



STARTING POINT

STUDENT EDITION

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TALKING WITH GOD

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

HERE WE GO

The purpose of this session is to equip you to develop a more effective and intimate prayer life. While prayer is the way we communicate with God, it is not just the act of asking for what we want or need. Prayer is also listening to God so that we may develop a deeper relationship with Him.

MEMORIZE *Philippians 4:6-7*

Copy the words, draw pictures, do whatever you need to memorize the Scripture.

Faith definition:

FAITH IS CHOOSING TO LIVE AS THOUGH GOD'S WORD IS TRUE REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS OF EMOTIONS AND REGARDLESS OF CULTURAL TRENDS.

“And without *faith* it is impossible to please him (God)...” - Hebrews 11:6

“...whatever does not proceed from *faith* is sin.” - Romans 14:23

“for we walk by *faith*, not by sight.” - 2 Corinthians 5:7

CONSIDER THIS

Catherine was living the senior year she had always imagined she would. She was captain of the volleyball team, in the top 10 percent of her graduating class, and had already been accepted to college and been granted multiple academic and athletic scholarships. In the afternoons, she volunteered with younger children who needed help with their homework and helped take care of her younger brother. She was thankful for her loving family and how well they all got along.

Her spiritual life, however, was a different matter. She felt restless in her Christianity because she never felt connected to God. At church, people would talk about their relationship with God, but she did not feel as though she had her own personal relationship with Him. During church, she enjoyed singing worship songs, but she still felt disconnected. She tried spending some time with God because she felt as though it was something she needed to do, but she never knew what she should do once she opened her Bible.

“What does God want from me?” she thought. “Why does a relationship with God have to be so much work?” she asked herself.

One day, while driving home from practice, Catherine was listening to a podcast from one of her favorite Christian speakers about prayer. She learned that the reason she felt disconnected was that she spent very little time in prayer. Rather than taking the time to be still and quiet, her prayer life consisted of quick one-liners like, “God, please get me through this test with a B or better,” or “God, please help me play well in our tournament today.”

Catherine also learned that her time communicating with God was important to every area of her life. She began to set aside a few minutes every morning before school to read her Bible and talk to God about the day ahead. Soon, as her relationship with God became deeper, she found herself getting up even earlier so that she could spend more time with Him.

Before too long, Catherine’s restlessness was gone, and her relationships with her friends and family grew even stronger. She knew this was a discipline she needed to uphold, not just for a short time, but also as a priority from now on.

How would you evaluate your connection with God?

Is God doing something to prompt a more intimate relationship with you?

1. What is prayer?

Prayer is simply having a conversation with God. When you enter into a relationship, the only way to keep it healthy and vibrant is to give sufficient time and energy to it. When you became a Christian, you entered into a relationship with God. That relationship needs time, energy and communication, too.

It is still not uncommon for believers to struggle with their prayer life. The list of reasons why Christians struggle in their prayer life can include:

- 1) Some hold on to unconfessed sin.
- 2) Some have difficulty putting words to their thoughts, especially to someone they cannot see.
- 3) Some have been discouraged by previous failed attempts at communication with God.
- 4) Some do not believe that God cares enough about them to communicate with them.

Whatever may be hindering our prayer lives, the Bible is clear that God wants to communicate with us through our prayer lives. Let us take a closer look at the characteristics of a healthy prayer life.

Your communication with God is like a child communicating with his or her father.

Psalm 103:13 states that “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.” Unfortunately, the term “father” sometimes leaves many people with the impression of someone who is harsh, disconnected or unavailable.

What impression do you get when you think of the word *father*?

Detached	Affectionate	Present	Gentle
Accessible	Intolerant	Severe	Intentional
Preoccupied	Accepting	Strict	Sincere
Adoring	Cold	Concerned	Loving

Read the following passages and record the words used to describe God.

1 Peter 5:6-7

Matthew 7:7-11

Psalms 149:4

Consider the previous passages, and fill in the chart below. Note your perception of your experience in the left box, and the truth of God’s Word in the right box:

Your Experience

What God’s Word says
in 1 Peter 5:6-7; Matthew 7:7-11,
Psalms 149:4

If you were living as though 1 Peter 5:6–7, Matthew 7:7–11 and Psalm 149:4 were true, how would you be living?

You can talk to God about anything, at any time and in any place.

Read the following passage that Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6–7:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

No matter what is going on in your life, God wants you to communicate with Him. You can talk to God about the good things as well as the bad things. You can go to Him when you have a pressing need, when you just feel like sharing a thought, or when you feel like you need to hear from Him.

Read the following verses and note any insights you may have concerning prayer.

Psalm 62:8

Matthew 6:9–13

Ephesians 3:14–19

Colossians 1:9–12

Hebrews 4:14–16

James 1:5

James 5:14–16

2. Why is prayer important?

Too many times, people think of prayer as a last resort. How many times have you heard someone say, “All I can do is pray”? Any energy you devote to prayer will accomplish more than anything else you might try to do to solve any of your problems because prayer is powerful. Other than the power that prayer can bring to your life, there are other reasons why it is important. A few of those reasons are listed below:

- **Prayer glorifies God.**

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13).

- **Prayer builds intimacy with God.**

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you (James 4:8).

- **God commands us to pray.**

Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

- **Make prayer a part of your daily experience.**

Continue in steadfast prayer (Colossians 4:2).

- **Prayer enables us to have an impact on the world.**

“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

James 5:16

List any other reasons you believe prayer is important.

To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives. The closer we come to the heartbeat of God, the more we desire to be conformed to Christ. To pray is to change. —Richard Foster

3. How are we to pray?

Since prayer is basically conversing with God, we have not been given a set of guidelines to follow, and there are no certain words or phrases that we have to say. It can be helpful, however, to follow a certain pattern in prayer to become familiar with the different aspects of communication. The acrostic **ACTS** is one such pattern. It stands for:

Adoration
Confession
Thanksgiving
Supplication

We will explore the **ACTS** acrostic in further detail.

ADORATION

Adoration is simply praising God. It means honoring and praising our Father and offering Him recognition for all of His marvelous characteristics.

Read Psalm 145:1-9 and note the characteristics of God that cause you to want to praise to Him.

Give an example of a time when you were overwhelmed with the desire to praise God.

CONFESSION

The word “confess” means to agree with God about our sins. When you become aware of an action or an attitude that is displeasing to God, you need to confess it. We need to admit our sin to God because our sins are, ultimately, against Him. That way we can maintain sincere and candid conversations with Him.

King David expressed his heart's desire in Psalm 139:23-24:

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

There are times when we will be aware of a sin immediately or soon after we commit it. However, it is also necessary to ask God to search through every crevice of our hearts. If we do so, He will be faithful to show us any sin we may have disregarded that needs to be confessed and of which we need to repent.

A prayer of confession does not have to be elaborate or wordy. Once God has revealed a sin, you merely have to talk to God about it. You might say, "God, I agree with You that when I did _____, I sinned against you."

Spend a few minutes right now, and ask God to search and cleanse your heart. If He brings anything to mind, confess it and accept His forgiveness and move on. Share any thoughts you have concerning any disregarded sin God revealed to you.

THANKSGIVING

Read the following Scriptures, and note what they say about expressing thanks to God.

Psalm 92:1

1 Thessalonians 5:18



TALK IT OUT

How can you be “thankful in all things?”

What keeps you from feeling thankful?

A prayer of thanksgiving will include the things in your life for which you are thankful. For example: “God, I thank You for the life You have given me. Thank You for Jesus, and all the changes You are making in my life. I also thank You for my family and friends who love me.”

In the box below, write a prayer of thanksgiving.

SUPPLICATION

Supplication is what happens when you make requests of God, and when you pray for your needs as well as the needs of others. Read the following passages and note some of the requests we can make of God:

Matthew 6:11

Matthew 6:13

Colossians 4:3

A prayer of supplication might look similar to the following: “God, please guide my pastor and church staff as they face the challenges of directing our church. Please guide our country’s leaders to make the decisions that You want them to make. Please help me to overcome the guilt that Satan has been trying to place on me for not being a better Christian.”

Write a prayer of supplication in the box below.

4. What hinders our prayer life?

Satan does not want us to communicate with God, so he will attempt to throw many obstacles in our paths to hinder our prayer lives. Some of these things include the following:

- Doubt (James 1:6–8)
- Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:18)
- Relational problems (1 Peter 3:7)
- An unhealthy fear of God (Hebrews 4:14–16)
- Past struggles (2 Corinthians 5:17)

How have any of these hindrances affected your prayer life?



TALK IT OUT

What does Hebrews 4:14–16 say a believer should do if he or she is afraid to approach God?

What hindrances seem to affect your prayer life most?

YOUR LIFE TODAY

Based on what you have learned in this lesson about prayer, what has God led you to do concerning your own prayer life?

If you were living as though Philippians 4:6-7 were true, how would you be living?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

Take a few minutes and discuss the following questions with your mentoring partner:

- 1) In what area of prayer do you need to grow?
- 2) Share a time when God answered a prayer that concerned you.
- 3) What are some steps you can take to help make prayer a greater priority in your life?

Consider all the material through which you have just worked, and read the following statement. When you completely agree with the statement, sign on the line.

By faith I choose to believe that I know I am certain that God wants to communicate with me. Because I am a child of God, I can have a powerful, effective prayer life.

[illegible]



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