

January 2021

“Prayer: Does it Make any Difference?”

by Philip Yancey

Study with Anne Griffith, Founder, The Enlighten Foundation

Chapter 13: Prayer Grammar

Our Father who art in heaven...

“The Bible includes around 650 prayers, some short and some long, reflecting many different circumstances and moods. Taken together, they provide an excellent guide for anyone seeking to learn to pray.” p. 171

Philip breaks down The Lord’s Prayer on p. 171. He explains that Jesus taught this prayer to his disciples, “who were already well-trained in the Jewish prayers of their day.” But Jesus had a different way of praying to God.

Review each phrase of the Lords prayer on p. 171-172. List each phrase below and write down something you found new or interesting



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1. Our Father, who art in heaven.
2. Hallowed by your name.
3. Your Kingdom come.
4. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
5. Give us this day our daily bread.
6. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
7. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Why is the Lord’s prayer so important in the prayer lives of Christians?

How often do you pray the Lord’s prayer?
During tough times, does this prayer come to mind? Or do others?

Open your Bible to the book of Psalms and pray them—sequentially, regularly, faithful across a lifetime. This is how most Christians... have matured in prayer. p. 176

1. How often have you looked to Psalms as a reference for praise, anger, sadness, relief, calm and inspiration?
2. What is a favorite verse in Psalms that could be a prayer from you?

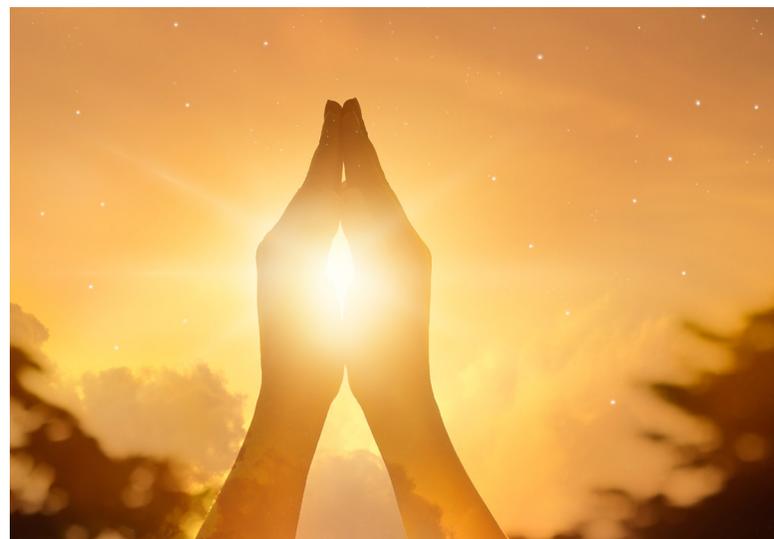
Review p. 175 where Philip takes a sequence of Psalms (35-44) and what he learned from those Psalms.

1. Read those Psalms and write down any insights that apply to you.
2. Reflecting on Paul’s prayers (Thessalonians, Corinthians, Philippians) how can they be a “template” for your prayers? p. 177

“Memorization can be to our hunger for God what practicing a musical instrument is for performance.” p. 179

Make a list of other Prayers in the Bible, p. 178

1. Are there any that you can pick out to memorize for your life right now? pray more.” p. 161



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Reminders

While I am not a proponent of structured prayer, I do know that without prayer I feel a bit lost. What are your thoughts on setting up reminders each day to pray? How would you structure that?

Chapter 14: Tongue-Tied

Inferiority:

“...many pray-ers labor under a Luther-like pall of inferiority. We feel guilty, or unfocused, or irritable, and assume those negative feelings will disqualify us from God’s attention, as if God only listens to good people.” p.185
All of us have felt insecure with the Lord at one time or another; unworthy, unable to make sense of what we’re thinking. Sometimes that can limit our communication with God. But Philip says he “considers it a motivation for prayer, not a hinderance.” p. 185

1. Have you felt tongue tied with the Lord?
2. How do you communicate with God during those moments? Do you stop the prayer? Do you forge through it?

Distractions:

“The more I concentrate on stopping my thoughts, the more they flood in like a swarm of bees.” p. 186

1. On p. 187, Philip goes through several ways of coping with interference. How do you break the craziness of the world from disturbing your conversation with the Lord?

2. Herbert McCabe writes that if you’re distracted “this is nearly always due to praying for something you do not really much want; you just think it would be proper and respectable and “religious” to want it.” “If you are distracted, trace your distraction back to the real desires it comes from and pray about these.” p. 187.

- a. How do you avoid distractions? How do you move away from them should they pop up?
 - b. What process have you learned that you can share with others?
3. What prayer does Philip suggest to help bring us back to the basics of praying?

Helpers:

It’s wonderful to know that despite us, and because of us, the Lord sends the Holy Spirit to help us.

1. How often do you think of the Holy Spirit as you pray?
2. Have you experienced nudging from the Holy Spirit in your life?

The Beauty of Psalms

1. Have you taken the time to review Psalms as a catalyst for prayer?
2. Which Psalms are favorites that you can refer to others; for prayer with trouble, as a celebration, as a cure for anxiety, as a source of peace?

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Chapter 15: The Sound of Silence

I take some comfort in the fact that virtually all the masters of spirituality recount a dark night of the soul. p. 201

Dark night of the soul is truly unnerving. Where is God’s answer? Where is God? For those of us who may have felt rejection in our lives, this feels a lot like that. Yet without our spirit we know God has not abandoned us. How do we cope? Dietrich Bonhoeffer asks, “May it not be that God Himself sends us these hours of reproof and dryness that we may be brought again to expect everything from His Word?” p. 202

In other words, go back to the Bible. We all get caught up with popular books on faith and Bible studies. But the Bible gets us back to the basics. Are we willing to go there?

1. Have you found that when God is silent, if you go back to the Bible, God’s voice can be heard again?
2. Have you seen that perseverance with the Lord brings answers?
3. Can you see the dry period as a time of waiting too? p. 205

Philip reminds us that even though we will never know God’s timing on answering prayer, we can trust God. We can lean on God and know that God loves us.



Congratulations!

Time to move on to Chapters 16-18! Thank God we are learning about every angle of prayer. Ultimately, it’s the communication with God that is important.

God Bless you.

If you have a prayer that you would like our Enlighten Foundation Prayer Walkers to know about, please email us at Prayer@enlightenfoundation.org.