayer!

If you want a more in-depth look at this cycle of prayer with all of the scripture references, read the complete article: [The Cycle of Prayer.](#)

I keep starting and stopping in my prayer life. How can I be more consistent?

1. **Become intimate with Jesus, your Lord and Savior!** It's important to spend time with the One you love! If you spend some significant time with Him regularly (DAILY), you will begin to know His heart so that He can use you to accomplish His will on this earth. Take time to worship Him, to offer praise, and to simply sit in His presence. Intimacy with Jesus will allow you to consistently pray with intensity, fervor and purpose.
2. **Get to know Him through His Word** (He IS the Living Word). Study it, memorize it, pray it, and let it soak into your spirit. The Bible should become your prayer manual. In it you will find the perfect will of God, and learn more about God's character.
3. **Pray His word back to Him.** Praying Scripture is a powerful way to know that you are praying God's will. This knowledge alone will revolutionize your prayer life.
4. **Be still and know that He is God!** Take time to listen to His voice. The more you know Him, the better you will be at hearing His voice and praying what is on His heart...and there is MUCH on His heart. Listening will keep you focused upon those things which He desires to accomplish in and through you...or on behalf of someone else, or a situation you are concerned about.
5. **Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit** to pray as people, situations, countries, etc. are brought to your mind. It isn't a random thought – it is the work of

the Spirit as He calls you to intercede.

6. **If you desire to be more consistent with your prayer life, then you must determine to be disciplined and faithful.** Don't ever let your lack of "experience" stop you or slow you down. If you stop, don't be discouraged and quit! Start again tomorrow. Always remember that prayer is not about your will being done in heaven. it is about God's will being done on earth.

As you apply these principles to your prayer life, you will find that prayer begins to become a delight rather than a duty...and you will look forward to spending time with God, who created you to have relationship with Him.

"Prayer is the act of bringing God into every situation and asking Him to change it from something natural into something supernatural so that He can get all the glory." — Joy Dawson.

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Why do my prayers seem to go unanswered?

First of all, it is important to recognize that there are many reasons why prayers "seem" to be unanswered, or at least not answered in the way we would wish or expect:

- **The most common reason is that we have already**

determined what the answer we want to hear or see is before we actually ask God. In other words, we make the decision about the answer rather than waiting on the answer God wishes to give...we don't ask God to do what He feels is best in our situation or someone else's.

- **We may ask God with wrong motives...usually because we selfishly want something to benefit ourselves or those we know.** Perhaps our prayer may be completely counter to God's will and purposes. It is important for us to realize that every prayer we pray should bring honor and glory to God alone!
- **If we are intentionally living sinful lives, God is under no obligation to answer our prayers (Psalm 66:18).** We need to check our lives carefully before coming to God with our requests and needs. If there is sinfulness, we need to confess it before Him because He promises to forgive us (1 John 1:9)...opening the way to His response to our prayer lives! This is the grace-filled life with God.
- **Sometimes we ask in a half-hearted way rather than praying with faith and power,** which can make our prayer ineffective and weak...much like a medical treatment that fails because it isn't the correct dosage or even the correct treatment. The prayer of desperation cries out to God because He is the only place to go when we are in need.
- **Sometimes what we are asking infringes upon the needs of another person, or pits us against them – even unintentionally.** It's like two parents on opposing sides rooting for the team their child plays for to win. This is asking God to take sides instead of asking for His best in a situation. God knows what we...and our children need even more than we do! He will help us to handle loss, pain and struggle when it comes, just as He will

rejoice with us in celebration and victory.

- **Our “bad” circumstances are not caused by God.** We live in a fallen world where “bad things happen to good people.” Recognizing that God, through His life in us, can take our pain, disappointments and roadblocks into His heart and give us comfort, reassurance and victory in the midst of difficulty and struggle will keep us filled with hope, peace and strength. He will sometimes allow the circumstances in our lives to lead us to something better even though we may not see it at the time. He will also utilize anything the enemy attempts to do to us in ways that will be used for good – even when we may not perceive it – if we will trust Him enough to ask (Matthew 7:9-11). Too many people blame God, and walk away from their faith because they feel their prayers were not heard, were not answered, or that their prayers were not answered as they expected...because they do not understand this truth about God... He wants to give us His very best. He is always present in the believer. He understands our suffering because He suffered and died on the cross. The ultimate victory is eternal life through Jesus Christ...forever...no matter what this life may bring.
- **If we are not careful, we can miss God’s answer when it comes.** It is important to be watchful in our waiting...and because the Father wants to give us His best to strengthen our walk with Him, we must be prepared to yield ourselves to His answers – even if they seem to go against what we think that answer should be. Sometimes our answers will not come in our lifetime, but in His eternal purposes we will one day see how He answered every prayer we have ever prayed...even if the answer is counter to our expectations or desires. One day it will be amazing to see how God’s hand worked in our lives and situations for His glory!

“The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need” (Matthew 6:7-8 MSG).

What should I do when I don’t feel like praying?

There are days, seasons, or events in all of our lives that sometimes seem to paralyze our hearts and leave no words available to us for prayer. When this happens, the first thing to do is remember that God is still there. He is with you in whatever you are walking through. He saw what brought the grief, or the anger, or the frustration. He is there in the depression, the addiction, the pain of rejection, the times of uncertainty. Your first step is to trust that He is right where Matthew 28:20 states He said He would always be – with us! He is with you – now and always!

Next, simply breathe in His presence. Take the next breath...and the next...and the next. Adversity or dark times can suck the air from your being and it’s so important to breathe God in and breathe out the issues or circumstances that may be causing your inability to pray. Think about the One who gave you life, who gave you Eternal Life, and who is Himself Living and Active. He has not abandoned you. His presence surrounds you. Soak in the awareness of this reality! [\[Read More\]](#)

How can I grow in prayer?

If you are a Christian and you need something, the first place you should turn is to the Lord. Jesus teaches us that we are to ask for anything we need, even for daily bread. That’s how dependent on Him we are to be. It seems to me then, that if I want to grow in prayer, the first place to go is to God. So I suggest praying about prayer.

Isn't it interesting, and maybe a bit sad, that we struggle so much in prayer, and yet never come to the Lord and ask Him to help us to pray. Do we really believe that we are so spiritual that we can handle this on our own? If we know that God wants us to be a people of prayer, and that is certainly clear in Scriptures, then when we ask believing God to make us a person of prayer, we can expect great results. I pray every day that God would make me a man of prayer. In His way, and in His timing, He will always answer that prayer. [\[Read More\]](#)

How can I keep my mind from wandering when I pray?

Let's face it! Many of us struggle to stay focused when we pray. Our culture is busy and there are so many things vying for our attention. What are some simple ways to combat the wandering mind when we want to focus our attention on God in prayer?

- 1. Choose times for focused prayer when you are most mentally alert.** If mornings are your best time of day, get up a bit early to meet with God. Grab a cup of coffee or tea, your Bible and a blanket if needed. We are to pray without ceasing, so although setting aside a certain time to pray is important, don't forget to pay attention to the activity of God in and around you throughout each day.
- 2. Keep paper and a pen nearby** so that if distracting thoughts come, you can quickly write them down so you won't forget and then go back into prayer. [\[Read More\]](#)

How can I make my prayer life more about the kingdom and less about me and my needs?

One of the problems that most of us have with praying is that we instinctively know that prayer isn't about getting what I want from God. It's about God's will being accomplished. Yet, there are things we want God to do that are very important to us. How do we reconcile these things?

The Bible demonstrates for us a fascinating way to pray that brings together our needs and the purposes of God. I call it “so that” praying. In many places throughout Scripture you will find someone making a request of the Lord for something that is very important to him or her. Then that person closes out his or her prayer by including a “so that” addition. Almost without exception, the “so that” portion takes the prayer and focuses it on God and His purposes. It often has to do with bringing additional honor and glory to God and expanding His kingdom. [\[Read More\]](#)

How can I learn to pray out loud?

God can hear our prayers anytime, anywhere, and at any volume! He is able to hear us even when we think our prayers to Him rather than voice them. Yet, so many of us struggle and would like to be able to verbalize prayers in a group setting. Here are a few tips on how to stretch yourself a bit and grow in this area:

1. One of the best ways to grow in praying out loud, is to practice listening to yourself reading prayers from Scripture. You could start with the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13. Hearing your own voice as you pray out loud is an important step.
2. Read Psalm 145 out loud back to the Lord and then say, “Lord, You are___(fill in the blank with some of the attributes you find in this Psalm). Looking for ways to praise God in His word is a powerful way to express your love for Him out loud. The more you know about Him and His goodness and love, the more you will want to express what’s on your heart to Him.
3. After using Scripture to help you pray out loud for awhile, try to voice your own prayers based on those you have been praying. Here is just one way: try looking at pictures of some of your family members and tell God what you want to pray for each of them. For example,

“Father, my daughter Emily is really struggling to make friends in her new school this year. Would you bring her some godly young women to get to know?” Or, “Lord, my husband has such a stressful job. Please help him to feel Your presence and to be filled with peace instead of anxiety.” [\[Read More\]](#)

How Can I Learn to Pray with My Spouse?

This is an important question, as the majority of Christian couples, even pastoral couples, don't make this a regular practice. Yet it is probably the most fulfilling and divorce-proofing thing any couple can engage in. Also, it has been said that praying together is the most intimate thing a husband and wife can do. So how do you get started? Here are a few ideas and things to consider:

1. Maybe all it will take is for one of you to simply suggest it. Many spouses just haven't considered this practice as it was never modeled in their own homes. Perhaps just a suggestion that you pray together for your children/grandchildren, or for one another's day...could prime that pump.
2. Sometimes one spouse is obviously a more seasoned prayer, especially out loud. This makes the other feel very self-conscious. Be sure to remember that you are talking to God and simply agreeing in prayer with your spouse. Reassure one another and make a commitment to be completely non-judgmental of one another's prayer styles.
3. Praying Scripture over family, friends and situations is a very good way to pray together if this practice seems difficult at first. For example, pray the Aaronic blessing in Numbers 6:24-26 over children/grandchildren and even over one another. Another Scripture to pray over children/grandchildren is 1 Timothy 4:12. A good prayer devotional can also be very helpful.

4. Pray as you take walks or while you are driving together. [\[Read More\]](#)

Sign Up for Connection! Daily Prayer Devotions

A daily devotional on prayer. Each devotional includes an inspiring and challenging message on prayer, a prayer to pray and several scripture-based prayer points. Here is a note from one of our thousands of subscribers from all over the world: "Thank you for your faithfulness in service to the Kingdom of God!! These devotionals make a difference in my life as the Holy Spirit speaks to my heart!" – Diane H.

Sign Up for Prayer Tip Tuesday

Each week we will email you some short tips and a resource to encourage and challenge you to go deeper in prayer.

Harvest does not rent our email lists to other organizations. On rare occasions we will use our lists to inform our friends of prayer events or initiatives of national or international importance, and occasionally we will use our lists to inform our friends of a financial need in the ministry.

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