

To Pray and For How Long? Things to Think About. . .

When you pray, what do you say? Who do you pray for? How long do you spend time in prayer? Do you have feelings or ideas that keep you from praying? Do you think God is too busy running the universe to hear from the likes of a no one like you? Maybe you feel your sin is too great to allow you into the Presence of God? Possibly, your schedule is packed beyond belief, and you just can't add one more thing without the whole thing toppling over on you? So, why don't we spend real time in prayer?

The answers are as numerous as there are people. So, what's wrong with going on our merry way without spending this massive amount of time in prayer? What's going to change?

You know, one of our sons used to ask me to pray for him in dealing with this person or that person. I always did, but I also told him that God will change him, not necessarily his friend. You know what the outcome of that was? He stopped asking me to pray.

Prayer does change things, and many times, we're the thing that changes. Is that so horrible? You never know what will happen when we pray. We could save a life, bring someone to Christ, prevent a car accident, help a student pass a class, help a mom have an easier day, help a new mom have an easier delivery, prevent chaos from happening someplace in the world. We don't know what our prayers will do.

We all know the story of Elijah – how he prayed and defeated 450 prophets of Baal. How, through his little, tiny prayer, stopped it from raining for 3 ½ years, then he prayed again, and it rained. James tells us Elijah was a man just the like rest of the world.

If we got together and prayed as a group once a week, we might be able to grow First Lutheran Church of Oklahoma City. We might be able to get this next election to NOT be full of cheating and chaos. We might be someone who could influence a politician to do something different or more than what they were planning. We don't know what our prayers can do.

There are a couple of keys to prayer. In Hebrews we're told that we must believe that God exists and rewards those that diligently seek Him. That's true with belief. **We must believe and not doubt.** (That's called double mindedness and James condemns it and says we shouldn't expect an answer if we're double minded. James 1:6-7)

Do you remember what Jesus told Jairus when He was on His way to Jairus' house to heal his daughter? The servant came and told Jairus (and Jesus), that his daughter had died. What did Jesus say? Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, **“Do not fear, only believe.”** (Mark 5:36) So, when we pray, we need to pray in faith. **Pray with conviction.** Trust God. Let Him have the reigns of your prayers and allow Him, through the Holy Spirit to pray through you. Most of us have experienced that. You're in prayer, everything else is blocked out and the next thing you know you're praying like you haven't prayed in a long time. There's a conviction in your prayer - **like you're talking directly to God and He's actually listening** to your prayer. (There's nothing like that feeling – not that we should live by feelings, but again, there's nothing like that and it encourages us to continue praying and to pray more frequently.

I believe that's how Paul and Peter and the other Apostles prayed. That's probably how Martin Luther, George Muller and others prayed.

Another thing to remember when we pray is to let God decide how He wants to do things. So many times, I have prayed giving God direction, like He needs my help. NOT! So, when I start to do that, I say out loud, “I don't have to tell You how to do that, You know what to do.” Or I'll just say, “It doesn't matter how You accomplish this, You're the One in charge.” This frees me from responsibility, and it allows God to be God in all matters.

I have learned a few things during my prayer time. Like I said above, we need to pray, believing. We're asking God to do something. Usually, we're asking for a friend or loved one. Then believe that God will do what you ask. Not like a Jeanie in a bottle or like Santa Claus, but like He's God of the Universe and can literally move Heaven and Earth should He have a mind to. Pray, trusting Him to listen, hear, be concerned about what you're concerned with, and be willing to move on your behalf. That's what He wants.

There are a few things that can get in the way, though.

- Unbelief.
- Guilt.
- Jealousy/Envy
- Fear.
- The Clock.

We already talked about unbelief, so let's move on to guilt. I'm not talking about being guilty of something – that is resolved easily by confessing our sins. What I'm talking about is false guilt. That usually comes from our not being in control and we didn't act when we feel like we should have. "Why didn't I say _____?" "I should have _____, instead I just stood there." And other times similar to this. The best way to deal with this is to tell God all about it. Tell Him the entire story. Let Him take care of your emotions and you just be honest with Him about everything. We forget that God loves us with such a deep abiding love, that He's going to let you know if you should do X or tell so-and-so what He wants so-and-so to hear. Don't let false guilt destroy your relationship with God. Just blurt it out there and let Him sort it out. You keep focused on Him and keep praying.

Jealousy/Envy.

While they are cousins, they are also one of the 7 deadly sins. The difference between them is that Envy wants EXACTLY what the other person has and will stop at nothing to get it – his/her spouse, house, car, job, etc. Jealousy is more of a fear – "Oh, no, I'm going to lose my spouse because this person is better looking, more capable. . ." Both destroy people and relationships. Notice the focus of both are "I, ME, MY." Our focus should be God. Confession can fix both of these – real time in the presence of God.

Fear.

Fear is the exact opposite of Faith and again, the focus is NOT God. If we can fix our eyes on the Lord, then fear begins to become small, and God becomes large. We need to remember that God is in control. Last year when going through cancer treatment, the only way I could keep from getting fearful is to keep my eyes on the Lord and remember that He said I would be okay. It didn't matter how I felt, what I did, how much chemo I received or any of that. I did what the Doctor told me to do, and I held on to what God had said.

So, what do you do when you don't have "a word from the Lord" to hang on to? You hang on to God. He's the KING OF THE UNIVERSE. He made you and He has a plan for you. So, pray with conviction, trust Him and keep your eyes focused on Him.

We had been in Oklahoma for about 4 years and things were going well. Then, the company Jo was working for downsized. He was let go. That was hard!!! It took him 7 months to find another job. I was a basket case! I didn't trust God. I trusted what I could see, touch, taste and take to the bank. It was awful. After he got that other job 7 months later, that company decided to move out of state and let all the employees go. Another time of Jo's unemployment! This time, instead of getting scared, I quietly told God, "I'm afraid God. Will You please keep my head pointed up so I see You." I was calmer, trusted God and Jo got a job in about 4 weeks' time. So much better. Fear is an ugly thing, and it robs us of all that is good.

The Clock

It's nice to spend some time in prayer, but finding the right amount of time, keeping a balance is sometimes a bit of a trick. Read what Philip Yancey wrote in his book, "Why Pray":

Did you know that George Müller began each day with several hours of prayer? "*Bishop Lancelot Andrewes allotted 5 hours per day to prayer, and Charles Simeon rose at 4:00 a.m. to begin his four-hour regimen. An order of nuns known as "The Sleepless Ones" still pray in shifts through every hour of the day and night.... Martin Luther, who devoted two to three hours daily to prayer, said we should do it as naturally as a shoemaker makes a shoe and a tailor makes a coat. Jonathan Edwards wrote of the "sweet hours" on the banks of the Hudson River "rapt and swallowed up in God."* (pg. 12)

We never know what we will change or who we will protect from harm, a bad decision, or having a car accident if we don't spend a significant amount of time in prayer. It's not always easy to find a time/place to do that, but the benefits, so outweigh not doing so.

When you pray, try extending the amount of time you spend in prayer. Don't let the clock be there reminding you of what's pressing on your to-do list. I can guarantee that if you put some real time into praying, God will make sure that your to-do list gets done. Just put Him first.

One last thing before I'm finished. In about 6 weeks we'll be looking at Lent. This year, why not incorporate one of the 8 different Spiritual Disciplines into your Lenten Season:

1. Bible reading/study
2. Prayer
3. Fasting
4. Worship
5. Service
6. Solitude
7. Discernment
8. Evangelism

A brief word on some of these.

Fasting is to forgo a meal, or several meals. When we give up one item, is that a real fast? That might be a Sacrifice, but according to some of biblical research, it is not a fast. The reason that is not considered a fast is because the time one would normally spend eating a meal is to be a time spent with God in prayer or reading your Bible or both. You can't do that if you're sitting in Bible Study passing up goodies because you're giving up sugar. Your time, because you're in a Bible Study class, is taken up with the class. There's no time set aside for just you and the Lord in prayer and study. You might be sacrificing that sugar, but there's not additional intimate time with God.

Worship is an attitude of awe and gratitude, of humble submission to God's greatness and grace, of obedience and love. Worship can be done with other believers. It has a way of connecting people in an incomparable way. Worship nurtures fellowship, promotes intimate relationships, and fosters edification of the Body of Christ. (Spiritual Disciplines brochure. Rose Publishing 2009)

Service to others, to serve them, not puff ourselves up. It is born of love and gratitude and requires humility, strength and love. (Spiritual Disciplines brochure. Rose Publishing 2009)

Solitude taking time to get away from all the hustle and bustle of our crazy electronic, on the constant go life and spend some down time with God.

Discernment "the Spirit inspired ability to separate our imperfect will from God's perfect will in recognizing, judging, and choosing what is right, good, and pure from what is wrong, evil, and impure.

Below is a chart with the Hebrew and (a couple) Greek names of God. It's there to help us remember exactly Who God Is. As you will notice, there is a name for every situation. Remember, God is the Great I AM... He is Who we need Him to be at that time.

Hebrew	English	
Adonai	Lord	
Alpha & Omega (Rev. 4 vs)	Beginning and the End	28x
Attiq Youm (Dan 7vs)	Ancient of Days	27x
Christos (Greek)	Anointed One	534x
El Chay	Living God	130x
El Chuwl (Dt. 32:18)	The God who gave you birth	1x
El Deah	The God of Knowledge	126x
El Elyon	God Most High	56x
El Gibhor	The Mighty God	97x
El Olam	The Everlasting God	53x
El Qanna	Jealous God	28x
El Roi	The God Who Sees Me	3+x
El Shaddai	God Almighty	76x
Elohim	The Creator (plural form)	
Immanuel	God with us	3x
Jehovah	LORD (Self Existent One)	6874x
Jehovah Bore	The Lord Creator	
Jehovah Jireh	The Lord our Provider	
Jehovah M'kaddesh	The Lord who Sanctifies	
Jehovah Nissi	The Lord our Banner	
Jehovah Rapha	The Lord our Healer	18x
Jehovah Rohi	The Lord our Shepherd	
Jehovah Sabbaoth	The Lord of Hosts	1308x
Jehovah Shalom	The Lord of Peace	
Jehovah Shammah	The Lord is There	
Jehovah Tsidkenu	The Lord our Righteousness	23x
Jehovah Tsur	The Lord our Rock	
Jeshua (Jesus)	The Lord Saves	983x
Logos	The Word	
Ma'on	Dwelling Place (Jn 14)	2x
Messiah	Anointed One	534x

Cleaning out those places.

2024 has arrived and it is the year of the purge. We will be going through and organizing the 5 or 6 storage areas in our church, so they can be better utilized and accessed. If you want to be part of this, contact Joan Heierding and you can be a helper/advisor.

The plan is to put a table at the end of the hall near the parlor. We will place items there that are on their way to the Heart and Hands Thrift store. New items will be added and old items removed every couple of weeks. This will happen on Thursdays around noon. If you see something that should be kept, let Joan know (405) 440-2409 and leave a message. There is also a sticky note pad and pen right above the right end of the table.

Anything there is a question about, please let me know. I don't want to get rid of anything that has value, historical, financial, or sentimental. Then if you see something you would like, take it, please. That will lighten the load.

Happy New Year!

Joan Heierding

(That crazy lady that want to clean the church)

January, 2024



Serving this month:

- 7 The Grays
- 14 Joe Glass/Chuck Gray
- 21 The Wackerlys
- 28 The Lees

Communion Deacon: Chuck Gray

Alternate: Bill Heierding

Happy Birthday!

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 2 Nils Almgren | 19 Carolyn Lewallen |
| 22 Pirie Sellars | 22 Brandye Mathis |
| 27 Marian Almgren | |



February 2024

Happy Birthday:

- 4 The Grays
- 11 The Lees
- 18 The Wackerlys
- 25 The Heierdings

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 Nancy Tucker | 2 Laura Waller |
| 4 Bennett Campbell | 5 Michael Monroe |
| 8 Roger Ray | 8 Amy Wright |
| 14 Eric Kiene | 22 Amber Borum |
| 22 Isaiah Kiene | 27 Susanne Cole |

Communion Deacon: Bill Heierding
Alternate: Chuck Gray



Lutherans for Life

January

January 7 – Epiphany I/Baptism of Our Lord – Nothing and nobody comes into existence apart from the will and the Word of the Lord God Almighty (Genesis 1:3). This means God desires the survival of every human life from fertilization to forever. We court great danger if we go against this intent or counsel others to do so (Psalm 29:7-8). Instead let us receive neighbors as blessings and enjoy our Father’s favor (Mark 1:11)!



January 14 – Epiphany II – Life issues like surprise pregnancy and terminal diagnosis come with uncertainty. But the Lord our God knows both our worries (Psalm 139:4) and the best way forward. He has already seen (John 1:48) what it will take to save, and He has still chosen life for all humankind, even when we behold only darkness and despair. We may not know what tomorrow holds, but we know who holds tomorrow.

January 21 – Epiphany III – The size of a people (as in the case of Nineveh, Jonah 3:3-4) makes no difference to their worth. Nor does the height of an individual’s status (so says the Psalmist, Psalm 62:9) affect his or her sanctity. The life-giving grace of God measures according to His abundance rather than our scarcities of age, appearance, or ability. May we likewise direct gazes beyond abortion’s and assisted suicide’s shortsightedness (1 Corinthians 7:30-31).

January 28 – Epiphany IV – Gospel-motivated voices have the privilege – and the responsibility – to proclaim the whole counsel of God. Those who speak otherwise dabble in judgment and condemnation (Deuteronomy 18:20). The Scriptures and the Savior have graciously made clear – with “shalls” and “shall-nots” – His jealous devotion to the survival and salvation of every human life. We get to repeat and rejoice in it, especially for the sake of the weaker ones (1 Corinthians 8:12).

February



February 4 – Epiphany V – Our Almighty Maker has blessed us with bodies for enjoyment. He has entrusted them to our control (1 Corinthians 9:26-27), but this means more than the mere “my body, my choice” indulgence of appetites. The greater gratification comes from receiving and serving even the least neighbor (1 Corinthians 9:22). Who are we to lie silent about the sanctity of life and thereby withhold the divine invitation to such a delightful discipline?

February 11 – Transfiguration of Our Lord – We proclaim not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord (2 Corinthians 4:5) of body and sexuality. We proclaim not personal choice, but Jesus Christ as Lord of marriage and procreation. We proclaim not popular opinion, but Jesus Christ as Lord of hurts and healing. We proclaim not political debate, but Jesus Christ as Lord of life and death. Listen to Him who makes us beloved children of God (Mark 9:7).

February 18 – Lent I – The Lord God forbid father Abraham from sacrificing his boy Isaac (Genesis 22:12). The lesson extends to us, too. Abortion is immoral because it is unnecessary. Jesus alone serves as beast of burden in the solemn rite of righting wrongs (Mark 1:13). Death always hatches from sin (James 1:15), but we belong in the business of redemption. If God’s forgiveness forgets even abortion (Psalm 25:7), we ought to forget about it also.

February 25 – Lent II – Physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia view aging and affliction as burdens. But Abraham became a blessing in his elderliness (Genesis 17:1-2). And we encounter the glory of the Lord in carrying one another’s crosses (Mark 8:34, 38). So let us resist Satan’s temptations to take death into our own hands (Mark 8:33). We will rejoice in our suffering (Romans 5:3) and receive neighbors as gifts even in theirs (Psalm 22:24).

Section 4:

Father, Son & Holy Spirit

1/1 Father God

Psalm 69:5-6; Luke 11:1-4; Romans 8:15-17

Jesus teaches that prayer begins with addressing God as Father, (Matthew 6:9). The Holy Spirit reminds you that you're God's son/daughter and can cry out to Him as "Abba, Father," and intimate Aramaic term similar to "Daddy." The Creator of the universe cares for you.

Prayer: Father God, Thank You for calling me Your child. Help me to grasp the ways You care for me as a parent does for a child. Regardless of how my earthly dad has represented You to me, teach me what it looks like to live from my identity as You child and heir.

1/2 The Church's Head

Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-30; Colossians 1:18

God the Son, Jesus, is the Head of the Church. As the Head, the part of the body that sees, hears, thinks, and decided, He gives the orders the rest of the body follows and lives by.

Prayer: Jesus, the Church's Head, help me to see how I am an important part of this greater body, the Church. Help us as Your body to follow You as head of the Church. Show us how You've positioned us to share the gospel and bring more into this fellowship.

1/3 Teacher

Nehemiah 9:20; John 14:26; 1 John 2:27

While Jesus' disciples often referred to Him as "Teacher," Jesus reveals to them that the Holy Spirit will be their teacher when He is with the Father. The Holy Spirit is your teacher, guiding you into more of who God is, who He says you are, and even leading you to your next step.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, my Teacher, what important truths would You like to highlight for me today? Open my heart and illuminate Your Word so I may learn Your life-giving ways and live in Your truth.

1/4 Wise

Job 12:13; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 3:19-20

All God's acts are accomplished through His infinite wisdom. He always acts for our good, which is to conform us to Christ. Our good and His glory are inextricably bound together. He is wisdom personified.

Prayer: Lord of wisdom, Thank You that Your every move is acted from wisdom. You tell me that being in a posture of reverence and worship is the beginning of wisdom. Thank You for sharing Your wisdom with me. I need Your wisdom in my life, and I need it daily.

1/5 Lord, Master

2 Samuel 7:18-20; Psalm 16:2; John 13:12-17

All God's people ought to acknowledge themselves as His servants, with God's right to reign as Lord of their lives.

Prayer: Lord, Master, Thank You that You are not like the masters of this world who lord their power over their subordinates. You show me, Jesus what it looks like to be a gentle and meek leader as You washed Your disciples' feet. I surrender my life to You. Show me how to be a servant-leader to those around me.

1/6 Spirit of the Lord

1 Samuel 16:13; Luke 4:18; 2 Corinthians 3:17

In the Old Testament, you can see how the Spirit of the Lord would come upon specific people for specific times. Following Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the Holy Spirit is now available to everyone who calls Jesus Lord and lives in His followers.

Prayer: Spirit of the Lord, Thank You for the gift of Your living in me. Help me to listen to Your counsel as I walk through this day and make choices which bring glory to your Name rather than grieve Your Spirit within me.

1/7 Faithful

Psalm 89:1-8; Lamentations 3:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 3:3

Out of His faithfulness, God honors His covenants and fulfills His promises. Our hope for the future rests upon God's faithfulness.

Prayer: Faithful One, Thank You for being faithful to me even when I'm not. I know You keep Your promises to me because You kept the greatest promise in sending Your Son. Give me an opportunity to share with someone about Your faithfulness in my life.

1/8 Lord Who Heals

Exodus 15:22-26; Psalm 103:1-5; Matthew 8:16-17

God alone provides the remedy for mankind's brokenness through His Son, Jesus Christ. The gospel is the physical, moral, and spiritual remedy for all people.

Prayer: God, Thank You for being my Lord Who Heals. Reveal where I need healing and lead me to the next step in Your ultimate healing plan. Show me how I can join You in bringing healing to the world, even in my local community.

1/9 Spirit of Truth

John 14:16-17; 15:26; 1 John 5:6

Jesus shares with His disciples that when He leaves, the Father will send the Holy Spirit who will guide them into all truth.

Prayer: Spirit of Truth, thank You for being the source of all truth. Continue to speak to my heart and counsel me when I'm confused and need Your clarity. Remind me of who you are and who You say I am.

The following sections have been chosen to show what God has done for us. This first section, January 10 - February 5 deals specifically with God's abundance.

January 10 Psalm 34

January 11 Psalm 36

January 12 Psalm 37

January 13 Psalm 85

January 14 Psalm 116

January 15 Psalm 119:1-24

January 16 Psalm 142

January 17 Daniel 12

January 18 Matthew 13:1-23

January 19 Matthew 25:14-30

January 20 Mark 4:10-25

January 25 Luke 18:18-30

January 26 Luke 19:11-27

January 27 John 10:1-21

January 28 Romans 5

January 29 2 Corinthians 4

January 30 2 Corinthians 9

January 31 Ephesians 1

February 1 Ephesians 3

February 2 Philippians 4

February 3 1 Timothy 1

January 21 Luke 6:27-45

January 22 Luke 8:16-18

January 23 Luke 14:12-24

January 24 Luke 16

February 4 2 Peter 1

February 5 Revelation 7

some of our heroes who engaged in battles

February 6 Joshua Joshua 11

February 7 Gideon Judges 7

February 8 Johnathan 1 Samuel 14

February 9 David 1 Samuel 17

February 10 Elisha 2 Kings 6

February 11 Jehoshaphat 2 Chronicles 20

Heroes who were invincible in battle when obedient

February 12 Moses Exodus 23

February 13 Moses Leviticus 26

February 14 Moses Numbers 14 (Ash Wednesday)

February 15 Moses Numbers 22

February 16 Moses Numbers 23

February 17 Moses Numbers 24

February 18 Deuteronomy 2

February 19 Deuteronomy 7

February 20 Deuteronomy 11

February 21 Deuteronomy 28

February 22 Deuteronomy 32

February 23 Deuteronomy 33

February 24 Joshua Joshua 1

February 25 Joshua Joshua 2

February 26 Joshua Joshua 10

February 27 Joshua Joshua 12

February 28 Joshua Joshua 21

February 29 Judges 4