

## STEPS TO A PRACTICAL, JOYFUL, PRAYER LIFE

1. **FIND** the best possible time and place for prayer.
2. **FORGET** all previous failures in prayer.
3. **FIGHT** all prayer hindrances.
4. **FOCUS** on the lord rather than on answers to prayer.
5. **FOLLOW** a meaningful plan of action.
6. **FEED** every day on spiritual food.
7. **FELLOWSHIP** with the Lord in love.
8. **FORGIVE** every wrong done to you.
9. **FORSAKE** all things that hinder spiritual growth.
10. **FINISH** what you start. (Be willing to be used by God to answer your own prayers.)

Dick Eastman

# Steps to a Practical, Joyful, Prayer Life

Jesus said, "Go directly to the Father . . . using my name . . . and you will have abundant joy" (Jn. 16:23-24, NLT). The psalmist adds, "In God's presence is the fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11, KJV). These 10 directives may help you make prayer not only practical, but a joy as well.

**1. Find** the best possible time and place for prayer. In Mt. 6:6, Jesus said, "When you pray" (suggesting a time devoted to it), "go into your room" (suggesting a place devoted for it). First, set a specific time that is best suited for you to pray. Watchman Nee wrote, "Those who have no set time for prayer, do not pray." Then, find a good place for prayer—like a spare room, a closet, or even a comfortable chair. Going to the same place each day helps form a habit.

**2. Forget** all previous failures in prayer. A lady once confided to me that a terrible problem was hindering her prayer life. "I often fall asleep during prayer," she said. I replied, "Welcome to the club. I do, too!" Stunned that a teacher of prayer would have that problem, she inquired, "What do you do when you fall asleep during prayer?" Chuckling, I replied, "I rest in the Lord, what do you do?" As she laughed, I added, "What I do is start praying again when I wake up. The key is—don't give up!"

**3. Fight** all prayer hindrances fiercely. Paul wrote, "Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy" (Eph. 6:13, NLT). Of course, the greatest hindrance to prayer is not praying at all. James said, "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (Jas. 4:2). Then there's the hindrance of selfish praying. James continues: "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (Jas. 4:3).

**4. Focus** on the Lord rather than on answers to prayer. God told Jeremiah, "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. . . . You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:12-13). The essence of prayer is in the repetition of the word "Me" (God) in this passage. Effective prayer isn't gauged by how many answers we receive, but by how much of God we touch.

**5. Follow** a meaningful plan of action. When the psalmist said he would "direct" his prayer

unto the Lord in the morning (Ps. 5:3, KJV), he used the Hebrew word *arak*, meaning to "set in order" or "arrange." He had a plan of action, or strategy, for his praying.

**6. Feed** every day on spiritual food. Jesus said, "People need more than bread for their life; they must feed on every word of God" (Mt. 4:4, NLT). Jeremiah wrote, "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight" (Jer. 15:16). Read the Word daily so you can pray it back to God.

**7. Fellowship** with the Lord in love. The prophet Hosea proclaimed, "Come, let us return to the LORD. . . . let us press on to acknowledge him" (Hos. 6:1-3). "Acknowledge" (or "know," as it is sometimes translated) is from the Old Testament Hebrew word *yada*. One important definition of *yada* is "direct, intimate contact." Intimacy with the Lord is the key to joyful prayer.

**8. Forgive** every wrong done to you. Jesus said, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him" (Mk. 11:25). Elsewhere He admonished, "If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Mt. 6:14). The Lord knew that holding a grudge would make it all but impossible to pray effectively. Indeed, bitter believers rarely pray.

**9. Forsake** all things that hinder spiritual growth. When Andrew Murray suggested that "we pray as we live, it's the life that prays," he hit upon a vital key to joyful prayer. Those who would pray well must heed Paul's directive, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature" (Col. 3:5).

**10. Finish** what you start. Rees Howells, a remarkable intercessor from an earlier generation, often said, "You will never be a true intercessor until you are first willing to be a part of the answer to your own prayers." When God selected the house of Cornelius to first release the gospel to the Gentiles, it was because Cornelius was someone who "gave generously . . . and prayed to God regularly" (Acts 10:1-4). Cornelius not only prayed, but he put feet to his prayers.

—Dick Eastman