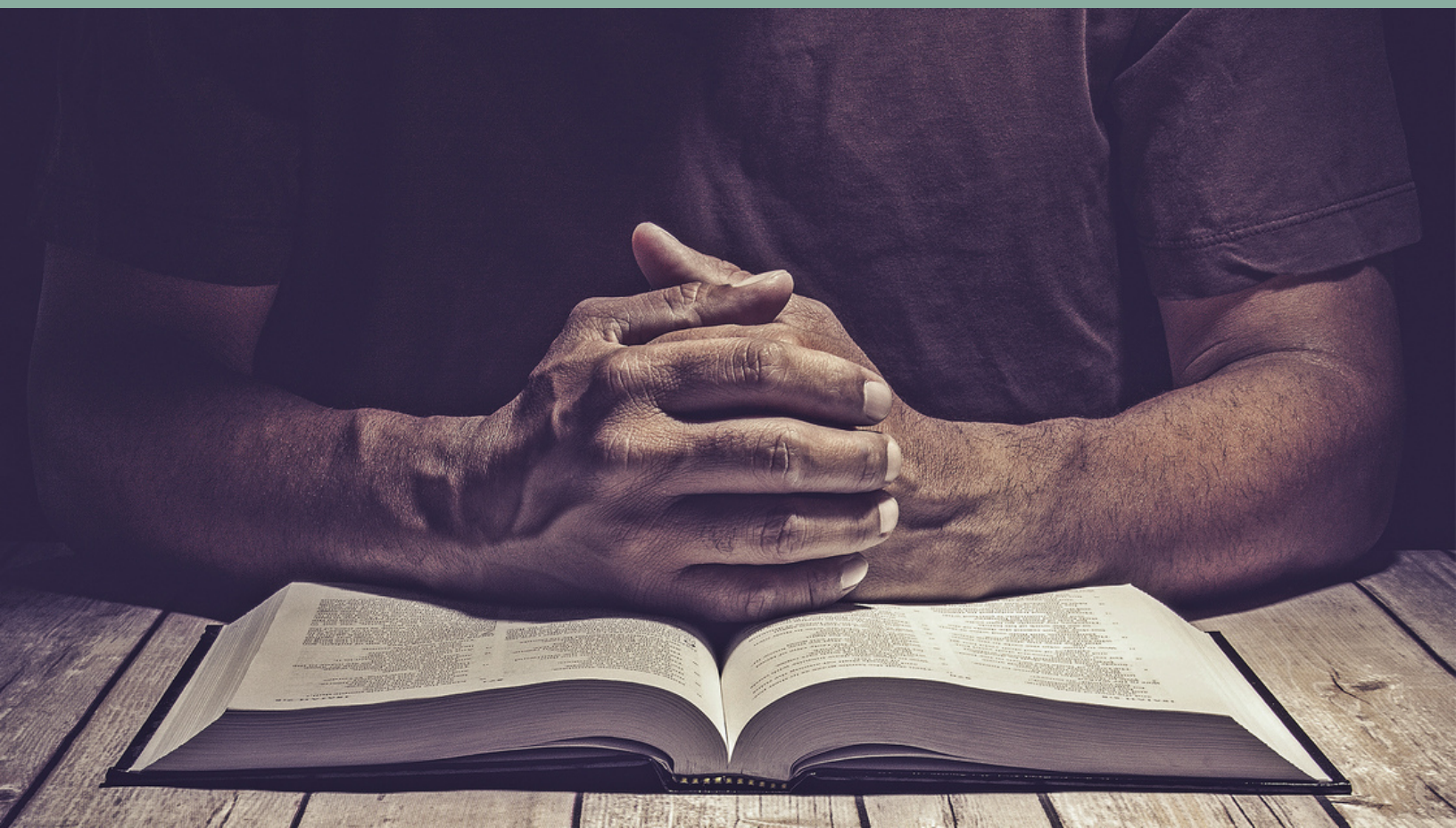


Prayer 02

Types of Prayer: Gratitude, Lament, & Intercession



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INTRODUCTION

Now that we have practiced using pre made prayers to talk to God, we are going to move into more personalized prayers. As we get more personal in talking to God we can talk about what is on our mind and hearts. This is where we can talk to God about our desires, our pains, our hopes and fears. And while there are many types of prayer, broadly speaking, prayer falls into three categories:

Gratitude: This is where we talk to God about the good things in our life and in the life of the people and world around us. We call it gratitude because we should recognize that every good thing in life is ultimately a gift from God.

Lament: Talking to God about what is wrong, or bad or evil in our lives, or the lives of those around us or in the world. We call it lament because it is a way to process our sorrow and grief over bad things.

Intercession: This is where we ask God to do the things He promised to do. God has promised to overcome evil with good. He promised to heal and restore us and the world to His good purposes. We call it Intercession for we are asking God to intervene and act on our behalf or on behalf of others.

While all three types of prayer are an essential part of our relationship with God, Gratitude is the most important. Gratitude must be the primary posture of our heart towards God for gratitude is what builds and maintains a healthy faith in God. We live in a world that is marred by sin and its consequences. That will not change no matter how spiritual you become.

God is at work by the Spirit today to heal and restore, however, the completed work of healing and restoration will happen at the re-appearance of Jesus. In the meantime, we will experience pain and suffering at times. We must learn to celebrate the goodness and greatness of God in the midst of sorrow and terror.

Furthermore, with a healthy faith in God, we can bring our complaints to Him (lament) and ask Him to act according to His loving promises (intercession).

GRATITUDE

Begin and end your day with gratitude

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Obviously, there is no formula for giving thanks to God. Be creative and use your imagination. Here are a couple of ideas:

- Start your prayer time by giving thanks to God for three gifts He has given you.
- At dinner, let each person at the table share something they are grateful for.
- There are many little and often unnoticed gifts throughout the day. Take little moments throughout the day to notice and acknowledge these gifts.
- At the end of the day, take a few minutes to quickly review your day and give thanks to God for any gifts you received that day.

Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on your experience. How did practicing gratitude impact you?

LAMENT

Honest Prayers

Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, Lord, You know it all. - Psalm 139:4

Practice having some honest conversations with God. No performing, no pretending. God already knows how you feel and what you are thinking. Why not talk to Him about it?

Here are some helpful steps for talking to God about the bad things in your life or the world around you. Just go with the most prominent thing on your mind or heart. Let yourself feel and be aware of your current emotional state. If you know what is behind it, talk to God about it. If you are not sure what is behind it, ask God to reveal it. Tell God what you think you need. Then give God your trust. Invite God's presence into this moment. Give God thanks.

Read one of the Lament Psalms (listed in the Appendix). How does it feel to pray it? Consider writing your own lament psalm.

Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on your experience. Was it awkward or uncomfortable? Was it helpful?

INTERCESSION

Pray on behalf of others

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. - Philippians 4:6

Intercession should really be divided into petition and intercession. Petition is asking God for your needs. Intercession is asking God on behalf of others. Most of us find petition easier than intercession (for obvious reasons). But if you really want to make a difference we have to learn intercession as well.

In the prayer Jesus gave us, He emphasized “us” - which includes both petition and intercession. If you don’t already do this, try the following:

- Get a piece of paper and write down the first 5 names or situations that come to mind.
- Is there at least one name that is the name of an “enemy” or someone you don’t like or who is giving you trouble? (Jesus did say to pray for our enemies)
- Take 1-2 minutes to offer up specific prayers for each one on the list
- Consider reaching out to someone on your list with a simple text, email or phone call.

Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on your experience.

MORE IDEAS

Prayer Transitions

It can be helpful to incorporate “transitions” into prayer. These are small rituals that signal your brain, heart and body that it is time to pray. Examples include getting a cup of coffee and sitting in a specific chair or specific location. It could be taking a few deep breaths, taking a walk, or playing a worship song.

Body Posture

Body posture can affect your prayers. Biblically speaking, our mind, hearts and bodies are connected. There are different postures you can take while you pray. The most common posture mentioned in the Bible is standing with your hands lifted up. But you can also sit, lay down, walk, kneel or go for a hike (one of Jesus’ favorites). I find different postures help with different kinds of prayer.

I find sitting helpful for silence and quiet meditation, kneeling or lying down for confession or surrender, and hiking good for conversations with God. Consider trying at least one different posture this week.

Distraction Notepad

If you find it difficult to quiet your mind and turn off distracting thoughts then try this trick. Bring a notepad with you to prayer. Whenever a “distracting” thought comes to mind (such as something you have to do later), write it down. Knowing that I have written it down so I will not forget often helps me get past the distracting thought. Keep writing down every distracting thought until you can focus on prayer.

Reflect

Did you try any of these other ideas? Describe your experience.

THE LORD'S PRAYER
(Matthew 6:9-13)

Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.

Or use a wonderful paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer created by Dallas Willard

Dear Father always near us,
may your name be treasured and loved,
may your rule be completed in us-
may your will be done here on earth in
just the way it is done in heaven.
Give us today the things we need today,
and forgive us our sins and impositions on you
as we are forgiving all who in any way offend us.
Please don't put us through trials,
but deliver us from everything bad.
Because you are the one in charge,
and you have all the power, and the glory too is all yours-forever-
which is just the way we want it!

APPENDIX

Individual psalms of lament

Psalm 3, 5-7, 13, 17, 22, 25-28, 32, 38, 39, 42, 43, 51, 54-57, 59, 61, 63, 64,
69-71, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, and 140-43

Corporate psalms of lament

44, 74, 79, 80, 83, and 89

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