

# *Are You Praying?*

*By: Lori Schaffer*

Prayer has been at the forefront of my mind. I've learned that if it's on my mind, it's because God has placed it there. I am in awe of how God answers prayer. It has taken me a long time to develop a consistent routine, free from distractions, where I can read my bible and pray each day. If you can commit to just 10 minutes each morning, I guarantee it will change your life. I know all the excuses of why you can't do it...trust me, I had them all. But I'm here to tell you, yes, you can do it! I only missed one day of prayer and Bible reading in 2023. I made it all the way to December 18, when I had an event. I was up early, busy cooking and eating, celebrating the holidays with friends. I totally missed the day. I realized it the next morning when I woke up. I was so upset with myself, but God whispered, "it's okay, it's a leap year in 2024, and I'm giving you an extra day."

So my question is, are you praying and what are you praying for? Take a minute to think about that. Are you spending time with God in conversation? Are you sharing with him your fears, desires, struggles, hopes and dreams, your everything? If not, perhaps you can take those steps to begin to develop a prayer life.

Prayer does not need to be complicated. Your words do not need to be filled with thee's and thou's. Just speak to God like you would speak to a friend. God values your presence more than your fancy words. Prayer is meant to be a part of your daily life, not just a last resort when things are going badly and you don't know what else to do. I encourage you to pray out loud. If I don't pray out loud, and try to pray silently, my mind gets easily distracted and I begin thinking about all the things I need to do that day. Speaking the words out loud helps to keep me more focused.

Prayer should be simple, yet we make it more complicated than it needs to be. Here's a few simple ways you can pray. Think of the book of ACTS.

- A: Adoration - Start your day by just adoring God. Praise God for his goodness in your life.
- C: Confession - Ask God for forgiveness for any areas in your life where you have fallen short.
- T: Thanksgiving - Give thanks and praise to God, for his love for us is unfailing.
- S: Supplication - Humbly bring your requests before the Lord.

Prayer is a healthy habit that you need to develop. It takes practice and repetition for it to become a part of your daily life. It needs to be a priority. I encourage you to start your day off with reading the Word and ending in prayer. Prayer is not just a one way conversation, although at times, it may feel that way. Learn to listen for God's voice. As you read his word, highlight scriptures that stand out to you. Thoughts that come to your mind, may actually be God's way of speaking to you. Keep a journal and learn to jot down things you are praying for, things God is speaking, verses that stand out. The more you pray and listen, the more you will begin to

recognize God's responses. Prayer is where your relationship with God is formed, and your faith is forged.

Back to my question, are you praying and what are you praying for? My prayers may sometimes be the same each day. I spent almost an entire year diligently praying for a situation, and now, I will forever start my prayers with praising God for answering that prayer. I pray for both big and small things. In being transparent, I will share some of my personal prayers with you. This past year I began to diligently pray for God to bring the right person into my daughter's life, someone who will love and adore her for who she is. I pray for my son and his fiance, for their future, for the plans they have. I pray for my marriage, and our future dreams. I've been praying for us to be able to retire early, and for God to provide the right home near the beach for us at just the right time and at the right price. I pray for many students at my school. I pray for protection over my children, for God's will. I pray for my enemies. I pray for good health. I pray for God to give me opportunities to be an encouragement to hurting students at school. I pray for my Pastors.

It's incredible to me to be able to look back on my prayers and see how God has answered so many of them. Even the little things that may seem insignificant, matter to God. For instance, my daughter was close to failing a college class this past semester. She needed a 'C' to pass, and heading into the final exam she had a solid D. Failing would have meant she wouldn't be able to graduate in May and she wouldn't be able to participate in her sport because she would have become ineligible. So the day of the exam came, and I prayed. I messaged friends and asked them to pray as well. Guess what, she passed the class with the C she needed. A more recent prayer was for my son's car. He was having car trouble, and what he thought was wrong with it was going to be a huge expense. I prayed that his car could be fixed, quickly, and without a huge hit to his budget. God answered that prayer, it wasn't at all what he thought, and the bill was much less than anticipated. About a month ago, my daughter was on a flight to Atlanta to visit her boyfriend. She messaged me from somewhere high in the sky to please pray for her, she was scared. The entire east coast was experiencing severe storms and she was flying right through all of it. She landed safely in Atlanta that night. Praise God! Did you notice I said she was going to visit her boyfriend? Another answer to prayer. She met a boy on Instagram a few months ago and hopped a plane to Indiana to meet him. He was attending Ball State University, as a graduate student and football player. Imagine a mother's fear. Your baby girl is flying solo to meet someone she doesn't even know. Well, since then, there have been many more plane trips for visits. From the very first trip I prayed to God that if this is who he has for her, to strengthen and build a love so strong between them; and if this isn't the person for her, to end it quickly before she gets hurt. Her most recent trip to Atlanta to visit him ended with an, "I love you." In my heart, I have such peace about it, because I have been praying for it.

I share all that with you to say that no prayer is insignificant to God. If it's in your heart, pray for it. God will use your time together to mold and shape you, but only when your heart is open and willing. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

I encourage you to think about the areas in your life and things that you could be praying for. Get a journal, and make a list. Each day, read God's word, and end in prayer. Begin to use the ACTS method for your prayer time. Jot things down in your journal that you are praying for, words that God is speaking with you, and begin to develop a consistent prayer life. I guarantee your life will be forever changed for the good, with prayer. 1 Thessalonians 3:16-18 says, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."