

THE ART OF PRAYER

Jesus, by example reminds us that the key to spiritual power is time alone with God. We see it over and over again in the Gospels. *“With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night”* (Mt. 14:23)

The day before Jesus chose the 12 men He designated as apostles, He spent the night in prayer. (Lk. 6:12)

The disciples noticed that Jesus looked forward to prayer and actually hungered for it. They saw that somehow prayer fed Jesus’ soul the way food fed their stomachs. They saw the interactive life between Jesus and His Father. They wanted to be nourished by prayer the way Jesus was. So, the disciples asked him to teach them to pray.

Prayer is *learned behavior*. Nobody is born an expert at it. No one ever masters prayer. Will we be diligent students in praying so that we would come to know our God more intimately?

Diane Moody in her book, *Confessions of a Prayer Slacker*, gives some great suggestions on how to get started:

- Make a commitment. Plan when and where to have time alone with God.
- Set a specific time. Stick to it, even if it means setting your alarm earlier than usual. Allow plenty of time so you don’t feel rushed.
- Find a place. Whether it’s a back porch rocker or the corner of your sofa, claim a distraction-free prayer spot.
- Unplug! You won’t be getting any text messages from God, so leave your cell phone and laptop elsewhere.
- Get organized. Keep your Bible handy. A prayer journal can make a big difference. Keep a list of people you pray for, and note things God lays on your heart. Date each entry. It’s a great way to track those answers to prayer.

Start with the Psalms – the Prayer Book. Ben Patterson suggests reading a Psalm through the lens of the “three Rs.”: Rejoice, Repent, and Request. Ask these three questions:

- Rejoice: What do I find here that gives me cause to rejoice, to give praise and thanks? Then do it.
- Repent: What do I read here that brings to light sin in my life? Then confess and repent.
- Request: What in this psalm can inform the way I pray for others and myself? Then make your requests of God accordingly.

Read Psalm One together as an LD group. Answer the three “R” questions.