

Prayer: Jump Start Your Prayer Life

Many Christians believe in prayer, but need a jump start. Here are seven ways you can jump start your prayer life in order to grow a more intimate relationship between you and God. Select a couple of them to implement in your life starting this week.

1. Set aside a time and place for daily prayer. This is the single most important thing you can do. When we establish a regular routine for prayer, we will make sure that our prayer life is not just 'on the run', or when our backs are up against the wall, or when our buildings are being brought down by terrorists.
2. Begin your prayer times by slowing down and quieting down. When we come to prayer agitated and stressed, it is especially difficult to hear God's voice and to sense God's presence. Spending a quiet minute or two focusing and breathing deeply can help quiet our minds and spirits and make two-way prayer more probable. Allow for some silence in your life. This silence doesn't have to be long. It can be as short as 30 or 60 seconds to begin with and then gradually extend it to longer times as you get more comfortable with silence and waiting and listening for God.
3. Have a prayer conversation with God. Simply begin a conversation with God, like you might with a good friend. It could go something like this:

Good Morning, Lord. It's Glen.
This is my situation.
This is how I am feeling.
This is how I need your help.
What should I do?
Silence.
I am concerned about these people.... Because....
What should I do?
Silence.
Lord, guide me in...
Thanks, Lord for listening.
I am counting on you.

4. Pray the Bible. Take a few moments to read something from the Bible and direct attention toward God. Use a Bible passage you are already familiar with to help you get started praying. Focus on the contents of the Scripture passage and allow it to steer your time spent in prayer. Slowly read a single verse or short passage two or three times. Pause for some silence in between each reading to allow God's word to sink deeply into your heart and mind. Record some of your favorite Bible verses in a notebook and pray with one or more of them when the need arises. All of Scripture does not speak equally to us. Pick out those verses that mean the most to you. Put yourself in the Biblical story and ask God what God might be saying to you about yourself, your life, your priorities, your relationships, your time, your money management -- you.
5. Write out your prayers. Name what is going on in your life. Sometimes simply by naming and articulating what we are thinking, feeling or experiencing - such as "I'm thinking about changing careers" or "I feel lonely" or "I feel hopeless about..." or "I am overwhelmed" can help us gain focus and reclaim a portion of the power our life experiences have drained from us. Writing it down, composing a short prayer and giving it to God can be an empowering ritual. Many people find keeping a prayer journal to be a helpful discipline.

6. Recall how God has helped you in the past. God told Israel over and over to "Remember how the Lord God brought you out of bondage in Egypt." It is as we remember the past saving acts of God that we gain greater trust in God's power and love. And so Jesus says "Eat the bread in memory of me." When we are caught up in our stress, pain or suffering, it is easy to forget how God has helped us in the past. The trials of life can cause us to lose perspective and weaken our sense of trust in God's caring presence. But as we remember how God has helped us in the past we can be filled with hope for today and tomorrow. "O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come."

7. Develop a Prayer Rolodex. Put together a rolodex with names of them. Use either 7 or 30 cards. On each card put together a short list of people and then take one card each day and pray for the people on the list. A short list allows you to go deeper into prayer for each person and yet keeps several people in your prayers every day. If you use seven cards, you have one for each day of the week. If you use 30, you have one for each day of the month.

Are these 7 ways the only ways to pray? Of course not! They are simply some tools you can use to jump start or beef up your prayer life. Pick a couple of them to implement in your life starting this week. How you pray isn't important. What is important is that each of us prays every day.

-- *Written by Glen VanderKloot*