



7 Day Devotional-PRAYER

Upgrading your time with God

Have you ever had to upgrade an operating system or app on your iPod or maybe your phone? When you are asked to upgrade, it's usually because there have been changes made to the phone or iPod to make it better. Often new features have been added or a bug has been fixed on the app. Upgrading your phone or iPod is an important thing to do to make it work better and for you to enjoy it more.

Just like it's important to upgrade your phone or iPod, it's important to upgrade your time spent hanging out with God. As a teenager, it's easy sometimes to not know where to begin when spending time reading your Bible or praying. Or maybe you already spend time with God, but you'd just like to upgrade what you're already doing. This devotion for teens has you covered.

Tips for upgrading your quiet time with God.

1. Just do it. Some times when you read the Bible, it will feel like God is really speaking to you and you'll have goose bumps and get really excited. Other times your time with God will feel dull and you'd rather be talking to others on Facebook. The key here is not to worry about whether your quiet time with God feels inspired or not. What's important is that you make a habit out of getting to know God and talking to Him. Just set aside some time each day to spend with God. As you make it a habit, you'll find that you really get more out of your quiet times.

2. Read books other than the Bible. Sometimes picking up a book about Jesus or a Bible topic that interests you is a great way to upgrade your quiet time. There are lots of devotional books out there that are written for teenagers. Find one that looks interesting to you and start reading. You can learn a lot about God and upgrade your quiet time by reading a book geared to teens.

3. Use a commentary. The word commentary might sound like a foreign word to you, but finding a good commentary will help you upgrade your devotion time with God. Commentaries will help you understand the verses you're reading in the Bible better and help you see things you might have missed. There are several apps for your phone or iPod that come with commentaries or you can try to find one online.

These are just a few tips to help you as a teen upgrade your time with God. Spending time with God is one of the best things you can do. Start today making your time with God a priority in your life and you'll come to know God in a fresh and new way!

In this devotion you will be challenged on the topic of "Prayer". I encourage you to write out a prayer to God for each day in the "my prayer" section. It is my prayer that you will see the importance of talking to God. It is my prayer that you will make reading God's word and praying to Him a *habit* in your life. It is my prayer that you will complete this devotion. It is my prayer that you plug into the power of prayer. I am praying for you!



DAY 1: What is prayer & how do I pray

READ Matthew 6:5-15

What is prayer?

Quite simply, prayer is talking to God. Prayer is a natural expression of our relationship with God. We depend on God for everything, even life itself. Prayer expresses this dependence as we ask God for what we need. Jesus says that people who trust him know God as their loving Father. God is not like our human fathers, who are flawed and sometimes mistreat their children. God as our *perfect* Father loves and cares for his children *perfectly*.

Jesus teaches his followers to pray to God as our Father, simply and directly, trusting God to answer our prayers in the way that is best for us. We do not need anyone to stand between us and God - we have direct access to God as we pray. Jesus warns against hypocrisy in prayer - that is, when we try to impress others with our prayers. Also, we don't pray with the aim of pressuring God to give us what we want.

The more we read the Bible, the more we understand God's values, plans and purposes. As a result, our prayers will be more shaped and informed by the will of God. All our prayer comes under the simple request, "Your will be done", taken from the "Lord's Prayer".

The Lord's Prayer

Jesus teaches us to pray by giving us the prayer we call, "The Lord's Prayer".

Note some of the features of the prayer:

1. We talk directly to God our Father
2. The prayer has 6 requests
3. The requests range from the big picture issues, like the coming of God's kingdom, to small day-to-day issues, like food to eat
4. We ask for forgiveness - Jesus goes on to say that if we pray this prayer for forgiveness from God, we must be willing to forgive others (see Matthew 6:14-15)

This prayer can be used as a model for our own prayers by taking its individual requests, expanding these in our own words and making them relevant to our own lives. We can also use the actual prayer itself.

How should I pray?

God promises that he will hear and answer the prayers of everyone who trusts Jesus. There are no "rules" for prayer. Here are some guidelines taken from Jesus' teaching:

1. Pray confidently to God as your loving Father
2. Pray naturally, expressing your dependence on God
3. Pray simply, trusting Jesus. Remember, God will answer our prayers in the ways that are best for us
4. Read the Bible and pray in line with God's will
5. Remember, no issue is too big or too small to pray about
6. Pray with good motives
7. If you are confused and don't know how to pray, just tell God that you don't know how to pray. God's Holy Spirit will understand your situation and help you

MY PRAYER:



DAY 2: Speechless before God?

READ Philippians 4:4-9

Is prayer a struggle for you?

I have a confession to make. While I talk about prayer to others, pray during church service, pray during youth group, even pray during meals with my family, I struggle to spend quality time on my own praying to God.

Yet, this is something that I should be prioritizing because prayer is good for us. Giving us direct access to God cost him his own Son. He asks us to share with him our thanks and our requests (Philippians 4).

He taught us how to pray (Matthew 6) and gave us so many examples of prayers (John 17 where Jesus prays for himself and for us, Philippians 1, 1 Thessalonians 1, 2 Thessalonians 1 and many more!).

Why is it that we still struggle with prayer? Perhaps we sometimes just don't know what to pray for.

Here are two reasons we don't pray:

1. **We don't pray to impress God.** We're not heard for our "much-speaking." You don't have to use poetic language or be an amateur Shakespeare. If an earthly child can speak to an earthly father, you can speak to your Heavenly Father. We're told to cry out to Him as our "Abba" Father — literally translated, "Daddy." (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6). We're not praying to impress Him.
2. **We don't pray to inform God.** You can't tell God anything He doesn't know.

So if we don't pray to *impress* or *inform* God, then what should we pray for?

What should we pray for?

This list is endless! There are so many things we can bring before God that it can sometimes be a bit overwhelming. Here are some helpful tips for working out what you should pray for:

Follow Paul's examples of prayer:

- Thank God for your brothers and sisters in Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:3)
- Thank God for the love and faith of others (Colossians 1:3-7)
- Ask God to teach you and others more about Himself (Colossians 1:9-14)
- Ask God to help you and others grow in knowledge and love (Philippians 1:9)
- Ask God to help you and others make wise decisions based on His word (Philippians 1:10)
- Bring before God all sorts of prayers and requests (Ephesians 6:18)
- Continually pray for other Christians (Ephesians 6:18)

This is only a short list! There are many more examples in Paul's letters of what we can pray. Have a read of Philippians, Ephesians, 1 Thessalonians and some of his other writings for more ideas!

MY PRAYER:



DAY 3: Tired? Stressed? You'll feel better...

READ Matthew 11:25-30

Life can be pretty tiring and stressful. School, homework, exams, peer group pressure, parental pressure, sibling rivalry, family break ups, pressure to perform, pressure to succeed, and the list goes on. A healthy lifestyle can really help. It is good to eat well, exercise, get plenty of rest, and even take multi-vitamins. Growing up my favorite wrestler was Hulk Hogan which he stated, "To all my little Hulkamaniacs, say your prayers, take your vitamins and you will never go wrong." Not that I am promoting Hulk Hogan, but he does have a point.

But sometimes the issues are deeper than this.

Sometimes our tiredness is more than a lack of sleep. Sometimes our stresses are caused by more than just an upcoming exam. What do you do then? Where do you turn?

It seems to me, we all have moments in life when we are troubled by the BIG QUESTIONS in life. Questions like, "Why am I here?" "What's the point of it all?" "Why should I go on living anyway?" "Does anyone really understand me?" "Does anyone really love me?" "Is there any light at the end of the tunnel?" "Is there any meaning or purpose in life".

If you have ever asked any of these questions you know that answer must be more than just eat better or exercise more. It is doing a daily exercise of the spiritual routine of prayer.

Check out what Jesus says to you who are tired in Matthew 11:28-30:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Jesus is saying you need to come to Him in humble submission, giving your life to Jesus as your King and Savior. This means entrusting your life to Jesus and your death to Him too. This means learning from Jesus how to live life the way you were designed to live it, God’s way! If you haven’t done this yet, why not do it now?

And Jesus makes a great offer to those who are stressed too:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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 minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6)

Jesus doesn’t want you to carry your stresses and anxieties by yourself. Jesus wants you to bring them to him in prayer. And as you give Jesus your stresses, He will give you his peace. Why not give it a try right now? Whatever it is that is bothering you now, pray about it now and see what happens.

Tired? Stressed? You’ll feel better with Jesus and Prayer!

MY PRAYER:



DAY 4: What energy drinks and praise have in common

READ Acts 16:16-40

Real energy

Energy drinks are awesome! They might not be the healthiest thing to drink, but when you’ve been up all night cramming for your biology test, they sure come in handy. After drinking an energy drink you feel more awake, more alive, and more ready to tackle the rest of your day.

As great as energy drinks are, the Bible talks about something that blows energy drinks out of the water. The Bible describes the power of prayer and praise. In fact, it had the power to turn situations around and made the people who praised feel more awake and alive too!

As we read in our passage, Paul and Silas were pulling an all-nighter of sorts in Acts when they stayed up late praying and praising God. They knew how to tap into the strength and power available when they praised God.

Is that an amazing story? Because Paul and Silas prayed and praised God, things changed in their life! They were energized and saw God move in their lives in mighty way after tapping into the power that comes from praising and prayer.

Who you talking to?

Have you ever watched someone having a conversation via text messaging?

They clutch their phone, pull it out every minute just to see if there are any new texts waiting for them—and when there are, they drop everything to respond.

Paul in writes to the church of Thessalonica to, “ *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of god in Christ Jesus for you.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

An article in The Washington Post told about a 15-year-old girl who sent and received 6,473 cell phone text messages in a single month. She says about her constant communication with friends, “That she would die without it.”▣ And she is not alone.

Researchers say that US teens with cell phones average more than 2,200 text messages a month.

To me, this ongoing digital conversation offers a remarkable illustration of what prayer could and should be like for every follower of Christ. Paul seemed to be constantly in an attitude of prayer for others. Paul knew there was power in prayer.

The same power is available to you too. God is ready to move on your behalf if you will be willing to ask Him and praise Him for the answer. Choose to tap into the energy and power that’s available to you as you pray!

MY PRAYER:



DAY 5: *Just* is a four letter word

READ Matthew 7:7-14

Four letter words

There are certain words you just don’t use. Most of them are four letter words. You know what words I’m talking about. You don’t need me to tell you what they are. There’s this one four letter word that I have a particular problem with. It’s a word that is perfectly fine in some situations, but when used in other situations it gets me really worked up. I’d like to see this word banned from these situations. Crossed out of the dictionary and never used that way ever again.

That word is “just”.

The good and bad uses of 'just'

Now, there are some good times to use the word “*just*”. If you’re using it as a word that is connected with justice, it’s a great word to use. “Our God is a *just* God. He will always do what is right.” That’s a good way to use the word. For those of you who know fancy grammar words, this is called using “*just*” as an adjective.

But the word “*just*” can also be used to limit something. To make it smaller than it actually is. “It’s *just* a small mistake.” “It’s *just* a game.” “It’s just a *flesh* wound.” This is the adverbial use. And there are right and proper times to use “*just*” this way. But my problem comes when using the word “*just*” during prayer time.

'Just' going to pray?

Here’s why it gets to me. When someone starts to pray by saying “I’m just going to pray now.” In my head, I’m

wondering what this person is saying, probably unintentionally, about prayer. Are they saying that there's nothing special about prayer? I would disagree. Are they saying that prayer is unimportant? I would disagree. The same thoughts go through my head when the word "just" is used during the prayer. "Lord, we just pray that you do this thing for us." When I hear this, I'm thinking that the person praying doesn't think that God will answer the prayer. That they think the prayer is beneath God's notice. I'm pretty sure that's not what the person praying is saying, but I find it really distracting.

Why it's not 'just' prayer

There is nothing small or unimportant about prayer. Prayer is a gift from God. There's nothing "just" about this. This is an incredible privilege and power we have. Jesus has this to say about prayer:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

In the Bible God promises that our prayers will always be heard, and he will always answer them according to his will - so our prayers are persuasive because of this. I think we are doing ourselves a disservice when we use the word "just" in prayer time. It devalues it. It gives the idea that prayer really isn't that big a deal.

But prayer is a very big deal. It is important. Prayer is something we should treasure. So be careful in the way you speak about prayer. And consider striking that four letter word "just" from your prayer vocabulary.

MY PRAYER:



DAY 6: The lifeline of prayer

READ JOHN Romans 8:26-30

"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God." (Romans 8:27)

A friend's prayer

"DEAR GOD, please help my friend Tyler."

Chris had prayed this prayer for months. His Christian friend, Tyler, was having an incredibly difficult time saying no to temptation. Tyler had a history of drug use and alcohol abuse. He had often shared his struggles with Chris, and Chris always promised that he would pray. So pray he did. No one knew Tyler's problems and needs better than Chris, and Chris took his responsibility to pray very seriously.

"Dear God, please help my friend Laura."

Ashley wouldn't give up. No matter how thin Laura got, Ashley simply wouldn't stop praying for her friend. Ever since her youth pastor had first asked her about Laura's eating habits, Ashley had sensed God's call to pray for Laura. "Only God can rescue my friend," she told her small group leader, "so we've got to pray." And she did pray. No one knew Laura's problems and needs better than Ashley, and Ashley took her responsibility to pray very seriously.

Isn't it great to have Christian friends who pray for you? And isn't it a special privilege to pray for your friends? Things happen when you and your friends pray for one another. God responds and acts!

Help of the Holy Spirit

There's only one thing more powerful than friends praying for one another, and that's the Holy Spirit praying for us. Do you realize that the Holy Spirit prays for you to God the Father? That's right. The Spirit of God who lives inside you is constantly talking to God the Father about your needs, your hurts, and your struggles. And his prayers are even more effective, because no one knows you like the indwelling Spirit of God — not your parents, not your friends, not even your youth leaders know you and your needs like the Holy Spirit does. Knowing your needs as he does, he can pray for you better than anyone.

Do you ever feel so hurt or confused or angry that you don't know how to pray? You sigh, cry, or groan, but you just can't get any words out? Well, relax. Here is an example of a prayer that you could use: Father, thank you that even when I can't find the right words to pray that your Holy Spirit knows exactly what to say.

The Holy Spirit is taking your sighs and groans and translating them for you, because he knows exactly what they mean. And he takes your hurt and concern straight to the Father's throne. Pleading with a passion words can't express, the Holy Spirit prays, "God, please help my friend." And remember this: He takes prayer for you very seriously.

Reflect

What does it mean to you when a friend prays for you? How about when the Holy Spirit chimes in with prayers that never cease?

MY PRAYER:

DAY 7: Prayer Selfie



In many of Paul's letters he wrote what he was praying for on behalf of his readers. With Paul's letters forming most of the New Testament, these prayers are now in Scripture. Because God saw to it that they are in the Bible, there's a good chance they are the kind of prayers God likes to hear.

Two of these prayers are noted below. Rather than simply read these verses, pray them as a prayer to God for yourself. In fact, each time you see the word *you*, substitute it with first-person words such as *I*, *my* and *me*.

"For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people, and His incomparably great power for us who believe" (Eph. 1:15-19).

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience..." (Col. 1:9-11).

How would things change if these prayers were answered in your life? Spend some time meditating on the points of these prayers. Ask yourself questions such as:

How would my relationship with God improve if God gave me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that enabled me to know Him better? (Eph. 1:17)

How would my life change if it was filled with the knowledge of God's will? (Col. 1:9)

What would it look like to be strengthened with all power according to God's glorious might so I may have great endurance and patience? (Col. 1:11)

Now take it a step further. After you've prayed these prayers for yourself, pray them on behalf of your friends. Send them a message that you're praying for them. Better yet, copy a phrase from one of the verses into a message and substitute your friend's name for the pronoun *you* when appropriate (for example: "I pray the eyes of *John's* heart may be enlightened in order that *he* may know the hope to which [God] has called *him*.")

You now have a go-to quiet time for life (and a prayer ministry for your friends!). By the way, now that you know they're there, you'll see countless other prayers in Scripture. In fact, if you'd like a few more, check these out:

Philippians 1:9-11

Ephesians 3:16-20

Philemon 1:4-6

MY PRAYER: