

## “Prayer: Does it Make any Difference?”

by Philip Yancey

Study with Anne Griffith, Founder, The Enlighten Foundation

Suggestion on how to work through this study:

1. Set up a special file on your iPad or laptop or pull out a notebook.
2. Begin taking notes, gathering special verses and inspiring tidbits
3. Share your insights, thoughts and comments [Prayer Page](#).

I have my own notebook of Philip’s insights, scripture and odds and ends that pertain to prayer. Referring back and forth through the information helps secure it in your spirit. Don’t be stingy in your writing and by all means don’t rush through this work.

As the Holy Spirit moves through you, share it with all of us. Just click on the [Prayer Page](#) and add your insight. The comments and insights of the others can expand your understanding of the book. These are fellow followers of the Lord. We’re in this world together to learn and to share. Let’s jump into this stream together! You’ll better understand this last statement once you read through Chapter 2.

### Let’s Pray,

Lord God I want to really know you. I want to hear you in my heart and soul. I want to be free from my daily insanity, from the chains that tie me to this world. I want to know the peace that transcends all understanding. I want to be more than I am now. Speak to me, help me learn from you, show me your way, help me to follow in your footsteps. I am here for You.

In your precious name, Amen.

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## Chapter 1: Our Deepest Longing

**Page 13:** *Philip quotes Thomas Merton, “Prayer is an expression of who we are...We are a living incompleteness. We are a gap, an emptiness that calls for fulfillment.”*

I am emotional eater. If something hits me wrong or someone slights me (which happens far too often 😞), I seek the solace of food, my personal ticket to feeling better. But all that really gave me was an extra 25 pounds. Years ago, I realized that just about everyone has that same emptiness and it’s not in your stomach. And most of us try to fill it with something.

1. What’s your emptiness?
2. What is the trigger that makes you search for something to fill you?
3. Do you think prayer has the “strength” to calm that trigger?
  - a. Why? Or why not?

**Page 15:** *Philip states: “We have less and less time for conversation, let alone contemplation. We have the constant sensation of not enough; not enough time, not enough rest, not enough exercise, not enough leisure. Where does God fit into a life that already seems behind schedule?”*

I can’t think of a single person who isn’t struggling with this same issue. In fact, we have a great topic in The Enlighten Foundation Journey called *My Geography*. It specifically goes into carving out time and space to make sense of our crazy lives. With the added insights of this book we begin flipping around our priorities to incorporate prayer with the Lord first. The difference in that priority makes all the difference in the amount of time and space we have as we face each day.

1. Have you ever thought that you really didn’t know what being a follower of Christ meant for you and your daily life?
2. Do you wonder what God had in mind when God created you? Do you continually ask God that question?
3. At the end of the day, do you find yourself wondering what you did all day?
4. Do you put the Lord into your daily communication? Or do you find yourself letting that slip by?
5. What does Philip mean when he says that “prayer has features in common with all relationships that matter?”

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## Chapter 2: View from Above

**Page 23:** *Philip states, "It occurs to me, thinking about prayer, that most of the time I get the direction wrong. I start downstream with my own concerns and bring them to God. I inform God, as if God did not already know. I plead with God as if hoping to change God's mind and overcome divine reluctance. Instead I should start upstream where the flow begins."*

1. What does it mean on page 23 to join the stream?
2. Explain "Grace, like water descends to the lower part. Streams of mercy flow." (p.23) Can you see a place in your life where this might apply?
3. Are you standing on the bank of that stream? Pleading with God?
4. As we contemplate jumping in the stream, we might visualize that sometimes streams can be calm and peaceful, and other times they can really bump you around. But God tells us in 1st Corinthians 10:13 that "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. *And God is faithful; God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, God will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*"
  - a. If God is faithful to you, can you be faithful to God?

**Page 26:** *Philip writes about "taking a break," "let God be God," "uncreate the world I have carefully fashioned to further my ends and advance my cause." Along with these actions, Philip challenges us with the notion of being still. (Psalm 46:10)*

1. Is being still even possible? Can you see yourself being still? Even for a minute?
2. Reflect back through your experiences and think of a time when you were calm, standing in a calm, still, beautiful place. How did that help clear your head? When you left that place, were you able to face decisions with a little more confidence?
3. On page 29, Philip talks about prayer becoming a "realignment of everything." As a follower of Christ, what are the prayers you would pray with God if you were standing side by side.



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## Chapter 3: Just As We Are

**Page 30:** *“Sometimes I wonder if the words I use are the least important part of prayer.”*

Is that a great statement or what? Do you ever fumble for the right words, sort of drift off and think of the grocery list? Sometimes I even think to myself, “for Heaven’s Sake, God already knows what is going on, I have no idea what to ask for, talk through or confess about. In fact, I’m sure the Lord is looking over my shoulder at the next person thinking, enough of this blather, “Next!”

But, in this sentence, Philip so aptly places our fallenness right in front of us. We go to the Lord in prayer because we are unsure, feel unprotected, indecisive and weak. Prayer time is when all the hype is stripped off while we humbly look to the Lord for answers.

1. Today, are there areas of your life that are loose? Unsure? Are you looking at your future with uncertainty? Concern?
2. Are you afraid to admit those issues to the Lord? Are you afraid that you might bungle the prayer?

**Page 40:** *Philip states, “Prayer allows a place for me to bring my doubts and complaints—in sum, my ignorance—and subject them to the blinding light of a reality I cannot comprehend but can haltingly learn to trust.”*

1. Have you ever just wanted to “lay it all out” with the Lord and just be honest with what’s going on with you?

2. On Page 41, Philip refers to Psalm 139: 4, 7-8. Read that verse. Philip states that for him, ... “what I think and feel as I pray, rather than the words I speak, may be the real prayer, for God ‘hears’ that too.”
3. Have you thought of having a real “heart to heart” prayer with the Lord?
4. Finally, Philip asks this question on page 44: “Do we allow our day to be shaped by God’s desire to relate to us?” How do you respond to this?



### Congratulations!

We’ve been through the first 3 chapters together. Now its time to tackle the next 3 (chapters 4-6). In the meantime, visit our [Prayer Page](#) to share your thoughts from these first 3 chapters. God be with you as you read through this book.

**Have a wonderful day.**

If you have a prayer you would like our Prayer Warriors and Walkers to pray for, please email us at [Prayer@enlightenfoundation.org](mailto:Prayer@enlightenfoundation.org).

If you want to break out and start your own path to your life with the Lord, sign up to start your [Journey](#). Every second of your life makes a difference in this world for God. Live your life to the fullest.

Contact [Anne@enlightenfoundation.org](mailto:Anne@enlightenfoundation.org)