

HOW TO
TALK
with
GOD

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New York • Nashville

Chapter 1

You Can Enjoy Praying

I think most people would agree that effectiveness is important in prayer. We want our prayers to make a difference in some way. But have you ever considered prayer to be easy and enjoyable? I didn't see it this way for many years, but I have come to realize that prayer can be quite simple and still be powerful, and that I can enjoy doing it. And so can you.

Everything about our spiritual lives, including prayer, depends on our personal faith in God and our individual relationship with Him. We can enjoy that relationship because Jesus' death on the cross gives us free, unhindered access to our heavenly Father, and our faith makes it possible for us to have an intimate, dynamic relationship with Him. The

more we enjoy our relationship with God, the more we enjoy prayer.

Ephesians 3:12 says that in Christ “we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him [that is, our faith gives us sufficient courage to freely and openly approach God through Christ]” (AMP). This scripture is exciting to me because it teaches us that as ordinary human beings we have *free access* to God at *any time* through prayer. We can approach Him boldly without reserve, without fear, and with complete freedom. How awesome is that?

*The more we enjoy our relationship with God,
the more we enjoy prayer.*

We don't need to try to sound super spiritual when we pray. We can be ourselves and be honest with God concerning our thoughts and feelings. The writers of the Psalms were totally honest with God about their feelings. The prayers we read there were not always polished and eloquent. Especially in the Psalms of David, we see that at times he poured out raw emotion due to the agony he felt as a result of

his many enemies. Although he was brutally honest with God about how he felt, he always ended by telling God that he trusted Him and would wait on Him for His deliverance.

ASK JESUS TO TEACH YOU TO PRAY

Early in my prayer journey, I came across a wonderful little book that has helped millions of believers learn how to pray over the years. In this classic volume, titled *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, Andrew Murray (1828–1917) writes about asking God to teach us to pray: “None can teach like Jesus, none but Jesus; therefore we call on Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray.’ A pupil needs a teacher, who knows his work, who has the gift of teaching, who in patience and love will descend to the pupil’s needs. Blessed be God! Jesus is all this and much more. . . . Jesus loves to teach us how to pray.”¹ Don’t just *try* to pray; ask Jesus to *teach* you to pray.

Jesus not only loves to teach *us*—corporately, as believers—how to pray; He also loves to work with us as individuals. He wants to take each of us just the way we are, wherever we are on our spiritual journey, and help us discover and develop a style

of prayer that maximizes our personal relationship with Him. He wants prayer to be an easy, natural, life-giving way of communicating with Him as we share our hearts with Him and allow Him to share His heart with us. And He wants us to enjoy it.

Regardless of what some people may think, prayer is *so simple*. We'll look at this more in a later chapter, but for now let me just say that prayer is nothing more than talking with God. We speak to Him, and He speaks to us. God speaks to us in many ways. If you desire to learn more about *how* He speaks, I encourage you to read my book titled *How to Hear from God*.

God is far too creative to want every person on earth to interact with Him through prayer in exactly the same way. He is the one who designed us all differently and delights in our distinctiveness. There are principles of effective prayer that apply to all believers, but God leads each of us to pray as individuals. Just think of it: some people like to pray with music playing in the background; others like a quiet atmosphere. Some pray as they paint or draw; others like to make notes while they pray or write out their prayers. Some pray with their

heads bowed and their eyes closed; others have their eyes wide open. Some speak to God silently in their hearts; others speak aloud. Some pray sitting in a certain chair; others pray while walking or on an exercise machine. As the saying goes, “Whatever works for you,” as long as you are communing with God.

*God leads each of us to pray
as individuals.*

We are all in different places in our walk with God, we are all at different levels of spiritual maturity, and we all have had different types of experiences in prayer. As we learn to pray for the first time or as we grow in our prayer life, we need to move beyond intellectual knowledge about how to pray and take the information we read to the Lord and say, “Teach *me* to apply this in *my* life, in *my* situation, to *my* heart. Show me how this idea is supposed to work for *me*. God, I’m depending on You to teach me how to pray, to make me effective in prayer, to help me enjoy praying, and to make my relationship

with You through prayer the richest, most rewarding aspect of my life.”

YOU'RE FREE TO BE YOURSELF

Because we relate to God as individuals—and that's the way He wants it—we pray as individuals. Even when we pray corporately with others, we are all still individuals, and I believe that God wants our hearts to be in unity much more than He wants our methods to be the same. When we say, “Lord, teach me to pray,” we are asking Him to teach us to pray in a distinctly personal way and to enable our prayers to be easy, natural expressions of who we are.

*God wants our hearts to be in unity
when we pray.*

We can feel free to be ourselves with God. We should go before Him just the way we are and give Him the pleasure of enjoying the company of the unique person He has made each one of us to be. We need to approach God with our own strengths,

weaknesses, personalities, and everything else that so wonderfully distinguishes us from everyone else in the world. God enjoys meeting us where we are, developing a personal relationship with us, and helping us grow to become everything He wants us to be.

Psalm 33:15 says, “He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works” (NKJV). Because God has fashioned *your* heart individually, your prayers need to flow naturally out of your heart and be consistent with the way He has designed you. As you develop your individual style of communication with God, you may learn from people who are more experienced in prayer than you are, but don’t make them your standard. There is nothing wrong with incorporating something someone else is doing into your prayer life if you truly feel God is leading you to do so. But don’t force yourself to do what someone else is doing if you aren’t comfortable with it in your heart. That wouldn’t be enjoyable at all. In addition, don’t try to keep up with others or copy their prayer styles or the length of time they pray, and do not feel compelled to use every prayer

principle you have ever learned every time you pray. God's Word teaches us that we can pray anytime, anywhere, with all kinds of prayer.

When some people pray, they are more comfortable following specified rules or formulas for prayer than daring to follow the leading of God's Spirit. When we follow human-made rules, we please people. But when we step out in faith and follow God's Spirit, we please Him. We do not need to feel pressured to pray a certain way or for a certain length of time, or to use the words or phrases other people use. And we don't need to focus on specific topics in prayer because other people are doing so. We are free to express our uniqueness as we pray.

Some people feel safe when they are doing what everyone else is doing, but sadly, in the context of praying, they will also feel unfulfilled until they learn to untie the boat from the dock, so to speak, and let the ocean of God's Spirit take them wherever He wills. When we are in control, we know what will happen next, but when we let God's Spirit take the lead, we are in for a lot of surprises in life—and those surprises can be some of our most enjoyable,

most thrilling experiences. We need to be determined to be ourselves and refuse to spend our lives feeling guilty because we are not like someone else.

*When we let God's Spirit take the lead,
we are in for a lot of surprises in life.*

My husband, Dave, has a passion to pray for the United States of America, and he does so on a regular basis. I have a passion to see God's children mature. I also have a great passion for the poor and oppressed, so I spend much of my prayer time praying about these situations. I know some people who focus intensely on social issues when they pray, and others who focus on missions with the same type of fervor. Some people pray passionately for their close family members or neighbors, while others pray just as passionately for people they have never met, such as government officials, celebrities, professional athletes, or little-known groups in undeveloped nations. My point is that God places different things on each of our hearts, and in this way, everything is covered.

No one can pray about everything that needs to be prayed about every day, but God's Spirit leads each of us if we allow Him to.

I suffered for a long time before I learned what I am sharing with you. At times, I found prayer to be laborious and even boring. I certainly didn't enjoy it, and I don't want that to happen to you. Let my pain be your gain. Start right now by asking Jesus to teach you as an individual how to pray in the unique way He has for you and to lead you to pray in ways you will enjoy.

*You have reached the end of this
excerpt of *How to Talk With God* by
by Joyce Meyer*

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