



Prayerfully Dependent

Cultivating an intimate and dependent relationship with God.

Communication is important in any relationship. It is that much more important in our relationship with Christ. As a church, we have identified six areas that we believe are crucial to becoming more like Christ and thus living a healthy and balanced Christian life. However, all of our efforts are in vain if we are not prayerfully dependent. Prayer is the common thread that runs through all areas of our Christian walk. Through prayer we can pursue a relationship with God that is both intimate and dependent.

Q: What are the most common obstacles to anchoring your life in prayer?

Even though we know that the Scriptures are full of admonitions to pursue a vibrant and consistent prayer life, it is still one of the most neglected spiritual disciplines. There are many things that make a consistent prayer life difficult. We can sometimes get so overwhelmed with these things that we avoid prayer all together. In order to improve in this area, we must first examine the way we think about prayer. For instance, prayer is less about an event or activity and more about a lifestyle. There are plenty of resources available that instruct us in how to pray. Unfortunately, though, pursuing an intimate and dependent relationship with God is less about method and more about a mindset. A life anchored in prayer must begin with the realization that we all struggle with self-sufficiency and independence. Self-sufficient people have no need for anything bigger than themselves, and thus, their prayer life is stifled!

One way to combat self-sufficiency is to deepen our knowledge of God. So much of our religious activity is anchored to the pursuit of our own happiness and fulfillment. God becomes the Great being who meets our needs and fulfills our aspirations. We do not pause to think about what He is like or what He expects in us. If we are not careful, we can act as though God is to serve us rather than us serving Him. If we lose sight of His holiness, sovereignty, goodness, and love, then we rely on our own abilities and we only turn to God when we have failed or disastrous circumstances strike.

In the biblical view of things, a deeper knowledge of God brings massive improvement in other core areas of Christian maturity: personal purity, integrity in relationships, better study of the Scriptures, a heart that desires to serve, better effectiveness at engaging the culture, and improved private and corporate worship. However, if we seek these things without passionately desiring a deeper knowledge of God, we are selfishly running after God's blessing without running after Him. One of the most important foundational steps in knowing God better is prayer – spiritual, persistent, biblically minded prayer.

1. Seek the Will of God in Scripture

1 John 5:14-15

¹⁴ And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. ¹⁵ And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

How do we know if what we are praying is according to the will of God? (See John 15:7)

Q: What is a good way to have Jesus' Words remain in you?

2. Come to God with Pure Motives

James 4:2-3

² You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you can't possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it. ³ And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole motive is wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

Q: What type of motive for prayer is described here? How can we purify our motives?

3. Seek Holiness Before the Lord

Psalm 66:18

¹⁸ If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.

Q: What is the relationship between sin and our prayer life?

Q: What can we do if God reveals sin in our lives? (Remember 1 John 1:9)

4. Believe

James 1:5-8

⁵ If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. ⁶ But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ They can't make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do.

Q: What must we do to receive from God?

THREE CATEGORIES OF PRAYER

1. Disciplined (Matthew 14:23, Luke 5:16, Luke 1:5-10, James 5:16)

Christ Himself makes prayer a priority in His life. Even though He is the Son of God, many times in Scripture we see Him escape by Himself to pray. Once we are in the habit of praying, scripture does give us some insight to shape our prayers.

Q: What are some principles these verses teach us about the discipline of prayer?

2. Spontaneous (Nehemiah 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Our prayer life should not be confined to select times when we are able to get alone and connect with God. Our activities throughout the day should be filled with prayer. Stopping for a moment throughout the day to quietly acknowledge God's presence and His faithfulness is an important step in developing a life that is anchored in prayer.

Q: What types of events most often lead you to spontaneous prayer?

3. Corporate (Acts 12:5-16, James 5:14-15)

Corporate prayer is also to be a priority in our lives. When you read through the book of Acts, big things always happen whenever the Church gathers to pray. There is something special about the body of Christ meeting together and lifting up both corporate and individual needs. Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another's burdens. Also, think through the "Lord's Prayer." It only contains plural pronouns like "us" and "our." Immediately after giving the disciples this prayer He stresses to them the importance of being in a right relationship with one another.

Q: What are some of the benefits/results that you have seen through corporate prayer?

FINAL THOUGHTS:

- God is much more concerned about our attitude towards prayer than the methods we use to communicate with Him.
- The transition from self-sufficiency to intimacy and dependence on Him often includes brokenness. God uses events, trials, and tests in our lives to draw us into a life that is more deeply anchored in prayer.

PERSONAL APPLICATION Are you Prayerfully Dependent?

1. Do I pray every day?
2. Is there anyone in my life that I pray with?
3. When I make decisions, how often do I pray through them?
4. Do I pray with my spouse about decisions?
5. Do I pray consistently for the needs of others?

Examples of personal goals to help you become Prayerfully Dependent

1. Set aside ten minutes each day to pray.

2. Pray through a Psalm each day.
3. Pray while you shower/get ready in the morning.
4. Pray while you exercise.
5. Instead of turning on the radio, pray during your drive to and from work.
6. Read a book on the subject of prayer (ex. A Call to Spiritual Reformation by D.A. Carson, Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference by Phillip Yancey, The Autobiography of George Mueller)
7. Do a word study in the Bible on prayer.
8. Ask someone to be your prayer partner.
9. Journal your prayers.
10. Create a list of people to pray for each day of the week.
11. Before you begin each week, write down the events of your week and pray about them.
12. Before every major event or decision that you make, pray for wisdom.
13. If you're married, set a regular time to pray with your spouse.
14. Pray for opportunities to become more relationally connected.
15. Pray through Scripture as you read it in an effort to become more biblically oriented. 16. Pray for opportunities to become more anchored in prayer.
17. Pray for opportunities to become more ministry focused.
18. Pray for opportunities to become more culturally engaged.
19. Pray for opportunities to become more courageously generous.
20. Attend weekly corporate prayer at Mars Hill Community Church.