

Step Up Your Prayer Life!

Headline: Discover the transformative power of prayer by developing a consistent daily habit and leading your family in spiritual growth. Embrace the challenge to deepen your relationship with God and inspire others to do the same. Join us in this spiritual journey and make prayer a cornerstone of your daily life!

Objective: Why do we pray anyway? If God is all-knowing, as our faith tells us God is, then why bother to pray? God already knows what is on our minds and in our hearts, so why should we waste time telling God what God already knows? There are two answers to this question. First, God may know what is on our minds and in our hearts, but do we know? Life can get so busy and so hectic at times that we easily lose touch with our thoughts and feelings. Prayer is our “time out” from the busyness of life to reflect on our deeper needs and desires. And why is it so important to contact our deepest needs and desires? Because that’s precisely where God usually speaks most clearly to us. Another reason we pray is not only to discover what we think and feel, but also to learn what God thinks and feels. Prayer is a two-way street. When we pray, we give our all-knowing God a chance to communicate with us. That means we must LISTEN. This is a risky business. All prayers are. By inviting God to speak to us, we risk being changed; that is, we risk having our attitudes altered, our perspectives broadened, our plans modified. So, Prayer is about developing a relationship with God. And, as Thomas Keating said, “The only way you can fail at prayer is to not show up.” Challenge ourselves to be more disciplined in our prayer life and be a leader for our families in prayer.

Song Suggestion: Make Me A Channel of Your Peace - Prayer of St. Francis

Bible and Catechism Readings:

1 John 5:14

And we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

1Thes 5:16-18.

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for all is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:6

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

Eph 6: 10-11, 18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

Catechism 2567

God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer. In prayer of the faithful God's initiative of love always comes

first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals himself and reveals man to himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation.

Catechism 2558

“Great is the mystery of the faith!” ... This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer.

Catechism 2560

The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts: his asking arises from the depths of God’s desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours.”

Note: Part Four of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is all about Christian Prayer

Saint: St. Mother Theresa of Calcutta - one the most heroic and inspirational people of the 20th century - famously said “My secret is simple, I pray.”

Vignette: Joe was struggling to maintain a consistent prayer routine and wanted to set a humble example for his family. Recognizing that a regular schedule worked best, he decided to pray during his commute to and from work. His routine included reciting the rosary, using the Hallow app, and following a simple prayer formula he found from Catholic evangelist Chris Stefanick. Additionally, Joe listened to the daily gospel readings and reflections by Jeff Cavins (7-10 minutes) through the Hallow app, allowing him to hear what God was saying to him. This practice improved Joe's attitude of gratitude and inspired others in his family to develop similar routines during their commute to work or school.

Joe's prayer routine was structured around the A.C.T.S. formula:

A = Adoration: Praising God for His greatness and goodness.

C = Contrition: Asking for forgiveness for sins and shortcomings.

T = Thanksgiving: Expressing gratitude for God's blessings and grace.

S = Supplication/Stuff: Presenting personal worries and concerns to God.

By incorporating these four steps, Joe found his prayer life to be more meaningful and impactful, leading to a deeper spiritual connection and a positive influence on his family and friends.

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. Is daily prayer as vital as breathing? Explain how and why? Describe your relationship with God through daily prayer.
2. How often do you pray? What benefits can you share from your prayer life that others might learn from?
3. Do you ever read the Bible? How can the Bible drive your prayer life?
4. What’s the hardest thing for you in establishing a prayer life? Time? Priority?
5. How do you incorporate gratitude and thankfulness in your prayers to God?
6. Are our prayers answered? How would we know? Do we recognize that it is God’s will be done and not ours?

Resources:

Chris Stefanick 4 Steps A.C.T.S. formula for Powerful Prayer (4-minute video – consider playing)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ibWL2-u2ZBU>

Why we need Prayer? from the Chris Stefanick show: <https://app.formed.org/app/videos/2807150?cid=706832>

Catholic Prayers and Devotions from the USCCB: <https://www.usccb.org/catholic-prayers>

Daily Mass readings and video reflections from the USCCB: <https://bible.usccb.org/>

Distracted during prayer? Five tips for help you focus:

<https://www.radiantmagazine.com/2023/06/29/distracted-during-prayer-here-are-5-tips-to-help-you-focus/>

Apps: Hallow, Augustine Institute -FORMED and Amen, Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network – Click to Pray, Laudate, The Ascension app (Bible/Catechism/Rosary in a year), Jesuit Prayer, and many others.

Step It Up!:

- 1. When** – Set a time each day that you will pray – morning, evening, lunch time, etc. and for how long – 15min, 20min, 1 hour, etc.
- 2. Where** – Find a good place where you can quiet yourself and get free from distractions (but not fall asleep...)
- 3. What (or how)** – Find 1 thing that will drive your prayer - Rosary, Liturgy of the Hours, Novenas, a spiritual book, meditation, and journaling, etc.
- 4. Why** – This is your “why” – It is meant to create a relationship, to build a relationship with the true and living God, who is pursuing ME. That is your “why” – To develop a relationship...
- 5. Go! And just Show Up!** Commit to doing this for at least a month and then adjust as you see what helps build that relationship. Step It up, add another thing to your prayer life the next month and the next.
- 6. Talk about your prayer life** with your family and friends and lead them in prayer.

A Final Word: Dr. Peter Kreeft writes: “I strongly suspect that if we saw all the difference even the tiniest of our prayers to God make, and all the people those little prayers were destined to affect, and all the consequences of those effects down through the centuries, we would be so paralyzed with awe at the power of prayer that we would be unable to get up off our knees for the rest of our lives.”

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