



PRAY FIRST

Pray 1 Hour (Prayer Wheel)

We often desire to develop a prayer discipline in our life but may struggle with knowing what to pray about longer than ten minutes. God doesn't have time requirements with regard to prayer, but the more we pray, the more we get to know Him, and the more we change our world as we co-laborers with Him. The more we know Him, the more we can pray in His will and He can work through us.

If you desire to build your prayer time, here's a way to help you. One hour each day equates to more than six weeks a year. Using this guide of twelve prayer areas of only five minutes each, you can easily reach that hour mark and in the process, change yourself and your world. You can adjust the 5 minutes slots as needed.

1. PRAISE (5 minutes): Psalm 22:3; 63:3; Hebrews 13:15 – Begin your prayer with praise. Praise esteems God for His greatness and virtue, focuses on His nature, and builds our faith as we reflect on His goodness and faithfulness. You don't have to thank Him for the same things or everything you can think of each day. Rather, consider taking one or two of His attributes and talk with Him about how they have affected your life, or the lives of others. Though we should develop a consistent habit of praise unto God, we don't want to develop a rote method that becomes more rehearsed than meaningful. Praise is not a method to "sugar-talk" God into listening to us; it's bringing our mind back to seeing WHO He is, regardless of what's happening in our life.

2. FORGIVENESS (5 minutes): Matthew 6:14-15 – Nothing blocks your spiritual progress more fatally than an unforgiving spirit. Forgiveness is a complete pouring out and release of any negative feeling that might be held against another person, church, or group. It's not holding a grudge, or desiring revenge. It's easy for us to become bitter against someone who has hurt us, but remember that you have also hurt others, including God. We all need to receive forgiveness, and we all need to give forgiveness. Include both of these areas during this time. In addition, accept God's forgiveness rather than holding onto your past mistakes. When God forgives, He releases, and we need to release ourselves as well. I've often prayed for those who were considered my enemies. As I have done that, I've seen those enemies and my situation change. There's too much effort needed to maintain bitterness and strife.

3. CONFESSION (5 minutes): Psalm 139:23-24 Psalm 66:18 – If you hide sin in your heart God will not hear you. Repent of sin and you will clear the road for God to move. When there is nothing to hide or cause hesitation between you and God, you will be free to approach Him without fear and full of confidence. During this time, repent of things you have done that need addressed, but also ask God to show you anything else that He is not pleased with. Wait on Him and open your heart as He shares any issues with you. When He does, don't revert to feeling condemned. Scripture tells us that God corrects those He loves. He desires to commune with you, so when He shares issues, realize that it's His love, not Him condemning you for your faults.

4. PETITION (5 minutes): James 4:2-3; Matthew 6:9-13 – This aspect of prayer deals with our personal needs and desires. God is interested in our personal life. He's interested in more than if we have a job, or good health. He also cares about our dreams, talents, and struggles. When I pray in this area, I talk to God about my frustrations, my thoughts, and things I'd like to do, even if they don't seem "spiritual". We need to remember that even the non-spiritual things of life can become spiritual when we bring God into

them. When we make all of our lives spiritual, we'll begin seeing God more involved. He won't intrude where He's not invited.

5. INTERCESSION (5 minutes): I Timothy 2:1-2; Matthew 9:37-38 – Intercession is prayer for others. This includes family, friends, our church, city, nation, and world. As you go through your week, write down issues that you hear about in these areas and pray over them during this time. Keep up with the news so you know what issues are happening in your world. Remember that God is bigger than your personal life. He cares about all nations. We co-labor with God to bring about His divine purposes when we pray, give, or go. Consider praying about missionaries, famines, natural disasters, wars, human trafficking, and so on. Try to feel what God would feel in these issues and pray accordingly. I also ask God what He wants prayed for. Sometimes He shares His heart with me about something that never crossed my mind.

6. READ THE BIBLE (5 minutes): II Timothy 3:16; Psalm 19:9 – Read the Bible during prayer. The Word is enlightening to the eyes, giving us direction, understanding, and revelation. It is the primary way that God speaks to us. Don't rush through your reading. Read scripture slowly, thinking on what you are reading. When you get to a scripture that makes you pause or think, this may be God speaking to you. Reread it again, and ask God to reveal to you what He wants to share. Read scripture for your personal edification, but also be open to scriptures that you can share with others. God often speaks His Word through people to others who need to hear it. We are to be conduits of His truth, in kindness and grace. My bible is full of things I received from God as I read. I write them down in my bible, if possible, so I when I read that scripture later His Word is brought back to my mind again.

7. MEDITATION (5 minutes): Psalm 1:1-2; 46:10; 77:12 – Take time to “think on these things.” This works well right after reading scripture. Ask God to give you understanding of what you read, and believe that He will. You will not hear if you don't have faith God will speak. You must be open

and willing to listen. We have to hear with our ears, and with our heart. Write down scriptures that God is dealing with you about and keep going back to them in your prayer time. I have a notebook full of things God shares with me. Sometimes during my prayer time, I open that notebook and reread those things. Sometimes they speak to me anew, and other times they bring a wealth of thanksgiving as I see how His words affected my life.

8. THANKSGIVING (5 minutes): Philippians 4:6 – Spend time thanking God aloud for His provision and goodness to you. Even the smallest of things are miraculous when we see them as the goodness of God. Consider thanking Him for something you don't often thank Him for, such as your talents, His thoughts toward you, music, silence, flowers, etc. Sometimes I simply thank Him for coffee, because I really enjoy it. And when God answers prayer, it would be good to record those answers so we can review them later. Sometimes our life situations can seem hopeless, but when we think about what God has done, our faith builds again. God doesn't change. He is able to do the impossible. It's natural for our human mind to easily forget what He has done in the past, so journaling and reviewing those things keep our faith fresh.

9. PRAY THE WORD (5 minutes): Personally apply, out loud, the precepts of the Bible. Praying scripture is praying the Word and will of God. When you don't know what to pray for in a situation, find a scripture and pray it. God will not go against His Word, and is faithful to do what He said He would do. Pray His promises over your life. When we live in obedience to His Word, His promises are sure for us. When we delight in Him and in His Word, He delights in us and is willing to bless us. I used to read my bible as a strict discipline, trying to hurry through my reading to check off another day. Now I read to simply know Him. It may be just a few scriptures, but even one scripture can bring revelation when you are truly searching to know Him.

10. SINGING (5 minutes): Psalm 100:2; Ephesians 5:19 – Singing refreshes the soul. It lifts our spirits, and causes praise to erupt. It releases emotions and gives us words to express what we are feeling. You can sing to God yourself, or sing along with a recorded song. God doesn't care how you sound; to Him, your praise is always beautiful. Try singing in the Spirit, or writing your own song. I have several songs I've written that are mine and God's alone. They will never be recorded or shared because they are for Him only. And sometimes, we simply need to listen because He may sing a song back to us.

11. LISTENING (5 minutes): I Kings 19:11-12; Psalm 46:10 – Prayer is not all talking to God. Prayer is also listening. Quiet your mind and silence your words, even if it feels awkward. Remember, you will not hear if you don't have faith God will speak. And you cannot hear if you are doing all the talking. This is personal instruction time. When God shares things with you, consider writing down what He says in a journal. Review this often. If God speaks, it's worth rereading again, just like scripture. And not everything God shares with you is for all the world to hear. Sometimes what God speaks to me is personal, and other times He speaks, I feel the need to share it with others. The more you listen, the more you will find Him speaking.

12. PRAISE (5 minutes): Matthew 6:13; Psalm 52:9 – Conclude every prayer with praise. It's not hard to praise Him again after everything you've just experienced. When He reveals more of who He is, we can't help but simply enjoy Him. We need time in our prayer hour to simply be with Him. To enjoy Him and to see Him in our everyday lives. When we do, we change. He no longer becomes a big God in the sky who might answer if we are good enough... He becomes personal – a loving father who delights in us, and we in Him.

Though this is a great guide to help you develop your prayer life, don't feel you have to follow this every time. Allow God to guide you. Sometimes He

will take you on a “field trip” and allow you to experience your prayer time in a different way. But regardless of what method you use, enjoy Him. Get to know Him. The more you see His glory, the more you’ll want to be in His presence.

by Colleen Clabaugh