



TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Community Group Discussion

- What was your experience with prayer when you were a child? a teen? a young adult? now? What do you think accounts for those differences?

Who has experienced a **startling** answer to prayer? Would you be willing to tell us about it?

- Read Luke 5:16. Why do you think Jesus **often** slipped away for prayer?

What does it tell you that he had to **slip away** in order to pray? What do you slip away for?

Review the seven **benefits** of prayer found in the Sermon Summary).

Which of those do you think **Jesus** needed? Which **one** of them do **you** most need?

- Review the three **guidelines** for prayer which Jesus gave us (see Sermon Summary). Which of those guidelines already are a part of your practice of prayer?

Which do you think could enhance your prayer life if you were to practice it more consistently?

- As a group, read the enclosed article, "**Praying the Bible**", and discuss how it may help you pray.

Then, take ten minutes
(right now, as a group)
to try this method. Go!



Need help getting started?
Write to:
BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

Application-Challenge

- Develop the personal habit of spending time daily with your Father in prayer.
- Participate in TCC's corporate opportunities for prayer, such as:
 - Request prayer—through the CONNECT card and at TCC's website.
 - Join the TCC Prayer Team to pray for needs from others in your church family.
 - Join existing men's and womens groups who gather together to pray each week.To learn more about these options, click on the "**Need prayer?**" header at TCC.org.

Sermon Summary

Key Text: Matthew 6:5-13

Real life-change is found in practicing the spiritual disciplines that Jesus himself practiced and taught his disciples. Prayer is one of those critical spiritual disciplines.

Prayer is vital to spiritual health and offers many spiritual benefits. Luke 5 tells us that “Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.” Jesus was **perfect**—yet he prayed! Sometimes we are reluctant to pray because praying invites a conversation with God about something He has identified that needs to change. But prayer is instrumental to life change. An anemic prayer life might explain our selfishness, lack of compassion, impatience, our preoccupation with temporal things rather than eternal things. Prayer **[1]** assures us of God’s presence (Psalm 145: 18), **[2]** brings blessings from God (Matthew 7:11), **[3]** brings help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16), **[4]** brings peace in the midst of anxiety (Philippians 4:6-7), **[5]** brings physical and spiritual healing (James 5:16), **[6]** brings wisdom (James 1:5), and **[7]** strengthens us against temptation (Matthew 26:41).

Jesus gave us several guidelines which help us learn to pray more effectively:

[a] Pray **secretly** (Matthew 6:5-6). This ensures a minimum of distractions and it eliminates the temptation to try to impress others. Jesus is not discouraging public or corporate prayer in this passage, rather, he is encouraging private prayer between you and God. **[b]** Pray **sincerely** (Matthew 6: 7-8). This involves being real, natural, and vulnerable. Finally, **[c]** Pray **specifically** (Matthew 6:9-13). Jesus does not give us an exhaustive list of what we should pray for, but he does instruct us how to do so. In verse 9, he indicates that we should pray for God’s honor to be upheld, for God’s kingdom to be established, for our daily needs to be met, for our sins to be forgiven, and for victory in temptation.

The “ACTS” acrostic is a helpful pattern for prayer: **[A] Adoration** Begin your time in prayer by worshiping and adoring God--His sovereignty, power, goodness, grace and mercy. **[C] Confession** Confess your sins to God, while thanking Him that you are forgiven, and don’t allow Satan to make you feel guilty over your sins. **[T] Thanksgiving** Acknowledge that you have been greatly blessed, so thank Him for answers to prayer, material blessings, spiritual blessings, and relational blessings. **[S] Supplication** This is where you specifically pray for others in the following four categories—ministry, people, family, personal.

We all can learn to pray as a lifestyle. We can have an ongoing conversation with God throughout the day. By practicing His presence, we admit our dependence and obedience to God and makes our relationship with Him more genuine and real. He is always available, and always willing to talk—anywhere!

Talking To Others About This Week’s Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, “*What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?*”, how would you summarize the most important elements of this week’s sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

Talking To God About This Week’s Message

“Heavenly Father, please help me today to be a ‘doer’ of the Word, and not just a ‘hearer’. Amen.”

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Praying the Bible

Donald Whitney

Abridged by Dan Clement

There's a problem: truly born-again, genuinely Christian people, often do not pray simply because we do not **feel** like it. Whenever the Holy Spirit enters a person, he brings his holy nature with him. The result is that all of us in whom the Spirit dwells have new, holy hungers and holy loves we did not have prior to having his indwelling presence. And when we pray, we always pray about those things which are most important to us—our family or friends, finances, our future, our job, church and ministry responsibilities, and, often enough, a current crisis. So, **why** do we become bored when talking with glorious, infinite, Creator-God, especially when what we're talking about is important to us? We typically assume that the problem is **us**. But the problem almost certainly is **not** with us—it's our method. The method most of us use is to **pray the same old things about the same old things**.

The problem is **not** that we pray about the same old things. It's normal to pray about the same old things because our lives tend to consist of the same old things. If we're going to pray about our lives, and the elements of our lives—family, finances, job, etc.—don't change dramatically very often, then it necessarily means that we're going to pray **about** the same old things most of the time. Our problem is that we **say the same old things** about the same old things—and that's boring. And when prayer is boring, we don't feel like praying. The solution is to change our method!

When we use the Psalms to shape and guide our prayers, we never again **say** the same old things even though we're praying **about** the same old things. God gave us the Psalms to show us how to pray and worship. Here's how to do it: simply go through a passage, line by line, talking to God about whatever comes to mind as you read the text. If you don't understand the meaning of a verse, go on to the next verse. If the meaning of that one is perfectly clear but nothing comes to mind to pray about, go on to the next verse. Just speak to the Lord about anything that matters to you as you slowly read his Word. It doesn't even matter if what you pray about isn't the main or "correct" meaning of the passage. Determining the correct meaning of a passage is critical when studying, teaching, or counseling. On those occasions, the primary purpose is to understand and apply the Bible. But that's not what we're doing here. Our goal is to use the words of the Bible to help us talk to God—and he wants us to talk to him about everything that's important to us (Philippians 4:6). And since God inspired a psalm for every sigh of the soul, you will never go through anything in life for which you cannot find the root emotions reflected in the Psalms: exhilaration, frustration, discouragement, guilt, forgiveness, joy, gratitude, dealing with enemies, contentment, discontentment. You name it—it's there!

So, again, here's the method: read a psalm line by line, talking to God about whatever is important to you. If your mind wanders from the subject of the text, take **those** wandering thoughts Godward, then return to the text. If you come to a verse you don't understand—just skip it. If you do understand it but nothing comes to mind to pray about—just go on to the next verse. If sinful thoughts enter your mind, pray about them and then go on! It's even OK to pray, "Lord, what does this passage mean?" and "Please show me how I can pray from this passage." When we talk to God about the words we read in the Bible, we'll never again pray the same old things about the same old things. And, we won't pray the empty, repetitive phrases we might if we were "using our own words" to pray.

Which psalm should you pray today? Since there are thirty days in most months, if you divide the Psalms up into thirty lists, you'll always know which psalms to select from for **today's** praying. Since there are 150 psalms, today's psalms are the psalms which correspond to today's date, plus 30, 60, 90, and 120. You can simply follow this chart (today's date is in the first row, today's psalms in the second):

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 |
| 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 |
| 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 | 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 | 105 |
| 121 | 122 | 123 | 124 | 125 | 126 | 127 | 128 | 129 | 130 | 131 | 132 | 133 | 134 | 135 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 |
| 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 |
| 106 | 107 | 108 | 109 | 110 | 111 | 112 | 113 | 114 | 115 | 116 | 117 | 118 | 119 [§] | 120 |
| 136 | 137 | 138 | 139 | 140 | 141 | 142 | 143 | 144 | 145 | 146 | 147 | 148 | 149 | 150 |

The most important benefit of this little plan is that it gives you direction and momentum. No matter how tired, sleepy, or distracted you might be when you begin to pray, with this method **you know** on any given day exactly which five psalms you will consider. Start by taking thirty seconds to quickly scan the five psalms for today's date and pick the one that best leads you to prayer in your present circumstances.

Let's try it! Suppose today is the 23rd of the month. Quickly scan the list of psalms for the 23rd (23, 53, 83, 113, and 143), and choose one that strikes you. Today you chose Psalm 23, and read the first line: "The Lord is my shepherd"—and you pray something like this:

Lord, I thank you that you are my shepherd. You're a good shepherd. You have shepherded me all my life. And, Great Shepherd, please shepherd my family today: guard them from the ways of the world; guide them into the ways of God. O Great Shepherd, I pray for my children; cause them to be your sheep. May they love you as their shepherd, as I do. And, Lord, please shepherd me in my decision about taking that new job. Do I make that move, that change, or not? I also pray for the pastor-shepherds at church. Please shepherd them as they shepherd us.

Continue praying anything else that comes to mind. When nothing else comes to mind, simply go to the next line: "I shall not want." And perhaps you pray:

Lord, I thank you that I've never really been in want. I haven't missed too many meals. All that I am and all that I have has come from you. But I know it pleases you that I bring my desires to you, so would you please provide the finances we need for that transmission job our van needs and for next semester's tuition? ...

Next you read, "He leads me beside still waters (v. 2b) and you begin to pray...

Yes, Lord, do lead me in that decision about the job shift. I want to do what's wisest, but I don't know which choice to make. And since you lead me beside still waters in this, I ask you to quiet my soul in this situation. May the turbulence in my heart be stilled by trust in you and your sovereignty over all things and over all people...

Then, simply continue through that psalm until you run out of time or you run out of psalm! That's it! Now, pick up your Bible, quickly scan the psalms for today's date, and talk to your Heavenly Father!



[§] Because Psalm 119 is so long, you'll almost certainly not get through it all! So, for every month which has thirty-one days, simply use Psalm 119 again.