

## **The Breath of Prayer**

You know... sometimes I think about prayer and I realize... wow... it's like breathing, but for the soul. Like, if I stop breathing, my body collapses. If I stop praying, my spirit collapses. And yet... we treat prayer like an optional thing. Like a side dish. Like... "oh yeah, I'll pray if I've got a little time left over." But no—no, no, no—prayer is oxygen. Prayer is fuel. Prayer is how we step into the presence of God Himself, the Creator of heaven and earth, and say, "Father... I need You." That's not small. That's life-changing.

And here's the crazy part: prayer isn't for professionals. It isn't for people with a microphone, or someone with a seminary degree, or somebody who knows big fancy Bible words. No—prayer is for the child who whispers, "God help me." Prayer is for the broken who cry out, "Lord, I don't even know what to say." Prayer is for you, for me, for all of us. And Scripture tells us that the Spirit Himself helps us when we don't even have the words. That means—even silence, even groans, even tears—are prayers that God hears.

Think about that for a second. The God who spoke galaxies into motion, the God who put breath in your lungs, bends His ear when you call His name. Wow. I mean, wow. Why would we *not* pray? But here's what I've found... if I'm honest... prayer is hard. Because prayer demands honesty. Prayer demands slowing down. Prayer feels awkward sometimes. But listen—awkward conversations with God are better than no conversations at all....awkward conversations with God are better than no conversations at all.

Have you ever noticed, in Scripture, people prayed all kinds of prayers? David shouted, he wept, he danced, he even complained! Gideon questioned, Hannah poured out her soul, Paul begged God to take away his thorn, and Jesus Himself prayed with such intensity that His sweat was like drops of blood. That tells me prayer doesn't have to be neat and polished—it just has to be real.

Actually, let's look at Gideon for a few minutes, Gideon is not who typically think of when we're talking about prayer but let's look...

### **JUDGES 6:11-23**

#### **The Lord Calls Gideon**

**11** The angel of the Lord came, and he sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites.

**12** Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "The Lord is with you, valiant warrior."

**13** Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about? They said, 'Hasn't the Lord brought us out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian."

**14** The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. I am sending you!"

**15** He said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's family."

**16** "But I will be with you," the Lord said to him. "You will strike Midian down as if it were one man."

**17** Then he said to him, "If I have found favor with you, give me a sign that you are speaking with me."

**18** Please do not leave this place until I return to you. Let me bring my gift and set it before you." And he said, "I will stay until you return."

**19** So Gideon went and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from a half bushel of flour. He placed the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot. He brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

**20** The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat with the unleavened bread, put it on this stone, and pour the broth on it." So he did that.

**21** The angel of the Lord extended the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire came up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

**22** When Gideon realized that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, “Oh no, Lord God! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!”

**23** But the Lord said to him, “Peace to you. Don’t be afraid, for you will not die.”

### **1. Gideon Shows Us That God Can Handle Our Honesty**

#### **A. Gideon asks... (vv. 13, 15):**

- “If the LORD is with us, why has all this happened?”
- “How can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest, and I am the least.”

Gideon doesn’t hide his fear or confusion. He voices the very questions many of us are scared to say out loud.

#### **B. God responded:**

- Not by striking Gideon down for questioning.
- He reassures him: *“I will be with you.”*

#### **C. Biblical echoes:**

- Like Gideon; Moses baulks (Exodus 3–4): “Who am I that I should go?” God answers with His presence, not just explanations.
- Like Gideon; Jeremiah whined (Jeremiah 1:6): “I’m too young.” God says, “Don’t say that, I’ll give you the words.”
- Like Gideon; David in the Psalms yelled (Psalm 13:1–2): “How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?” Yet God calls David “a man after His own heart.”

God doesn’t flinch at your “Why?” or your “How?” He invites you to bring those questions into His presence rather than stuffing them down.

### **2. Candid Prayer Builds Deeper Trust.**

#### **A. Honesty is the doorway to intimacy.**

- You can’t have a real relationship with someone if you’re constantly pretending to be okay.
- In prayer, pretending we’re “fine” with God keeps the relationship shallow.

#### **B. Jesus Himself modeled this.**

- In Gethsemane when he says (Matthew 26:39): “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.” That’s vulnerability.
- Or on the cross when he cries (Matthew 27:46): “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

#### **C. Biblical examples of honesty strengthening faith:**

- Hannah (1 Samuel 1): pours out her soul in grief and longing.
- Habakkuk: complains about injustice, then listens and responds to God.
- Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7–10): asks for the thorn to be removed, then accepts God’s grace.

#### **D. Why this builds trust:**

- Because when we bring God our raw truth and He still stays, we learn His love isn’t conditional on our mood or performance.
- Candid prayer turns prayer from a duty into a relationship.

The reason this builds trust is because when we bring God our raw truth and He still stays, we learn His love isn’t conditional on our mood or performance.

Candid prayer turns prayer from a duty into a relationship.

And oh... when we pray... something happens. Sometimes God changes the situation. Sometimes God changes the person. Sometimes He changes me. And that’s the beauty—prayer is not just about getting things from God. Prayer is about *being with God*. Think about it: what if prayer is less about moving God’s hand and more about God moving my heart? What if every time we pray, our roots sink deeper into Him?

That’s spiritual growth. That’s relationship.

And maybe you're thinking, "But what if I don't feel anything when I pray?"

Ah, yes. The silence. The waiting.

The feeling like nothing's happening.

Listen—prayer is like planting seeds. You don't always see results immediately. But something is happening underground. God is working even when I don't see it, even when I don't feel it. Faith holds on. Faith says, "God hears me." And every prayer, big or small, shapes me.

I think about Jesus in the Gospels. Over and over again, He slipped away to pray. The Son of God—the one with perfect unity with the Father—still prayed. If Jesus needed it, how much more do I need it? How much more do we need it? Prayer was His lifeline, His rhythm, His anchor. And prayer can be ours too.

Here's the thing—prayer is the difference between surviving and thriving. You can limp through life without it, sure, but you'll never have the fire, the intimacy, the strength that God designed you for. Prayer grows us. It sharpens us. It builds resilience in us. It pulls us closer into the heart of God. And when you pray consistently, faithfully, boldly—you stop being a spectator in the Kingdom of God, and you start being a participant.

So I'm asking you... no, I'm urging you... don't treat prayer like a last-ditch effort. Treat it like your first instinct. Talk to Him when you wake up. Talk to Him when you walk into work or school.

Whisper to Him when you're overwhelmed. Cry out to Him when you're desperate. Praise Him when you're joyful.

Just. Talk. To. Him.

Don't wait until the crisis hits. Don't wait until the wheels fall off. Build the relationship now.

And here's what excites me most: every time you pray, heaven moves. Every time you pray, the Father leans in. Every time you pray, you are being shaped into the image of Christ. And nothing—nothing—is wasted.

A. Step 1 – Start where you really are.

- Don't start with "Dear Lord, thank you for this day" if that's not where your heart is.
- If you're frustrated, say, "Lord, I'm frustrated and here's why."

Spend time each day talking to God without a script.

B. Step 2 – Use the Psalms as your language coach.

- Psalms teach us it's okay to lament, celebrate, question, and rejoice.
- Read Psalm 42 or 73 to see how biblical prayers start in doubt but end in trust.

C. Step 3 – Talk to God like you would a trusted friend.

- Not casual disrespect, but personal closeness.
- Share details: your hopes, fears, and even the silly things you think don't matter to Him.

D. Step 4 – Listen after you speak.

- Gideon paused and let God answer. Prayer is a two-way conversation—pause for the Spirit's whisper through Scripture, impressions, or counsel.
- End each time by asking, "Lord, what do You want me to know right now?" and listen.

E. Step 5 – Keep the conversation going.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray without ceasing" means stay in ongoing dialogue throughout the day.
- Like texting a friend instead of one big phone call.

So let's breathe. Let's pray. Let's not make prayer an accessory to our faith—let's make it the heartbeat of our faith. Because the more we pray, the more we grow, and the more we grow, the more we shine.

I'd like to invite you to come to the altar right now to have a candid conversation with the Lord. You can do that on your own or one with another.