

# Practice of Prayer



## Jesus and Prayer

Luke 5:15-16; 6:12

Mark 1:35-37; 6:46

Matt 14:22-23a

- Prayer built Jesus' relationships with God. Jesus "knew" him as father [experiential reality]. Jesus was honest in prayer. He sought the will of God

## thoughts from "Finding Sanctuary" – Abbot Christopher Jamison

- "I have never found prayer easy, but what gets easier is accepting it. So I worry less about technique and more about my fundamental, heartfelt attitude to God while I am praying. In simple faith, I offer myself and me community into the hands of God, with no striving after effect and without worrying too much about distractions that inevitably come. The result of this is that I find it easier to spend time in prayer. While time is not the measure of quality in prayer, without giving the time there is ultimately no prayer." [p52]
- "the cry to God of a distraught parent or the act of sitting in silence in a church or making the sign of the cross – all these are prayer. While there is usually (but not always) an external expression of prayer, prayer in this general sense is an inner intention and the intention is to communicate with God, to address God personally as "you"; even the simple act of listening in silence is by implication an invitation to the divine "you" to speak. Prayer in this general sense is a very varied activity and includes acts as different as cries of anguish, total silence and religious rituals." [p54]
- "the aim was to pray constantly, in the general sense of keeping the memory of God alive in your heart at every moment of the day and night ... another way of expressing this is to say that the purpose of the monastic life is purity of heart, that purity of heart which enables us to see God in everything and hence to be aware of 'you' at all times. Monastic life aims to remind us constantly that God is in our midst and sets up a virtuous circle of awareness to help us do this: pray constantly, in order to have a pure heart, in order to see God everywhere, in order to pray constantly." [p55]
- Prayer softens our hearts to his presence. It is as much about time as it is about words.

## thoughts from "Reaching Out" – Henri Nouwen

- A spiritual life without prayer is like the gospel without Christ [p91]
- The paradox of prayer is that it asks for a serious effort while it can only be received as a gift [p94] – in what sense is prayer responsive to God who has given us all we need?
- "although we want to make all our time, time for God, we will never succeed if we do not reserve a minute, an hour, a morning, a day, a week, a month or whatever period of time for God and him alone. This asks for much discipline and risk-taking because we always seem to have something more urgent to do and 'just sitting there' and 'doing nothing' often disturbs us more than it helps. But there is no way around this. Being useless and silent in the presence of our God belongs to the core of all prayer. In the beginning we often hear our own unruly inner noises more loudly than God's voice. This is at times very hard to tolerate. But slowly, very slowly, we discover that the silent time makes us quiet and deepens our awareness of ourselves and God. Then, very soon, we start missing these moments when we are deprived of them, and before we are fully aware of it an inner momentum has developed that draws us more and more into silence and closer to that still point where God speaks to us." [p104]

## Other Random thoughts!

- A man prayed, and at first he thought that prayer was talking. But he became more and more quiet until in the end he realised that prayer is listening. S Kierkegaard

- Prayer invokes God's presence in every action we perform
- Praying in tongues – allowing the spirit to pray in us – the model for all our prayer
- Prayer is about change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us.
- What things support our efforts to find a place of prayer?
- The practice of praying in tongues – why and how?

## **PRACTICING THE PRAYER-FILLED LIFE:**

**[ideas from Richard Foster of [www.renovare.org](http://www.renovare.org)]**

1. Pray for ten minutes each morning or evening.
2. Pray without words (in silence) for five minutes each day.
3. Offer a short prayer throughout the day (for example, the hesychastic prayer "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner" or the verse "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within *me*" [Ps. 51:10]).
4. Set aside an hour that will be free of distraction. Use the time for solitude, prayer, and meditation on the Bible.
5. Read a section from a devotional classic such as Augustine's *Confessions*, Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*, or Madame Guyon's *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*. (See *Devotional Classics*, a volume in the RENOVARE Resources for Spiritual Renewal, for other suggestions.)
6. Write out a prayer in your journal. You may wish to keep it private, or you may wish to share it with your group. Write the letter as if it were addressed to God, telling him how you feel.
7. Learn to appreciate God through his creation. Take a walk in a park or simply sit and watch a sunset. Consider the majesty of the world, giving thanks and praise for all of God's creation.
8. Set aside fifteen minutes for a time of thanksgiving. Thank God for everything you can think of. Do not worry about intercession or confession; this is a time simply to give thanks.
9. Practice the art of listening to God. Meditate on a verse of Scripture, being attentive to what God wants to tell you. Note the words in the verse. Does anything stand out? Turn the verse into a prayer. Ask God to teach you during this time of silence.
10. Hold people and situations before God in prayer. Take ten minutes a day to bring your friends and loved ones before God. Do not worry about words; simply imagine Jesus standing beside them before the throne of grace. Let God minister to all of their cares and hurts.
11. Pray for the leaders in your church. Find a time this week to pray specifically for your pastors and other leaders. Ask God to give them strength and wisdom and compassion. Pray for their protection.
12. Try "flash prayers." When you see someone—anyone—silently pray for that person. Riding on a bus, standing in a line, sitting in a room— wherever you are, inwardly ask the Lord to give those around you joy, to touch their lives with his presence.
13. See if you can wake up praying. Give your day to God in that prayer, asking him to guide you through each meeting, each conversation, each appointment.
14. Take a "prayer walk" this week. Choose crowded urban streets where you can bless many passersby with prayer, or go to a park or woods where you can rediscover that the earth and everything in it is the Lord's.
15. Pray as you jog, swim, or play tennis. Bless the homes you pass as you run or head for the pool or court. Thank God for your swimming friends. Even try praying for your tennis opponent!