



## Prayer Life Cheat Sheet

**Primary purpose of prayer** is not to change something but to know someone. Never forget that prayer changes me and the way I look at things. It conforms me to God, it places my trust in Him. It connects me through communication.

### Enemies to Prayer (Blockers and obstacles to prayer)

Our default, when prayers are not answered, should be: 1. Is there sin in my life? if not, then 2. What is God trying to teach me? He loves us so much, He will use all means to draw us to himself and knows what will drive us to our knees. See list below as a checklist to what might impact your prayers.

1. **Sin or disobedience** (habitual and unconfessed)- David- *If I had cherished sin in my heart, you would not have heard me.* (Psalm 66:18); *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.* (Isaiah 59:2)
2. **Pride** Repent of pride. *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.* (1 Peter 5:5)
  - a. **Too busy** simply our declaration of our independence from God. I can do this God, I don't need you. Being too busy to pray is pride in yourself.
3. **Spiritual Battle** *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* (Ephesians 6:12)
4. **Lack of faith** *and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well;* (James 5:15)
  - a. **Not fervent** *the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.* (NKJV, James 5:16)
  - b. **Regular/persistent** parable of persistent widow (Luke 18).
  - c. **Doubt** *let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord"* (James 1:5-7)
  - d. **Fear** Focused on the mountain, not the mountain mover. Pray BIG prayers!
5. **How we treat people**
  - a. **Others** *Those who shut their ears to the cries of the poor will be ignored in their own time of need.* (Proverbs 21:13)
  - b. **Our spouses** *Husbands... be considerate as you live with your wives, that your prayers might not be hindered.* (1 Peter 3:7)
6. **Lack of reconciliation/unity** Matthew 18; Galatians 6
7. **Unforgiveness** *Jesus says, "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."* (Mark 11:25)
8. **Hardened Heart** *If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination"* (Proverbs 28:9)
9. **Delays** Timing is not right
  - a. Sometimes God says "Not Yet" as in it's simply not time for it.
  - b. Sometimes He delays answering to increase or test our faith
10. **No.** No is an answer to prayer. God is good, just and right. He has the big picture in mind.
11. **Prayerlessness** I simply don't pray (obvious!)
  - a. But ask: why? Do I believe God can't or won't answer? If so, study God's word and look up all the accounts in Bible about how God answered prayer.
12. **Wrong Motives**
  - a. **God's will?** We need to ask in accordance to God's will. (1 John 5:14-15)
  - b. **My Selfishness?** *You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions* (James 4:3)

### How to Pray - Pick a Pattern

Here is the prayer pattern modeled in **The Lord's Prayer** as shown in Matthew 6:

1. **UPWARD** *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.* Start with seeking God's face before his hand. Find a Psalm that is all about God's glory and pray that scripture, inserting your name to personalize it.
  - a. Prayer is intimate, seek Him like seeking a father
  - b. He's our king in heaven, seek Him like a king deserves
2. **DOWNWARD** *Your kingdom come, Your will be done.*
  - a. Submit your will to His will and plan for every area in your life.
3. **INWARD** *Forgive us our debts as we forgive those...*
  - a. Move to confession and repentance. It gets the heart right.



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### 4. **OUTWARD** *Give us this day our daily bread*

- Supplication - asking God for us and others. He knows our needs, but we are called to *pray continually for everything, for this is the will of God* (1 Thess. 5:18). What should I ask God? Again, I need to *pray according to His will* to have it answered (1 John 5). The best way to know His will is to pray scripture.
- Pray specifically
- Pray daily
- Pray sincerely (from the heart)
- Pray fervently

*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil...*

- Spiritual battle readiness prayers/request.

### 5. **UPWARD** *For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory...*

- End seeking God's face. The bookends of prayer.

#### Other prayer patterns:

##### ACTS

Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication

##### John Piper's IOUS

**I**-Incline my heart to your testimonies- Psalm 119:36

**O**-Open my eyes to see wonderful things- Psalm 119:18

**U**-Unite my heart to fear your name- Psalm 86:11

**S**-Satisfy me in the morning with your steadfast love-Psalm 90:14

#### Ways to encourage good prayer habits

##### 1. **Regular**

- Time** -When freshest. The pattern throughout scripture is early morning.
- Place** -Prayer closet (place that is free of distractions). This is surprisingly a great idea. For some time, my closet was a bench on a lake on the way to work.

##### 2. **Push through dry seasons** God's way of saying, is this about you or me?

##### 3. **Journal** Stick to a discipline of one page maximum. 3 habits:

- Briefly recap the day before and in one paragraph, write what God showed you or something He revealed that you need to change or remember. Pray it.
- In a paragraph, write what God spoke to you through His word in your quiet time. Pray it.
- Write out a few prayer requests for the day.

##### 4. **Pick a trigger** It sounds odd, but when fasting, hunger is a trigger for me to turn my attention to God and pray instead of concentrating on hunger. If you are fighting a stronghold (could be any addictive desire), when the pressure manifests itself, use that as a trigger to focus attention on God and the empowerment of Holy Spirit. When you struggle with anger, bitterness, complaining, recognize it and bring it to the cross. Don't talk to yourself about it, talk to Jesus about it.

##### 5. **Be disciplined** Nobody accomplishes anything without commitment. There are two extremes to avoid:

- Avoid legalism**- if you miss a day. Don't sweat it! It's all grace.
- Avoid unstructured time and activity**. It'll never work. Self-defeating.

##### 6. **Pray Scriptures** In this way we pray the will of God, it keeps us focused and in the Word. Too often we don't let God speak. He often speaks most clearly this way. It's important to preach the meaning of the teach, not manipulate the text to get what you want. Like if you are single and you pray from Philippians 1:1: *Grace be to you...* so you pray, *Lord, that girl Grace on the worship team is amazing, I pray that she would be to me!*

Okay, so far so good, but how do I pray scripture? Glad you asked. Here is an example from our text, Philippians 4:6-7

*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 heart and mind in Christ Jesus.*

Jesus, I praise you that you are worthy to approach, that you care enough about us to listen. You are a great Father (UPWARD). I ask you to examine my heart through your Holy Spirit to show me where I am anxious and where my lack of faith in your ability to help me live out life. I choose to pray and approach you with my requests [pray them]. Now Jesus, I thank you for [and list them!]. Now Father, I am asking that you would make peace a sentinel in my heart.