



SCRIPTURAL

PRAYER

PRACTICES

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Scriptural Prayer Practices

(All passages quoted from the English Standard Version)

Benedictions

The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, defines a benediction as, "God's blessing conferred on a person or a group by God's designated human agent." Examples of individual blessings include characters such as two of Noah's sons, Shem and Japheth (Genesis 9:26-27), Abram (Genesis 14:19-20), and Isaac (Genesis 27:27-29). After King Hezekiah restored temple worship in Jerusalem, the priests and Levites blessed the people of Israel during celebration of the Passover (2 Chronicles 30:27).

Common themes seem to emerge when a benediction was pronounced.

- ❖ A benediction was always theocentric; God was exalted as the One who was the source of great blessing with the bestowal of peace.
- ❖ A benediction was quite solemn; it was quite serious with climactic declaration.
- ❖ A benediction was authoritative because God's human mouthpiece was respected.
- ❖ A benediction was often rhythmic; the rhetoric of the spoken word captured attention.

Sadly, these elements are often lost in the final words of a teacher, preacher or communicator of biblical truth. Perhaps it is a good reminder to be more intentional about "final words" and send the listener(s) away by reinforcing the importance of what we have said on God's behalf. Here are some great illustrations from God's spokesmen:

The LORD bless and keep you; the LORD to make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.
[Numbers 6:24-26]

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. [Psalm 19:14]

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgement and inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.
[Romans 11:33-36]

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. [Romans 15:5-6]

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. [Romans 15:13]

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith- to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. [Romans 16:25-27]

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. [2 Corinthians 13:14]

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. [Ephesians 3:20-21]

Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. [1 Thessalonians 3:11-13]

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. [1 Thessalonians 5:23-24]

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. [2 Thessalonians 2:16-17]

To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. [1 Timothy 1:17]

... he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. [1 Timothy 6:15-16]

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. [Hebrews 13:20-21]

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. [1 Peter 5:10-11]

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. [2 Peter 3:17-18]

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. [Jude 24-25]

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" [Revelation 5:13]

Group Prayer Experiences

Supplications – [1 Timothy 2:1]. Supplications are **requests or petitions** that can be made known to man or God- which then qualify them as prayers. Requests connote a need which can be shared with anyone- including God. Because the Greek word- used 19 times in the New Testament- was not an exclusive term, Paul clarifies that it becomes a prayer when one asks God to intervene.

- In triads, share a request with each other regarding something which is preoccupying your mind today. Then take turns praying for each other, petitioning God to intervene.

Intercession – [1 Timothy 2:1]. It seems that we use this term far more than the Bible does, found only twice in the New Testament, it is also a word used for petitioning God. The difference is found in the person(s) for whom we are praying. Paul's instruction to Timothy in this context, was to pray *for kings and all who are in high positions...*[v. 2]. In other words, these were individuals who ruled over Timothy.

When Nehemiah was a cupbearer in the presence of King Artaxerxes, he petitioned the King for his blessing to return to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1-8). **Intercession** was a word used to express being in a king's presence to make a petition of him. Prayers of intercession are for people in positions of authority over us! And, the One we pray to is the King of kings and Lord of lords!

- Who are those in positions of authority over us? Government officials...employers ...parents...church leaders and elders? Meet with your accountability partners and identify two or three people of influence over you and pray for them by name.

Thanksgiving – [1Timothy 2:1]. Our prayers can never simply be reduced to just asking God for something. Paul’s careful reminder is that all of our prayers must be seasoned and well-balanced with **thankfulness** and **gratitude**. On 15 occasions, this principle is reiterated throughout the New Testament. The attitude of gratitude adorns our prayer life as we become reflective of Whom we are addressing, and the great lengths our Father God has pursued to tear down the walls of separation by making Jesus our mediator. He is available to us anytime in anyplace for any reason!

We should not be surprised that the word in Greek is the same root word from which we derive our English word Eucharist! Some prefer the “Lord’s Supper” or “Communion.” Whatever your personal preference- thanksgiving re-centers our thoughts on the reality that our only right to enter God’s presence through prayer is because of His finished work on the cross as our sin-bearer and subsequent victory over sin, death and the grave by His resurrection!

- Sentence prayers of thanksgiving by the assembly gathered are voiced as a sacrifice of praise.

Pray for One Another – More than 30 one-another commands are given to the New Testament church. Praying for each other is an exhortation in a vast array of passages which give instruction about prayer.

- Invite the group to mention specific (but brief) requests or “unspoken” requests which can be written on a white-board, black-board, etc.
- As prayer time begins, ask the audience to pray silently for each request as a leader reads it aloud, allowing about 10 seconds of prayer for each request.
- If there is someone in the audience fluent in another language, ask them to close in prayer as a reminder that God knows our hearts, even if others do not!

Pray for One Another 2.0

- Write requests on whiteboard and as each request or praise is spoken, ask for a volunteer to pray specifically for that request.

Pray for One Another 3.0

- Record the spoken requests or add them to an existing list. Have one “Levite” pray out loud for each request, ending each one with, **Lord, in your mercy;** this calls for the congregation to respond verbally in unison, ...**hear our prayer.**

The Peace of Jerusalem – [Psalm 122:6-7] Psalms 120-134 are affectionately known as the Psalms of Ascent. They were recited or sung as the Jews made their pilgrimage three times a year to the holy city of Jerusalem. Even during David’s (the author of this Psalm) reign, the travel “up to Jerusalem” was dangerous and strenuous because it was a city on a hill.

Today, the Middle East is a political and religious hotspot. Jerusalem is a holy site for all three Abrahamic world religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Turmoil, persecution and terrorism are daily occurrences in Middle eastern countries such as Israel, West Bank Territories of Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Iran and Iraq. Pray for those believers in these countries who are caught in the tension of injustice and that peace will prevail in their hearts and nations.

- List on the white-board (simply a sheet of paper) observations from this Psalm that were critical reasons for prayer. Add to the list, factors we glean from the news which make this region volatile. Pray aloud as a community of faith for the global church facing these challenges and those immersed in other regions.

Quakers' Prayer Model

- Write prayer requests and answers to prayer on the white-board
- Follow a pattern practiced by the Quakers by using their hands as a symbol, resting them on their lap
- When a request is spoken, PALMS ARE TURNED UP to symbolically to affirm an answered prayer or blessing received from God
- When a request is spoken representing a concern or burden, PALMS ARE TURNED DOWN as we place those matters in God's lap for Him to bear

Pray Without Ceasing – [1 Thessalonians 5:17]

In any group setting...a class, Bible study, devotional, discussion...invite group members to simply raise their hand and pray aloud as the Spirit prompts them. This can also be done privately if a person is reluctant to pray publicly. The intention is to invite God to be at work in their heart "in the moment" as they are engaged with truth and its implications to their life!

Praise God in Song – [Psalm 69:30] Sing it; read words of a hymn; listen to one with eyes closed; watch/listen to a music video; write a psalm. Just make a melody in your heart!

- This verse says, *I will magnify him with thanksgiving*. Write some praises on the whiteboard.
- Sing the *Doxology: Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

The Persecuted Church – [Matthew 5:43-44] What does it "cost me" to be a Christian? Christian organization, Vision for Israel, reported this incident about two years ago.

- *12 CHRISTIANS BRUTALLY EXECUTED BY ISIS REFUSED TO RENOUNCE NAME OF CHRIST: Twelve Christians have been brutally executed by ISIS, including the 12-year-old son of a Syrian ministry team leader who had planted nine churches, because they refused to renounce the name of Jesus Christ and embrace Islam. According to the Christian Aid Mission, the horrific murders took place on 28 August 2015, in a village outside Aleppo, Syria. "In front of the team leader and relatives in the crowd, the Islamic extremists cut off the fingertips of the boy and severely beat him, telling his father they would stop the torture only if he, the father, returned to Islam. When the team leader refused, relatives said the ISIS terrorists also tortured and beat him and the two other ministry workers. The three men and the boy then met their deaths in crucifixion." They were killed for refusing to return to Islam after embracing Christianity, as were the other eight aid workers, including two women.*
- *The eight were asked if they would return to Islam. However, after they refused to renounce Christ, the women, ages 29 and 33, were raped before the crowd summoned to watch, and then all eight were beheaded. They prayed as they knelt before the ISIS executioners. "Villagers said some were praying in the name of Jesus, others said they were praying the Lord's Prayer, and others said some of them lifted their heads to commend their spirits to Jesus," the ministry director told Christian Aid. "One of the women looked up and seemed to be smiling as she said, 'Jesus.'"*
- *The twelve martyrs are among thousands of Christians who have been ransomed, tortured, beheaded or killed over the past year by ISIS, a hardline Muslim group determined to wipe Christianity off the map. In Syria alone, the Christian population has plunged by nearly two-thirds since the country's civil war started in 2011. In Iraq, the Christian population is teetering on extinction, dwindling from around 1.5 million in 2003 to well below 200,000 now.*

The Holy Spirit Helps Us Pray – [1 Samuel 1:12-13, Romans 8:26-27] Eli observed Hannah's lips moving but did not hear her voice; in fact, she was praying from her heart. Sometimes, there are such deep matters of the soul which we find difficult to put into words. Apparently, the Apostle Paul was very aware of this dilemma and assured the Romans that the deepest heart matters were indeed known by God and the Holy Spirit would intercede on our behalf. It is comforting to know that when we are incapable of framing our thoughts- the Spirit is able to deliver those deepest hurts, tears, struggles and joys to the Father for us.

- Have a scribe record some spoken and unspoken requests on the white board.
- Invite everyone to stand, sit, kneel, lift their hands- whatever they preferred prayer position- and whisper their prayers for one another.
- International students are also invited to pray in their first language.

Who Comes to Mind? – Have you ever had someone’s name just pop into your mind? How did you respond? With this statement, I would wager that a few names just popped to the surface of your frontal lobe! Write down the first five names which come to you.

- On a 3” x 5” card, write down three to five names.
- Behind each name, select one of these 4 words which you would use to describe your relationship with that individual right now:

Blessed: this person is a blessing to you

Distressed: this person and you are dealing with an unsolved conflict

Quest: this person needs wisdom from above in making a critical decision

Request: this person has asked you to uphold them in prayer for some reason

Rest/Sabbath: this person is dangerously close to burnout if they do not rest

- Partner with another person to pray for at least two people circled on your card

Every Praise Is to Our God – [Philippians 4:4-7] – A good reminder which brings a smile to our faces!

- YouTube Video – *Hezekiah Walker – Every Praise is to Our God* (5:29)

Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart – [Psalm 118]

The unquestionable theme of this Psalm is the LORD’s steadfast love. The author gives plenty of reasons why His people should say “thank you.”

- *his love endures forever* (vs. 1,2,3,4,28)
- He listens to us when we are distressed and sets us free (v. 5)
- Because He is on our side we have nothing to fear from man (vs. 6-7)
- He is more trustworthy than any human being (vs. 8-9)
- He was Israel’s best national defense (vs. 10-13)
- The LORD is my strength, song and salvation (vs. 14-16)
- Even in divine discipline, we can remember that He is a good God (vs. 17-18)
- He saves us- spiritually and sometimes literally (vs. 19-24)
- He is the giver of any success we enjoy (v. 25)
- We are blessed to be in His presence (vs. 26-27)
- *You are **my** God* (vs. 28-29)

There is never a shortage of reasons to be grateful- only a shortage of grateful people!

- Spontaneously pray aloud by finishing this sentence: “Father God, I thank you for...”

Declare Your Love of Scripture – [Psalm 119:13]

Anyone who takes the time to read all 176 verses of the longest chapter in the Bible will quickly pick up on the Psalm's theme- the greatness of God's Word- His *statutes, commandments, precepts, rules, law, words, promises, & testimonies* are trustworthy and transformational.

- After you peruse the Psalm, spontaneously recite your favorite verse as a prayerful declaration of appreciation for how He keeps you on the right path.

Declare Your Love for the Lord – [Psalm 31:23]

This verse is a command to *love the LORD, all you his saints*, not an invitation or request! The concept of love may be one of the most misunderstood and abused word in the English language. We use the same word to describe our favorite food, place, athletic sport, or piece of clothing. If indeed we are lovers of God, what is it about Him that spurs us to deeper attraction and affection?

- Declare your love without reservation or hesitation in sentence prayers as frequently as you wish.
- "I love you LORD, because..."

Set Apart Choice Servants – [Acts 6:6; 13:3]

As spiritual leaders began to emerge in the church, there was intentionality by the church in praying, fasting and ordaining them by laying their hands on them to commission them publicly before sending them out to use their spiritual gifts. Their godliness was apparent to all and their call to serve was clear.

- When members of your church family- or the family of God in any context for that matter, send them out with your blessing by laying hands on them and praying over them for protection and that their ministry would bear fruit.

Personal Prayer Exercises

Paraphrase a Passage – [Ephesians 2:8-10] Some of the passages which are most familiar to us are recited or receive an honorable mention, without the reader hitting the pause button long enough to **really** mine the riches of the text.

- Use a 3" x 5" card to write a personal paraphrase of these three verses. As a result of this new perspective on the text's truth, what is it that you need to thank God for or ask Him to do in your life?

God's Benefits Package – [Psalm 103:1-5] Have you ever been intentional about listing all of the benefits available to you as a child of God? Although I don't think King David's intention was to create an exhaustive list in this Psalm, he does include quite a few for your meditation.

- Use a 3" x 5" card to write down what David identifies in these verses. After each one, take a few moments to reflect/meditate on these benefits and jot down how they are fleshed out in your life.
- If you discover that you are not cashing in some of these benefits- articulate on your card, why it is hard for you to "believe & receive" these truths.
- Take time to pray; thank God for the benefits afforded to you; ask God to assist you, by His Spirit, to apply these truths to you personally.

Attributes of God - [Psalm 103:6-14] A large part of the benefits which are afforded to believers find their roots in the attributes possessed and displayed by God. Throughout Israel's history, the nation was repeatedly reminded of all the ways the Lord had shown His omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence in visual demonstrations to His chosen people and other nations.

- Use a 3" x 5" card to list all the attributes of God which King David highlights in these verses.
- After listing an attribute, jot down a brief definition of the attribute. Have you seen evidence in your own life which confirms that God is still actively pursuing you as one of His children? Reflect on these and respond to God appropriately.
- This can also be done as a group prayer discipline by asking everyone stand as the passage is read in unison; ask a "scribe" to write out the attributes of God as group participants name them; pray spontaneously- praising Him for his very being.

Heart Surgery – [Psalm 139] No part of our being escapes God's watchful eye. But, it is easy for us to think we are hiding the motives and intentions of our heart from the One who knows us intimately. The busier we are, the more distracted we are and the less intentional we act allows moments of introspection, self-examination and meditation to dissipate. God prefers that we search our own hearts before it becomes necessary for Him to discipline a wayward child.

- In silence, read this Psalm slowly, pausing as necessary to do some soul surgery.

Prayer Walking – [Ephesians 6:18-20] This prayer discipline is easily adapted to many themes, foci, places and group size. What stands out to me in this passage is the balance in Paul's prayer life. Writing to saints, he implores them to be praying for him as he prays for them- and that God would give him the right words in those spontaneous opportunities to proclaim the mystery of the gospel.

In his book, *Organic Outreach for Ordinary People*, author Kevin Harney challenges his readers to consistently pray as the Holy Spirit leads them as they walk an area- their street, neighborhood or community. He recommends that it be done on a weekly basis. *Begin walking (or driving) and quietly lift up your prayers to move and break out in each life and home. Don't pray out loud, but pray quietly in your spirit* (p. 100). He also gives some very specific guidelines to help you pray with intentionality:

- *Pray for families and individuals you know. Pray for them by name and ask God to meet needs and touch lives.*
- *Ask the Holy Spirit to open eyes and soften hearts. God is moving in every home, but people often miss his activity. Pray that people will notice the presence and work of God.*
- *Pray for believers in your community to let the light of Jesus shine in and through them. Ask for gentle boldness as Christians to give testimony to their faith.*
- *Pray for broken families to be healed, shattered hearts to be restored, loneliness to be lifted, and needs to be met in the power of Jesus.*
- *Ask the Spirit to bring a conviction of sin that creates a longing for the cleansing that only Jesus can offer.* (Harney, p. 100)

Praying Scripture

This method of prayer begins and ends with Scripture. Find an appropriate text to meditate on as you personalize it. How is that done? Read the verse as if the text is being written by the author directly to you. You may need to change the pronouns or names to make it personal. Ask questions of the verse or passage. Read it slowly, repetitiously, placing emphasis on key words each time you rehearse it. Record your thoughts and articulate your conversation with God. Above all, answer the "So What?" questions. How does God want you incorporate this truth into the way you live out your faith?

Here are some recommended passages for you to consider: Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Peter 5:6-11.

Wisdom Seeking– [James 1:5-8]

Every day we consciously or subconsciously make hundreds of decisions. Some are small. I'm not sure if we need to pray about which flavor of jam we lather on our toast! But, some decisions are life-changing with eternal implications. I don't think Peter had much time to consider all of the options when he climbed overboard to walk on the water toward Jesus during a severe storm on the Sea Galilee. When he started to sink, he spontaneously cried out, *Lord, save me* (Matthew 14:30).

When we are praying about life altering decisions, James 1 gives us two guard rails: (1) ask in faith, and (2) ask without doubting that God will have our welfare as His top priority.

Global Kingdom Concerns

Technology allows us to hold in our hands full access to world events. Instead of spending time on temporal things to entertain us, why not become a more responsible global citizen by praying intentionally and internationally for the needs of the world? Websites like <https://prayercast.com> give us up-to-date prayer requests for countries and Christians around the globe. Be informed. Be intentional. Be a “glocal” (global & local) prayer warrior!

Fruit of the Spirit – [Galatians 5:16-26]

Discussion about fruit of the Spirit peppers many conversations about spiritual growth and maturity. Sermon series abound with this fruit bowl of nine evidences that a Christ follower should manifest...*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*. We can only imagine the bliss of environments if these qualities were the norm. However, that is seldom reality. WHY? Because we ignore the first word in verse 22...*but*.

“But” is a word contrasting what precedes fruit bearing in verses 22-23. And, while it is good for us to pray that we might increase in bearing these nine fruit of the Spirit, we fail to pray specifically for a decrease in the desires of the flesh which are at war with what the Spirit wants to produce in our lives. Paul is equally specific in identifying the culprits which undermine the Spirit’s work in us: *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these* (vs. 19-21a). He says these *works of the flesh are evident* (v. 19) and Paul even suggests this is just a token list because he leaves it open-ended!

Nine qualities are highlighted as fruit of the Spirit in contrast to 15 specific traits of the flesh with even more unmentionables. Interesting. It sparked an idea; maybe we should be praying just as fervently and specifically to conquer- with the Spirit’s help, of course- the fruit of the flesh. Without even working up a sweat, I would wager we could identify specific areas to begin targeting with prayer in our selves.

Models for Directed Periods of Prayer

How to Spend an Hour with God- Not Just 60 Seconds

{<http://americaskeswick.org/resources—media/free-resources>}

Give five minutes to each of the following twelve activities:

1. Praise the Lord for who HE is (Hebrews 13:15)
2. Read the Word (Psalm 119:105)
3. Meditate on what you have just read (Joshua 1:8)
4. Confess your sins and shortcomings (1 John 1:9)
5. Intercede for others (1 Samuel 12:18)
6. Listen for God's voice (Psalm 46:10)
7. Pray using language of the Word (Psalm 22:1)
8. Petition God for your own needs (James 4:2)
9. Pray for your Pastor (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)
10. Pray for your church (Ephesians 5:25)
11. Pray for your public and corporate leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-8)
12. Give thanks (Psalm 136)

The Seven Stages of Prayer {John MacArthur, Jr.}

STAGE 1: Reverence...a time of worship, adoration and praise. (1 Chronicles 29:10-12; Psalm 100)

STAGE 2: Reflection...a time of soul searching and waiting on God in quiet communication with Him through His Word. (Psalm 46:10; 131:1-3)

STAGE 3: Repentance...a time of acknowledgement and confession of sin. (Psalm 51; 139:23-24; 1 John 1:9)

STAGE 4: Restoration...a time of gratefully acknowledging the restoration of divine fellowship. (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 32; Mark 11:25)

STAGE 5: Requests...a time of personal petition as well as intercession on behalf of others and the church. (Matthew 7:7; Philippians 4:6-7; James 5:16)

STAGE 6: Renewal...a time of renewing your commitment to spiritual growth and your strength for spiritual battle. (Isaiah 40:31; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 6:10-18)

STAGE 7: Rejoicing...a time of expressing gratitude to God for His bountiful blessings and goodness. (Psalm 107:22; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

Praying Through the Lord's Prayer – Matthew 6:9-13 {James R. Ayers}

IDENTIFICATION – *Our Father in heaven*, ; Remember to Whom you are communicating with!

ADORATION – ...*hallowed be your name*. ; Remember you are speaking to a holy God!

CONSUMMATION – *Your kingdom come*, ; Remember that kingdom issues are of the utmost importance!

ADMINISTRATION – ...*your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*. ; Remember that our will is subservient to God's higher purposes!

PROVISION – *Give us this day our daily bread*, ; Remember that our heavenly Father provides all we need- not all we want!

RECONCILIATION – ...*and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*. ; Remember that our willingness to forgive is necessary to enjoy God's gracious forgiveness!

TEMPTATION – *And lead us not into temptation*, ; Remember that our enemy is always on the prowl seeking whom he may devour or destroy!

PROTECTION – ...*but deliver us from evil*. Remember God's hand of protection overshadows any evil which confronts us!

BENEDICTION – [*For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.*] – Found in some manuscripts, remember that ultimately all we ask is to bring glory to God!

The Colossian Cycle – [Colossians 1:3-14] {James R. Ayers}

When the Apostle Paul thought about his brothers and sisters in the church at Colossae, his heart was immediately filled with gratitude (v. 3). Their faith, love, hope, embracing the gospel and biblical truth coalesced into a spiritual maturity which deepened his affection for his group of believers.

Consequently, his prayers for them became very specific. He passionately wanted these new believers to fall deeper in love with the One who had delivered them *from the domain of darkness*, transferring them to the kingdom of God's beloved Son (v.13).

This critical spiritual journey we are on is filled with detours, potholes and pitfalls. It is necessary for us to maintain our focus and hit the pause button of life periodically to assess where we are in our journey.

With pen and paper in hand, walk through this process Paul outlined in verses 9-13. Take note of your progress- phrase by phrase- to assess if your pathway aligns with the journey the Colossian believers were walking.

- ❖ Are you filled with the knowledge that His will has all wisdom and spiritual understanding?
- ❖ Are you walking in a manner worthy of the Lord which pleases Him?
- ❖ Are you bearing fruit in your good works?
- ❖ Is your knowledge of God increasing?
- ❖ Are you leaning into God's strength and might by depending on the Holy Spirit?
- ❖ Are patience and joy evident in your life when you are enduring difficult days?
- ❖ Does the realization of your eternal inheritance infuse you with deep gratitude?
- ❖ Can you attest to God's victories over darkness?
- ❖ Are you moved to a deep appreciation for the cost of your redemption?

All of these examen questions could be answered with a simple "yes" or "no"- but that would be tragic. Questions such as these are deeply rooted in Scripture and demand some reflection and introspection. Articulating your thoughts forces clarity of intellect and emotion. Make the investment of time without parameters of other demands to distract you- and don't forget to silence your phone and tuck it away for a while so YOU can recharge!

The A.C.T.S. of Prayer – Origin Unknown {Descriptions by James R. Ayers}

This model is very familiar to many and so simple to use because it is an acrostic easily memorized. Use these passages to enlighten your understanding of each element.

ADORATION...is giving worth to God for His *person*.

Psalm 34:1-3; Psalm 67:3; Psalm 100

CONFESSION...is acknowledging that we fall short of His standard of *perfection*.

Psalm 32:5; Psalm 51; Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 59:1-2; 1 John 1:5-10

THANKSGIVING...is cultivating an attitude of gratitude for His amazing *provision*.

Psalm 69:30; Psalm 147:7; Luke 17:11-19; Colossians 1:3

SUPPLICATION... is bringing personal & corporate needs to God for *presentation*.

Philippians 4:4-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Timothy 1:3

R.E.A.C.H. – Praying for Friends who are Far from God {James R. Ayers}

Although many of us may not have the spiritual gift of "evangelism," we still have many important relationships with friends, family members, colleagues at work, neighbors, etc., who are far from God and desperately need to hear the Good News of the gospel.

This acrostic is a prayer guide to help us become more intentional about reaching them wherever they are in during their spiritual journey. Meditate on each of the five components and talk with God, asking how He might be directing you to engage with those in desperate need of a Savior.

Relate – In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul summarized his brief experience with the believers in Thessalonica. According to Acts 17:1-5, Paul and Silas were only able to stay in the city no longer than three Sabbaths before a mob of jealous Jews in the city created an uproar thereby forcing a hasty exit. However, consider the bond he had forged with them during his brief stay: *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share not only the gospel of God but our own selves, because you had become very dear to us* (ESV). It seems Paul and his associates loved the people as much as they loved sharing the gospel! They could **relate** to their lives at every level!

How well am I relating to those who have no knowledge of or relationship with Jesus? Am I looking for common ground which would strengthen our bridge of friendship? Have I been attentive to what is occurring in their lives- being a faithful friend?

Expectations – Christians have often been sharply criticized for their rush to judgment of others' sin. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned the crowds, *Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you* (Matthew 7:1-2, ESV). It seems that the longer we are a Christian, the more we expect others- even those who have no spiritual moorings- to act like Christians. We need a refresher course on the bent of a natural (unsaved) person's heart. A person who is far from God may be excelling at behaving badly because sinning is what they do best! They have skewed biblical knowledge and no spiritual assistance from the Holy Spirit to restrain themselves. It is difficult enough for a redeemed person to take his/her own thoughts, words and actions captive, submitting them to the Lordship of Christ.

Have I been guilty of being judgmental of my unbelieving friends? How do I or should I respond when their moral views and choices are different from my own? Have I assumed a role of a judge and jury of their actions?

Acceptance – John 4 is sometimes interpreted as a passage providing guidelines for personal evangelism. While there is much to glean from this text, the most intriguing sentence to be highlighted is verse 4: *And he (Jesus) had to pass through Samaria*. Geographically speaking- no he didn't! In fact, most Jews for centuries refused to travel through this territory by going dozens of miles out of their way to circumvent the exact road Jesus traveled. Something more was at

stake in this divine appointment at the well. The Son of God was compelled to model something for His disciples, because they *marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said... "Why are you talking with her?"* (v. 27). They were astonished that he was in a spiritual dialogue with a Samaritan woman. One can only imagine how much greater their surprise would have been had they known she was living with a man after having been married five times previously! Regardless of her gender, past experiences, or even present circumstances, Jesus accepted her and showed genuine concern for sincere questions. The narrative relates that Jesus and the disciples spend two days in Sychar, *And many more believed because of his word* (v. 41).

Learning to accept the uniqueness of others can be very challenging. Does that take you way out of your comfort zone? Evaluate your ability and effectiveness to accept people who don't look, talk, or dress like you. Can you respect their preferences and differences? Do I have the capacity to accept them with the same unconditional love?

Caring – This element of reaching a person far from God demands that we put feet on our faith. On the spectrum of objective and subjective perspectives of sharing the gospel, caring weighs heavier on the objective side. This allows for unbridled creativity in determining how we can best show that we "love our neighbor" in tangible ways. In the English Standard Version of the Bible, the sub-heading of Matthew 25:31-46 is The Final Judgment. Perusing the passage strikes a sharp contrast between authentic shepherds who showed how they cared for individuals in need and for those who didn't lift a proverbial finger to assist the needy. Jesus illustrated His point by referencing those who fed the hungry, quenched the parched throats of the thirsty, showed hospitality, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and the imprisoned. Don't miss the verbs...they DID something which met a need.

So- what am I "doing" to show someone I care? Maybe they didn't ask for it, but we can learn about how to care by just paying attention- or better yet- ask them what they need and then provide it. Intentional and meaningful actions of loving care speak volumes and earn a lot of credibility to the gospel we speak and show.

Heart – In our quest to be more proactive in sharing our faith, kingdom-building is always a heart issue beyond our control. It is that part of supernatural transformation which only God can do. He simply invites us into the process. Romanized Jews were reminded by the Apostle Paul of this truth...*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved...For there is no distinction*

between Jew and Greek...For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:9, 10, 12a, 13).

Am I a good steward of this gospel which has been entrusted to me? Do I keep it for myself or make every effort to share this life-changing story with others? When was the last time I shared my story of God's life-changing work which radically changed my life?

Prayer Positions

Hands Spread Out – [Exodus 9:22-33]

- At the Pharaoh's request, Moses promised he would *stretch out my hands to the LORD* in prayer to end the seventh plague of thunder, hail and fire- likely bolts of lightning. This prayer posture was mentioned four times in those 12 verses. The LORD told him to do it, the Pharaoh pleaded for him to do it, and Moses complied twice when the plague commended and ended.

Lifting Holy Hands – [1 Timothy 2:8]

- As you are lifting holy hands, offer sentence prayers of worship for God's attributes.

Kneeling in Prayer – [1 Kings 8:22,54-55; Daniel 6:10]

It was an unforgettable day in Jerusalem's history when the ark of the covenant was carried into its new home- the Most Holy Place in the Temple built by King Solomon. Countless sheep and oxen were sacrificed during the dedication. The "cloud" hovered over the Holy Place giving evidence of God's pleasure and presence. Before King Solomon began his dedicatory prayer and in the presence all the assembly of Israel, he knelt before the altar of the LORD with hands outstretched toward heaven!

Fast forward to a darker time in Israel's history when the nation was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Daniel later finds himself as a high ranking official in the newly conquered kingdom of the Medes. Distinguished above all the other high officials, he is framed as being rebellious because he refuses to obey an injunction restricting everyone from making a petition to any god. His response is recorded in Daniel 6:10.

When Daniel knew the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he had done previously.

Two prominent figures in biblical history unashamedly knelt in prayer. I can't explain it, but there is something about this posture which shows honor and respect for our Lord.

It matters not who sees you, where you are, or when it occurs- but it seems to please God regardless of if it is done privately or publicly. It is extremely humbling!

Prostrate – [Matthew 26:39]

The only reference to prayer in the prostrate position describes the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was alone with His Father when *he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."*

Peter, James and John failed Him in His greatest hour of need. Jesus was filled with sorrow and had a troubled heart. When heaven is silent and seemingly no one is listening, this position seems to be most fitting.

Standing – [Matthew 6:6; Mark 11:25]

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus references a mental picture which anyone who ventured to the Temple in Jerusalem could recall in their mind's eye. The Pharisees were notorious for standing and praying in public places like the synagogues and street corners to attract attention. Jesus draws a sharp contrast saying this practice was a violation of prayer's purpose. The goal was not prayer as a performance; rather, private prayer helps keep our motives for prayer in check. When coupled with His teaching in Mark 11, there is a need to check our heart first to deal with any issues of sin which we need to confess to God and others.

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