

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO PRAYER

40 Days of Prayer – Week 2

(Note – may be only be reproduced for use as participant of MCF 40 Day of prayer campaign)

Welcome to 40Days... Prayer is such a huge subject
It has so many facets, I've struggled knowing where to start.

Type "Prayer" into Amazon search = 136,000 books
into Google = 132 million web pages!
inc. 4 M videos... 4 M books... 6 M news articles

Over 40 yrs as a pastor, noticed **3 facts about prayer**

1. OUR CREATOR WIRED HUMAN BEINGS FOR PRAYER!

Everybody prays! A universal urge... worldwide
Every culture prays to something or someone"
Even atheists in a crisis cry out "Oh God!

Why? It's part of **what makes us human!** **Given capacity...**
Makes us different from animals...
We're wired for prayer!

ECC. 3:11 scr **"God has planted eternity in the human heart."**

2. WE'RE NOT VERY GOOD AT PRAYER.

Everybody feels inadequate. Many are afraid to pray publicly
CARD 1

- **Even St. Paul** considered himself to be **a novice** at prayer!
ROM 8:26 scr **"We don't even know what we should pray for,
nor how we should pray..."** (NLT)

- **And even the disciples who lived with Jesus asked for help**
LK. 11:1 **"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When
he finished, one of the disciples said "Lord, teach us to pray..."**

Why I titled this intro to 40 DOPr "A **Beginner's Guide...**

God doesn't talking to him to feel so difficult!

3. Our frustrations with prayer are caused by our misconceptions

So many false ideas about prayer out there. *Mention 4*

1. Prayer is NOT a magic wand!

Not an **enchanted tool** you wave like Harry Potter to change your situation!

Not a **magic bottle** you rub & God comes out to fulfill every desire
"Your wish is my command!" *God is not your Genie*

Not a **secret incantation** – special words used to get your own way
"Abracadabra! You're now a good husband!"
"Hocus Pocus! Give me the promotion!"
(not the droids)

ORIGIN:- a corruption of the Latin phrase used in a Catholic Mass
Hoc est corpus meum = "This is the Body of Christ"

2. Prayer is NOT a fire extinguisher!

Break glass & **use only in an emergency**
Only for desperate situations

Get bad news: start praying! *Hurricane coming!*
"God if you get me out of this mess..!"
Treated as a LAST RESORT

"All we can do now is pray" Has it come to that?
Talking to God is not just for emergencies!

another misconception..

3. Prayer is not a tug of war with God!

You have wear God down until he give in & gives you.

Beg – *please, please, pretty please give me*
Bargain – God, if you do this for me, I'll do that for you
Bribe – make a sales pitch to God

Keep **pestering & badgering** God until he gives in
Jesus told a parable to illustrate the exact opposite

4. Prayer is not a ritual to relieve guilt!

You really blew it- sinned- so you have pay for it by praying a lot

Jesus specifically told us to NOT repeat the same thing over & over
MT. 6:7scr **"When you pray DO NOT use meaningless repetition
thinking that you will be heard for your many words."** (NAS)

Not mindless ritual...repeating clichés...

DURING 40 DOP – *demolish other misconceptions with the truth* **SONG**

4 FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS ABOUT PRAYER

to help you see prayer in a different way

1. GOD LOVES FOR ME TO TALK WITH HIM ABOUT ANYTHING

It doesn't have to be a "religious" topic!

If YOU are interested in something- *God is too!*

Why is God interested in anything you're interested in?

1. He loves you! When you love someone...
2. He gave you those interests! *shaped you*
3. He *enjoys* talking with his children!

PS. 103:13 "The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who reverence him." (NLT)

Babies are deeply loved even before they can talk

But parents long for the day they can have a conversation

1. **God love YOU deeply even if you can't or don't talk to him.**
But he wants you to GROW UP: Means learning how to talk to him!
2. **Learning to pray is like learning any other language.**
You listen & practice & get better...Words become sentences!
Q: *Did your first sentences make sense?*
3. **There is nothing off-limits in talking to God.**

1 JN. 5:14-15 "We can be confident in approaching God, knowing that he listens to us whenever we ask him for anything according to his will. And since we know that he hears us when we make our requests, then we can be sure that he will answer us."

Pray w *no fear.. shame...hesitation* – God LOVES it when you talk w Him

PRAYER IS: a conversation, not a ceremony NOT monologue,
talk & listen
a relationship, not a ritual

If prayer is **boring** to you- *you misunderstand the point of it!*
and you are talking about the wrong things!

It's not a duty... it's a privilege! enjoyed /not endured

People often miss the verse **after** Jer. 29:11

JER. 29:11-12 "I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future. Then you will call my name. You will come to me and pray to me, and I will listen to you." (NCV)

And he's interested in everything you are interested in because he loves you

2. GOD LISTENS TO PRAYERS THAT ARE SINCERE & SIMPLE

You don't have to use flowery words or fancy phrases.

It just has to *come from your heart. Authentic. Real. Honest*
NOT what you think you ought to say

o Ever hear people pray one request but **embellish it 9 different ways**
because **longer seems stronger?** "Land the plane!"

MT. 6:5-8 "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they've received their reward in full. Instead, when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep babbling on and on like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (NIV)

Summarize - Don't use prayer to show off. *To impress*
- Be sincere. Don't just spout clichés!
- Keep it simple. *Adding words doesn't make it stronger*
- Stay humble or you'll stumble

We'll come back to this during 40DOP but **the bottom line is**

HEB.10:22 "Let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith"

3. GOD LIKES TO SHOW HIS GRACE BY ANSWERING PRAYER

With every answer, God shows he is a good, good Father

... *even when the answer is NO or NOT YET!*

Q: Does a loving parent give a child everything they ask for? No!
Many good reasons: Protection, Correction. Direction not spoil

God, you didn't answer me!" "Yes I did! My answer was no!"

Always 4 possible answers: Yes, No, Wait, & Are you kidding!

JER. 33:3 "Call to me and I will answer you. I will show you marvelous and wondrous things that you could never figure out on your own." (Mes)

Sometimes the answer is a **bigger perspective.** I now see...

MT.7:11 "If you, being imperfect and sinful parents know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him?" (NLT)

JAM.4:2 "You do not have, because you do not ask God." (NIV)

A huge truth...

4. GOD LONGS TO BE CLOSE TO ME!

If you're away from someone you love for a long time - can't wait to talk

God is waiting for you to talk to him. Not busy. *Longing, A privilege!*

ISA. 30:18 *"The Lord waits for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion."* (NLT)

ILL: Some parents know the pain of child that **can't** talk to you
wont...

God designed you for a relationship
He **made** you to **love** you
He **created** you for *his companionship*
He **chose** you to be his **child!**

The Bible is full of examples: It tells us that **Noah, Job, Enoch, Hezekiah** and many others all had **"a close relationship"** with God

HOSEA 6:6 *"I don't want your sacrifices--I want your love! I don't want your offerings, I want you to know me!"* (LB)

Feel the passion? The *longing* God has for you?

One of the most amazing verses in Bible is **JOHN 15:15** screen
Jesus said, "I don't call you servants...I call you my friends!"

You were formed for a friendship with God!

Does *anything* matter more than that?

Will you treat that casually & just walk away?

HOW DO I GET CLOSER TO GOD? Desire it & Make time for it!

PS. 25:14 *"Friendship with God is reserved for those who reverence him. With them, He shares the secrets of his covenant."* (NLT)

JAM. 4:8 *"Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you!"* (NLT)

In the days ahead, you'll learn how...and the many benefits

The Closer I Am To God, the less stressed & more blessed I'll be

JESUS DRAW ME CLOSE MEDLEY

Close

- The entire purpose of 40 DOP is to deepen your friendship with God
- We've prepared **all the tools you need**
If not here last weekend **FILL OUT COVENANT CARD**
PRAYER

CARD 1 I took a survey a couple of weeks ago

I asked you: **What word describes how you feel about prayer:**
Some descriptions

*frustrated... inept . . .awkward... unsatisfied... confused
a mystery ... I don't understand how it works ...want it better
I need help!*

o I've never met *anyone* who thought they were outstanding at prayer.
No PhDs in prayer. *Everybody knows they could be better at it.*

o **Even St. Paul** considered himself to be **a novice** at prayer!
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