

PRAYER

Prayer is simply a conversation with God. The Psalms are biblical examples of this conversation. Some are praise songs to God. Others acknowledge and honor who God is and what He has done. Others are cries for help from His people. Our prayers should be no different.

Think of the conversations you have in your life, with friends and family. There are a wide range of conversations that go on - conversations such as acknowledgements of love and affirmations of one another. There are times when you ask for help. How we converse with others is a great model for how we can pray.

We want to help you grow your prayer life. Maybe you have a great prayer life, where you have a continual conversation with God. If this is you, help us! We suspect that you are a lot like us--realizing that there is always more we can do.

This guide is the start of our journey for 2017. We are going to give some suggestions of how to pray and how to build a prayer list that you use. We will also give you some prayer requests for us here at South.

How to Pray

Any conversation needs to have balance. If you have a friend that does nothing but ask for things, the relationship is a challenge to say the least. To help us have balance in our conversation with God, we can use the ACTS model for prayer. Each letter is a different aspect of the conversation. Here's what they mean:

ADORATION - Adoration is us recognizing God for who He is. Its giving Him praise for all the awesome things He is. It is us declaring that God is God and we are not. That He is creator and we are created.

Simple Examples are: God, You are the creator of the heavens and the earth. You are Lord over all including the US, N. Korea, and Iran. You are greater than pro football.

CONFESSION - Confession, while easy to understand, is hard to do. When we confess, we acknowledge the wrongs we have committed. We admit to not being perfect (I said it wasn't easy).

Simple examples are: I am sorry for my road rage today. I confess my failure listen to my co-worker. I confess that I think I am smarter than I really am.

THANKSGIVING - Thanksgiving is the part of the conversation where we thank God for the things He has done for us. It could be thanking him for a beautiful sunrise to thanking him for the grace that He gives us. Our thanks could be more specific like an answered prayer about a family member.

Simple examples are: Thank you for butterflies. Thank you for Your grace. Thank you for my friends.

SUPPLICATION - Supplication is a churchy word for requesting help from God. This is probably where the majority of our prayer life exists. We always have needs. We always have moments and spaces in our lives where we need God to engage.

Simple examples are: Have your Spirit over the mess of North Korea. Help me to be more compassionate to my spouse. Help me show grace to my co-worker.

When you pray, you can work through all four. You could also just pray ACT or AC or AT. We need to make sure we are doing more than asking (S) for things.

How Long to Pray

This is a conversation. You don't want the conversation to only be 2 minutes long. There has to be quality time for a relationship to work. The conversation could be broken up throughout the whole day. It could be a specific time in the morning and a specific time in the evening.

You aren't going to go from little to no prayer to praying all day in the course of a week. This is a process. Think about how much you have prayed before? How do you grow that? Maybe you set aside 20 minutes each morning to begin. Then, give five minutes to each of ACTS in the model above.

Make time for praying. Maybe you give up something like your favorite TV show or Facebook time to pray. Start with something attainable and grow!

What to Pray

What is important in your life? What is important in your faith? Where do you want God's presence? Those are the things you pray for. The first three parts of the above model probably don't need to be scripted out. Simply follow our lead with the examples we give and see where your heart and mind take you.

As for the Supplication section, take some time to make a list of things you want to pray for. Maybe they will be structured like the following list:

1. Personal - things I need to change or grow
2. Family - spouse, kids, parents, in-laws, etc.
3. Friends
4. Coworkers
5. People who need to know Jesus
6. South's ministry - list given below. Add to it!
7. Missions South supports
8. ?? - its your list!

You could pray through this list each day, or you could break it into days of the week. Its really is all up to how you want to do it.

Building Your List!!!!

What follows in this booklet are some helps for you to begin to build your list of what you want to pray for. We've taken the list from above and given you some space to fill in names and items you want to pray for.

Over the next week, spend some time each day to think and pray through this list. What should I be praying for? Fill in the list as you go. The challenge won't really be what to pray for, it will be MAKING TIME to pray. Here we go!

PERSONAL - things I need to change or grow. Examples are: purity; wisdom; less lust, greed; health

COWORKERS/ACQUAINTANCES

PERSECUTED CHURCH

FAMILY - spouse, kids, parents, in-laws, etc.

WORLD/NATION

FRIENDS

?? _____

OUR SLCC MISSIONS

GO Ministries
His House
Intentional Impact Ministries
Christ in Youth
Urban Ministries of Chile
Sid and Sangs in India
Northwest Haiti Christian Mission

Rock Lake Christian Assembly
Great Lakes Christian College
Mechanical Ministries
Abby Weller
Christ's Church in Albany
All Nations Christian Church

FINAL THOUGHTS

Once you formulate your list, it may be helpful to put it into your phone or write it out on a sheet of paper. Then, slide it in your Bible or put it on the fridge so you see it every day. Set a reminder or an alarm on your phone to keep you consistent on the time you set to pray.

Other things you might want to do is buy a journal to record your journey. You can purchase an inexpensive ring notebook at the store (Walmart had some for 25 cents each in the clearance section). It doesn't have to be fancy. You could even use a document on your phone or computer.

Then commit and use it. All you do is write down what you are learning and praying. It is that simple! Write the date on the page then list out what you are praying. Answer some questions in the process like: What am I learning through this? How can I make more time? What am I missing? Also write down and prayers that have been answered. it is always great to have an answer list!

If you feel overwhelmed or stuck, we are willing to help you work through this. We'd love to sit down with you and guide you through this process. It is like going to the gym - when you go to work out, it is helpful at times to have someone there to guide you along and encourage you. That's why we are here! Call the church office and schedule a time to get some help.or email us at helpmepray@seekstudyserve.org. We would love to help

FASTING

Fasting is voluntarily going without food - or any other regularly enjoyed good gift from God - for the sake of some spiritual purpose¹. Sounds fairly simple, right? You choose to not eat so that you can engage with God for some purpose.

You may have already done this. If you grew up in a formal style church, like the Catholic Church, you may have participated in Lent - a time where you didn't eat meat on Fridays and gave up something like sweets, coffee or something else for 40 days leading into Easter.

The challenge for us comes when we try to not do something. In our culture, our attention is constantly drawn from here to there. We feed on the need for the next like on Facebook or Instagram. We are constantly glued to the news to see what is happening. We are continually wanting the next, great thing. We have to overcome our physical or emotional appetite to create space to focus on God.

WHAT THE BIBLE TELLS US

There are many mentions of fasting in the Bible. In the Old Testament, fasting happens in mourning, in seeking out God's opinion on something, when confessing sins, and for safety in some action. Most times when it is mentioned, it is tied to prayer. This makes sense. More focus can be attained in the conversation when you are limiting yourself from something else.

Fasting doesn't really change in the New Testament. Jesus fasts for 40 days and nights before he begins his ministry. As he teaches in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), fasting is an assumed practice that believers are doing. It is not, "if you fast," but "when you fast". As Jesus teaches, we learn that what we do is not for show among the people, but a private thing.

Fasting is also something we see the early church doing. In Acts 13 fasting is a common thing. It was a part of who they were as a people. As they fasted and worshipped, God spoke to them and told the community to send Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Even more, a chapter later, we see Paul and Barnabas praying and fasting over the new leaders they are selecting on their journey.

THE CHALLENGE FOR US

If you are like me, fasting is a challenging thing. Maybe you haven't even tried it. It is something that is way out of our comfort zones. And, unfortunately, we haven't talked about it much in church. It is something we see highly spiritual people do. While all of these things are true, as we look at how people fasted in God's story we see great reasons and encouragement for us to actually fast. This should compel us to do it.

¹ desiringgod.com/articles/fasting-for-beginners

Once we choose to fast, the greater challenge is humility. How do I learn to humble myself by limiting what I am eating or doing to make time for God? Even more challenging is how do I humble myself to realize and acknowledge that I cannot control everything, even though I think that I can. Our mindset as we enter into fasting should be, "God, I am learning to trust and lean on you. Show me where you are and lead me. Give me insight and direction."

HOW YOU CAN FAST

What follows are some steps to take as you plan to fast. Our goal in these steps is to help you have a positive experience the first time you fast. Positive experiences lead to a desire to repeat the process. Here we go!

Choose something you are going to focus your fast on. Think of something you can fast about. Maybe you have a big decision you need to make, and you would like God's leading on it. That's a good reason to fast. Maybe you have some sin that you need to confess and overcome. That's a good reason to fast. Maybe you realize from The Core series that you need to engage with God more. That's a great reason to fast. Choose something and write it down in your journal (or in the space we've given on the next few pages).

Pick a day or a period of time you are going to fast. Are you skipping meals for a whole day or are you just fasting for a meal or two? Maybe you want to fast from something else, like social media. There aren't really any rules, other than choosing something you aren't going to do, not doing it, then filling that space with God. You should probably think about how your fast is going to affect those around you. If you have family dinner on Thursday nights, Thursday dinner probably isn't a good meal to skip.

Start small. Doing a 40 day fast like Jesus did probably won't work too well for you if you are a beginner. It would be like trying to run a marathon without any training. Start small. Choose a meal or two to skip. Set yourself up for success. Also, decide what you are going to do instead of eating, social media-ing, etc. Are you going to pray? Maybe you are going to read your Bible and journal during that time. Another option may be to go for a walk in nature and listen for God to lead you. Again, no real rules here. Do something that will engage you in the process of conversing with God.

Write down what you hear/learn/decide. We've given you space in the rest of this document to record a fasting session or two. As you fast, take time to write down what you learned. Write down questions that you have going into this time. Write what you are learning or how you feel God is responding. Write about how hard it is to not eat a meal. You will be amazed at what comes out of this spiritual time.

As always, if you have a hard time figuring out what to do, or you want accountability, call us at the church office or email us at helpmefast@seekstudyserve.org. We will walk through this with you!

