

FEBRUARY

Week 1

Prayer is not an effort to manipulate God – what an absurd idea! Let's pray the way Jesus told the disciples to do. The Lord's Prayer becomes our prayer:

We simply engage God in a conversation in which we thank and praise him and proclaim his sovereignty. Then we make our requests: that we be forgiven for sins; that we will avoid sinning further; that we can forgive others; that he will work out his will in our lives; that our needs of the day will be met; that we have protection against temptations to sin and against any evil which we might encounter. Then we openly celebrate that God's power and glory are eternally supreme. So be it, Amen!

It is not an ancient prayer to be recited by rote, thoughtlessly demeaning its purpose. It is the summary of the meaning of our salvation, the way we connect with God, the dynamic route to fulfillment as the people of God.

Monday. “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” (Col. 4:2)

Father, for me anyhow, this is easy to say and hard to do. This is just one of many Scriptures that tell me to devote myself to a life of prayer, making it a lifestyle and not just a ritual on Sunday or a plea when I'm in trouble. But I'll confess it: I'll probably never do this on my own without some help from you. But here, it says to be watchful and thankful – are those the ways to do it? Help me, O God, to pay attention to you and your words of instruction. And teach me how to keep my life centered on my relationship with you, because then I'll be watchful, really paying complete attention. When I do that, my heart will know the wonder of your love, and I'll be thankful. So now as I focus in just that way, I pray for...

Tuesday. “...be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” (from 1 Peter 4:7)

Dear Lord, you have guided my life in ways I know about and in other ways I don't discover until long after they have happened. I'm sure you even do it in ways I'll never know about until I'm at home with you. One of those ways has been to teach me to think clearly and control my errant ways. It is your powerful love that does this. Without it, I would be lost, so I shall rely on it always – and not my own wandering thoughts – to bring me into your presence. Thus, you set the scene for me to pray, to commune with you. It is in that aura of your love that I now pray for...

Wednesday. “You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” (James 4:3)

Father, I have been guilty of doing this more often than I like to think about. Sometimes I don't come to you at all. And sometimes I come to you with my mind made up about the way things should go. When I've been doing that just to suit some plan of my own, forgive me, O God. Help me to seek you in *all* things, starting with the most important: building a right relationship with you. From there, I really can pray for your will to be done, and I'll mean it. Revisit me now with a fresh awareness of your love as I bring these other prayers to you...

Thursday. “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.” (1 Tim. 4:4)

Lord, what a mess we've all made of your creation throughout the centuries. We have desecrated your world, abused your people, profaned your name. You meant it all for good for your children, but we have taken that good and made it ugly, even evil. And you have loved us still! Help us – help me – never to forget that all things, all people, are of your making, consecrated to your purposes. Help us to be grateful and lead us into never-ending communion with you, a state in which we can pray as I do now...

Friday. “Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray.”
(Jas. 5:13a)

Father, most of us, and that certainly includes me, seem to think about praying only when we have trouble. So a lot of us are already used to doing that. And even then, we hasten to you with solutions we have already imagined are the right ones. We need your help on this. When trouble comes, help us all – help me – to come to a full stop and look to you before we have even one more thought. We need first to let the power of your love surround us, taking us and all our troubles into your embrace. Then the praying will be as it should be, a seeking of your will and your guidance for the solutions you know are the right ones. I pray just that way now for these things...

Saturday. “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (1Pet. 5:16b)

Lord, it's hard for me to think of my self as “righteous” even on my best days. It is even presumptuous, I think. But your word makes it clear that I *should* be righteous. And your word tells me how to do it: seek you first, confess my sins, accept that you love and forgive me, then pattern my life on the examples of love which your word so richly describes. And you even tell me you'll always be there to support and guide me – I'll never be alone. So maybe it is presumptuous *not* to think of myself as righteous. How fine to know that my communion with you and my petitions to you can be powerful and effective. Fill me with confidence born of that reassurance as I bring you these prayers...

February - Week 2

"Prayer is not only for the spiritual parts of us. The spiritual and the psychological are so intertwined as to be, for us at least, inseparable. God is interested in all our aspects..." "God *wants* us to go to him with our joys, griefs, hopes, and disappointments. The Creator-Provider esteems us so much that he wants to listen and to use the mysterious dialogue of prayer to help make us more like him. He is our Father." (from *Honest Christianity* by Clinton W. McLemore)

Monday. Paul told the Christians at Rome to be themselves, honoring who they were as individuals but without being self-centered and, in the process, to honor each other as well. He said to abhor evil and cling to good, to be zealous, to serve the Lord, to be hospitable, and "**Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.**" (from Rom. 12:3-12)

Father, I come to you today frankly thinking just about me, something I do a lot, I confess. "I" and "me" – what little words those are. But when I think of who I am really, as just a tiny part of your world, I am stopped in my tracks. *Your* greatness is beyond my ability to perceive. Still, you bend to know even the smallest parts of me. And you have made obvious ways for me to know you, to live life with you. Your word tells me: I am to be who I am – with provisos. But those provisos won't be hard to meet if I am faithful in prayer. That's the key. Help me to keep this attitude of prayer as a constant in my life, for surely it is the only way I will stay in touch with you, to be in your presence, to be led by your Spirit, to be who you designed me to be. Now I pray also for...

Tuesday. "...many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many." (from 2 Cor. 1:11) "...golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." (from Rev. 5:8)

Dear Lord, sometimes I feel so alone in my world. I am tempted to give in to feelings of dismay, even desolation. But then I hear your word talking about the host of other Christians – in fact, the

whole of your church in your world. And there are so many right here in my town, in my church. So when I pray, I do not pray alone. I am joined by the voices of all believers, raised in praise, in thanks, in confession, in supplication, and in the joy of these times in your presence. I should never feel alone! Thank you for the gift of all these who share in the knowledge of your love. Help me to keep understanding the joys of our shared discipleship in you. I pray now for...

Wednesday. “And pray in the Spirit...” (from Eph. 6:18)

O God, I pray that you will open my eyes to the fullest understanding of what it means to have your Holy Spirit within and around me. Each time I come to you, I need the reassurance that you are with me, that you hear me. Block out all other thought so the whole of who I am is centered in you. What a gift is your Holy Spirit! It brings sharpened awareness of you. It brings empowerment so my mind may be open to your leading. It brings inspiration to go to higher levels than I have ever gone before. And it brings peace and joy and a comprehension which is so far beyond my ordinary abilities. It is in that marvelous bounty of the Holy Spirit that I now bring these other prayers to you...

Thursday. “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” (from Eph. 6:18)

Dear Lord, forgive me for thinking that I don't need to pray except in crisis times. In my humanness, I seek you just for special favors or when special fears arise. Too often I assume I can handle just about everything by myself except, maybe, illness or other tough dilemmas for which I can't find my own answers. Help me to see that all the answers to all of life lie in the light of your love, and that I can so easily access those answers simply by staying in touch with you as a lifestyle. Help me see that prayer is not some kind of formal rite, but a way to stay in your presence, allowing me to talk to you at any moment, on “all occasions.” Let my connection with you be routine and familiar and nonstop. You invite me to this – this blessing of prayer. Within that blessing, I reach out to you about these things...

Friday. “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert...” (from Eph. 6:18)

Dear God, sometimes when I start praying, my mind wanders. I can't stop the interruptions, and I can't control thoughts that intervene when I need to talk to you. So I must have your help to deal with this weakness. I long to have a life in which my communication with you is a habit – and my chief joy. I need to have full concentration in my praying. I need to be purposeful and intense, but without tension. In fact, I want to know the pleasure of a relaxing easiness in your presence. But I cannot do this by myself. It will be you, through the power of the Holy Spirit, who makes all this happen. So, right now, bring me into that holy place with you where I may present my praise, my thanks, my requests for these other matters...

Saturday. “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.” (Eph. 6:18)

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