

# Following Jesus Requires Prayer

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, roughly 20 years ago, a little more than 20 years ago, I was the prodigal son of Luke 15.

I was living in rebellion against both my parents and, more importantly, and even worse, God Himself. For years, I lived in sin. I relished my sin. I refused to repent of my sin. Occasionally, I would feel a tinge of guilt. I was, after all, raised in the church by Christian parents. But I could always suppress those feelings with a bit more unrighteousness.

Well, when I was a young 20-something living in an apartment with a friend of mine, everything changed. It was an altogether ordinary night. My roommate, he was out for the evening. I think he was out for the entire night. I was home alone, watching TV, I think. And it was starting to get late, so I decided to call it a night. I turned off the TV. I turned off all of the lights in the house.

[ 1 : 05 ] And then I just stood for a minute in front of the big window in the living room. Now, in hindsight, I know what happened. But at the time, I didn't quite understand why I suddenly felt so miserable, so alone, so afraid.

I mean, as far as I could tell, my life was on the upswing. I hadn't gotten into any kind of trouble for a while. I had a decent place to live. I was working a full-time job. I had friends.

Sometimes my relationship with my family was still a little shaky, but overall, things were looking up. I thought I was feeling better. I thought I was doing better.

But God thought differently. As I was staring out that window, looking out into the darkness, I suppose, I suddenly felt the weight of my sin.

And when I say I felt the weight, I mean, it felt as though I had a literal weight on my shoulders. And that's one of the reasons I love John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

[ 2 : 10 ] I can very much relate to Christian at the start of that story, carrying around that burden on his back. I felt literally heavy at that moment, which is how I ended up on the floor.

Everything I had done, all of my sins, they just came flooding back into my mind all at once, it seemed. Everything I had tried to ignore for so long, I just couldn't ignore any longer.

I'd gotten really good at pushing thoughts of God and thoughts of my guilt away, but I just couldn't do it anymore. I turned from that window. I dropped to my knees right in the middle of the living room floor.

Now, despite growing up in the church, I was surprisingly ignorant about God and about the Bible. I didn't know much, but I did know this.

Especially in that moment. I knew I was guilty. And I knew the Lord was my only chance for salvation. I'm not sure I could have explained any more details than that.

[ 3 : 12 ] If you would have asked me about, say, the doctrine of justification, I would have looked at you dumbfounded. I didn't know. But I knew something had to give.

In fact, I remember thinking, either God will strike me down for my sins, or He will offer me forgiveness. But I need resolution. One way or the other, I need resolution.

I wasn't going to leave that floor until I felt sure God had answered my prayer. So that's what I did. I fell to the floor. I cried out to God.

I wept. I confessed. I pleaded. I rocked back and forth on my knees. There were moments when I was lying flat out on the floor. I was desperate for the Lord to hear me and do something.

I feared that He would strike me down. I knew I deserved it. But I begged Him to forgive me. I begged Him to save me. And He did.

[ 4 : 12 ] I was on that floor for at least 30 minutes. At times, I was crying out audibly. At times, I was praying silently. I don't think anything I said was remotely eloquent.

Eloquence was the least of my concerns. And after 30 minutes or so, I stopped praying. Because instantly, I knew the Lord had answered me.

It was as if He said, my son was dead and he's alive again. He was lost. And now he's found.

Suffice it to say, I slept like a baby that night.

And my life has never been the same. Now, looking back on that night, I always find it very intriguing how easy that prayer came. Now, don't get me wrong.

It was a hard prayer. I felt tortured through most of it. A relief eventually came, but it was an extremely difficult prayer. Yet, it felt so natural.

[ 5 : 11 ] I never stopped to think, should I pray? Should I not? I never thought to myself, what's the best way to word this? I didn't incorporate any Bible verses into my prayer.

I hardly gave any conscious thought into what I was saying or how I was saying it. For 30 minutes, that prayer just poured out of me. I don't know that I've ever prayed so naturally before.

I never once got distracted. My mind never wandered onto anything else. But then, time marched on. Over the next few months, few weeks, prayer didn't come so naturally for me.

I often found myself getting distracted. I often made excuses for why I wasn't praying more. I knew I needed to pray. I had experienced firsthand just how powerfully effective prayer is.

I mean, God brought a dead sinner to life and gave him eternal life through a single prayer. That's powerful. That's powerful. That's incredibly effective.

[ 6 : 16 ] Yet, prayer seemed to grow more difficult by the day. And as challenging as private prayer was, I remember that sense of dread I'd feel when I was first being asked to offer public prayers in the church.

Now, it's easy enough to avoid getting distracted when you're praying out loud in front of everybody else. But now, you're suddenly thinking about how you sound to everybody else.

Suddenly, you feel pressure to speak with eloquence. So, public prayer was its own particular challenge. And I suspect many of you can relate.

On the one hand, prayer is one of the easiest things we can do. We simply speak to God our Father. It's not complicated. On the other hand, prayer can be a real struggle for us.

And we're going to talk about why. If you haven't been here, we've been considering what it means to follow Jesus. How do we follow Jesus? First, I said, following him requires us to trust him.

[ 7 : 24 ] Second, I said that following Jesus requires us to learn from him. And third, I said, following Jesus requires that we become an active part of his body, the church.

And today, we will consider the necessity of prayer. First, if we are following Christ, we will pray because Christ prayed.

He prayed often. He prayed with confidence. He prayed with urgency. And second, if we are following Christ, we will pray because he told us to pray.

He commanded us to pray. And third, if we are following Christ, we will pray because it's one of the most important and necessary things we can possibly do.

Perhaps the most convicting thing I've ever read regarding prayer came to me from Robert Murray McShane. I can't remember where the quote came from, But he said, What a man is on his knees before God, that he is, and nothing more.

[ 8 : 34 ] Can I read that one more time? What a man is on his knees before God, that he is, and nothing more. What was McShane saying?

He was emphasizing the fact that prayer is a core component of our relationship with God. Now, imagine if you rarely spoke to your spouse.

Right? You're living in the same house, you're married, but you never speak to one another. Would you consider that a healthy marriage? Probably not. In fact, the lack of communication actually indicates that something is not right.

Something is terribly wrong. Who knows what the underlying problems might be, but something would be clearly wrong. And we can take that illustration a bit further. What if you talk to your spouse frequently enough, but all of your conversation were on topics that were very shallow? What if you never sincerely talked to your spouse? What if you never confessed your faults or asked for forgiveness when you had done something wrong?

[ 10 : 07 ] What if you never talked about what you need from one another? If every conversation is about, let's say, the weather, I think that too would indicate something's wrong.

Prayer serves as a pretty good gauge of our spiritual life. If we're not frequently, sincerely, deeply communicating with God our Father in prayer, something's wrong.

Or if we find ourselves mindlessly reciting the same prayer over and over again, and it becomes like empty words.

Well, something may be wrong. What a man is on his knees before God, that he is. And nothing more. Philippians 4, 6, and 7 say, Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Following Christ requires faith.

[ 11 : 23 ] Right? As his followers, we depend on him for everything. So in writing to the believers in Philippi, Paul says, Pray in everything.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God.

Turn to him. Every step of the way, we depend on him for everything. And furthermore, keep the lines of communication open. Speak to him. Let your requests be made known to God.

And the reward is this. The peace of God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

That intimate communion with God, we might say, makes our faith real.

Each time we pray, each and every day, we're consciously, proactively seeking God's help. We're stepping into his presence. We're approaching his throne of grace.

[ 12 : 23 ] And consequently, his presence becomes more vivid to us. We're making our faith in him real, so to speak. And he responds by giving us peace and guarding our hearts and our minds.

So why, then, can prayer be so difficult for us? It's obvious that we should pray. In fact, it's obvious that we should pray frequently.

1 Thessalonians 5.17 Pray without ceasing. We know that we should pray, and we know that it has tremendous benefits. We also know it's a very simple activity, isn't it?

We simply speak to God. So why is it so hard for us at times? Well, first of all, let's consider how the Bible talks about prayer.

I said that prayer is simply speaking to God. But that's not exactly how the Bible describes prayer. Consider, for instance, Romans 15.30.

[ 13 : 25 ] Paul says, I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.

Now, Paul, he wanted the church to pray with him that he might be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea who, of course, threatened his life. He also wanted them to pray that his ministry in Jerusalem would be fruitful.

But he doesn't say, brothers, will you please speak to God on my behalf? He uses a much stronger word. In the ESV, the phrase strive together is translated from a word that means to struggle with others.

I think the NIV and perhaps other translations use the word struggle. It could be translated fight with others. Fight with others. Paul is not asking the Christians in Rome to merely speak to God with him.

He's asking them to join him in battle. He's recruiting an army. We could read the verse this way. I appeal to you, brothers, fight with me in your prayers to God.

[ 14 : 39 ] Struggle with me. And this is not the only instance where prayer is talked about in this way. In Colossians 2, Paul is talking about his care, his concern for the church, while he's, of course, away from them.

And he says, I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you. A struggle. That is a contest. A fight. Now, he's not with them when he says this.

He's not talking about his preaching ministry. He's not talking about persecution. He's referencing his care for them from a distance. He's referring to his thoughts and, no doubt, his prayers for them. And he describes it all as a struggle. It's like a wrestling match. His prayers are hard. They're intense.

Paul uses a word in the Greek that forms a root for our word agony. Paul fought in his prayers.

[ 15 : 42 ] He agonized in his prayers. And he encouraged others, as we saw in Romans 15, to fight and to agonize with him. In Colossians 4.12, Paul speaks of Epaphras always struggling on your behalf in his prayers.

He's not just praying. He's not just speaking to God. He's struggling as he prays. He's fighting. He's agonizing. In prayer, he's doing kind of what Jacob did in Genesis 32.

In Genesis 32, Jacob is preparing to meet his brother Esau. And he's fearful. Because he's deceived his brother a couple of times in some pretty big ways.

And his brother just might take vengeance on him. So he sends his family away. And the text says, Jacob was alone. And the man with him wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.

When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket. And Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, Let me go, for the day has broken.

[16:57] But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. And he said to him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. Then he said, Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel.

For you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed. In this story, Jacob, we don't have time to go into all of the details, but Jacob wrestled with God.

If not at first, he eventually knew he was wrestling with God. And the wrestling match became a means for Jacob to receive God's blessing. Do you see that? So Jacob and this man, God, in the form of man, fought.

And even through the pain, the agony of having his hip put out of joint, and just the fight, the fight that lasted all night, he continued to fight.

He would not let up. He refused to relent until God blessed him. That seems to be how the New Testament talks about prayer, especially Paul.

[18:08] It's a struggle. It's a fight. It can be agony, in a sense. In Colossians 4.2, Paul says, Continue steadfastly in prayer. Be strong in the direction of prayer.

You need urgency. You need intensity. And you need to persevere until the goal is reached. Don't stop. Don't give up. In Luke 18.1, Jesus taught his disciples always to pray and not lose heart. So when we consider all of these sometimes subtle descriptions of prayer, we realize that prayer is not really described as something easy.

In fact, it's described as something rather intense. It's like going into battle. There in Luke 18, Jesus tells his disciples a parable about a widow who goes to a godless, unjust judge, and she needs help.

But this judge, he doesn't care about her. He doesn't care about her problems, so he tries his best to brush her off. But she won't take no for an answer.

[19:23] She perseveres. She keeps fighting. She keeps wrestling with him, if you will. She keeps agonizing. And finally, the judge says, Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.

Then Jesus says, Will not God give justice to his elect who cry to him day and night? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily.

The lesson here is what? It's that effective prayer may require a degree of agony. It may require endurance and persistence.

It can seem like a fight. It can seem like a wrestling match with God. But the result is answered prayers and great blessings from our Lord. So if we're really paying attention as we move through the Bible, we can see that prayer is not presented as some easy, casual thing.

You know, you're not just turning to your buddy in the car. I remember when I was in high school, a lot of people in the church tried to present prayer in that way. You know, Jesus, he's just your buddy.

[20:41] Talk to him like your buddy. That's not how the Bible really depicts prayer at all. Never mind the lack of reverence that might be in that. In the Bible, prayer is actually presented as a bit of a challenge, which points to the fact that there's more to prayer than meets the eye.

Practically speaking, prayer is a really simple thing to do. But there's more to prayer than merely speaking. So what more is there to prayer?

Why can prayer be so difficult for us? Let's consider five reasons. And reason number one, our sinful flesh doesn't want to pray.

Now that's not what we typically tell ourselves. Instead, we claim we're too busy. Or that we have too many demands on our time and attention.

It's not that we don't want to pray. It's that we don't have time. We just get busy. We think, that's life. What can I do about it? Well, the first step is to acknowledge that our lack of prayer doesn't have

anything to do with a lack of time.

[ 22 : 00 ] That's the first step. Instead, the truth is, we don't pray because we don't want to pray. It's like what Paul said in Romans 7.

I delight in the law of God. He could have said, I delight in prayer. But I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

The Christian, born of God's Spirit, struggles to do what is right and good because his or her flesh is working against them.

This is a consequence of our fallen nature. Regarding prayer specifically, our fall into sin broke our relationship with God. Genesis 3.8 seems to indicate that before sin, God would frequently walk through the garden communing and talking with Adam and Eve.

In all likelihood, they walked right along with Him in the cool of the day. They talked with Him. They communed with Him. They enjoyed intimacy with Him. But their disobedience ruined that.

[ 23 : 14 ] Genesis 3.8 says, They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees in the garden.

So rather than greet Him, as you would anticipate, they ran away from Him in fear and in shame. Communing with God has been a challenge for us ever since.

Even believers adopted into the family of God, reconciled to God, we still contend with our sinful flesh.

Like Paul, we want to pray. We want to live in constant communion with our Heavenly Father. But our flesh says, No, I don't want to do that. You know what I'd rather do? Turn on Netflix.

I'd rather scroll on my phone. I'd rather do everything, anything else. Then pray. I do not want to draw near to God in prayer.

[ 24 : 15 ] You see, prayer isn't difficult on a technical level. Technically, you don't have to position your body in any specific way. The Bible never says you have to pray with your eyes closed or your head bowed.

You don't have to be in a certain location to pray. You don't have to face toward the east or the west or any other direction when you pray. Technically, you don't even have to speak out loud to pray. You can pray silently. You can pray standing up or sitting down or lying down. I mean, technically speaking, prayer is incredibly easy. There's nothing to it.

But here's the thing. The challenging part of prayer isn't doing. The challenging part of prayer is desiring. Our flesh doesn't want to pray.

So the first difficulty of prayer is it's not a practical issue, if you will. It's a matter of the heart, which, ironically enough, is a pretty good thing to pray about.

[ 25 : 18 ] When Paul wrestled with his flesh, he asked, who will deliver me from this body of death? And his answer, thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I can't overcome my flesh apart from his grace. If we're struggling to pray as we should because our flesh doesn't want to, well, fight.

Fight. That's the nature of prayer. Fight. Fight against your flesh. Pray anyhow. Plead with God to help you overcome the temptations of your flesh. Ask him to help you pray.

I know it sounds a bit strange to be fighting through the temptations to not pray and asking the Lord, keep me here, Lord. Don't let me be drawn away.

But that's a perfectly, perfectly good prayer. Reason number two that prayer is difficult. We need prayer to grow in grace.

[ 26 : 27 ] Now, I realize that sounds more like a reason to pray. Then a reason it would be difficult, but it's both. Prayer is difficult in the same way that faith is difficult.

We have to trust in what we can't see. Prayer is also difficult in the way that obedience is difficult. We would rather do what we want to do than what God wants us to do.

So in this way, prayer is weaning us from our flesh. It's teaching us to trust in God whom we cannot see and it's relying on Him and His will rather than ourselves, which is all great.

But it's also difficult. According to one article I read, the Bible makes reference to prayer nearly 500 times. The Bible is saturated with teachings and with examples of prayer.

And as we study the subject, it quickly becomes evident that prayer is essential, it's vital to our discipleship, to following Christ. it's a key component of our discipleship.

[ 27 : 38 ] So if discipleship can be hard, as we've all experienced, we should expect prayer to be hard, shouldn't we? After all, prayer is an expression of our trust in and our utter dependence upon God.

These are not easy things for our flesh to accept, but they are important for our sanctification and for our spiritual growth. Jesus taught us to qualify our prayers.

On the one hand, we make our requests known to God, right? That's what Paul said in Philippians 4. We tell them what we want or at least what we think we need. But on the other hand, Jesus taught us to say, your will be done.

So we qualify our prayers with that statement. We're confessing that we're not good enough, we're not wise enough to know perfectly what we need.

So by saying, Lord, your will be done, we're acknowledging that, Lord, ultimately, your will is better. We're expressing our trust in his wise and benevolent plan, and that's not easy for us.

[ 28 : 54 ] Prayer is not bending God's will to our will. It's the opposite. We're bending our will to his will. Through prayer, God works in reshaping our hearts and realigning our desires so that they're in line with his desires.

So it's difficult for us. It's a matter of growing pains. You know, we can't pray, your will be done, and then try to keep our own agenda. Can we?

We can't pray, give us this day our daily bread, and then try to remain self-sufficient or self-reliant for everything. We can't pray, forgive us, and then refuse to forgive others.

The entire exercise of prayer forces us to put self to death. In our hearts, in our minds, it elevates God to his rightful place on the throne.

It encourages us to trust his will and his providence for all of life. You may remember that Jesus qualified his own prayer in the garden before his arrest and crucifixion.

[ 30 : 09 ] He said, Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. He's speaking of the suffering he was about to face, but then he said, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

Even Christ, facing the worst suffering anyone could ever know was willing to trust in the sovereign plan of God. He humbled himself before the Father's throne.

And as his followers, of course, we should do the same. And as we do, we find ourselves increasingly sanctified. We will grow in the Lord's grace with all of the growing pains that come with it.

The third reason prayer is difficult is that prayer is powerfully effective. And again, that sounds more like a reason to pray than it would be a reason that it's difficult, but again, it's a little of both.

If we know prayer is effective, why would we hesitate? Well, imagine, imagine you're the president of the United States of America.

[ 31 : 22 ] You wield the most powerful military on earth. You have access to, I don't know how many nuclear weapons we have. Does having the ability and having the authority to use all of that power make it easier or harder?

How many of our presidents have entered into their first terms and thought to themselves, finally, I get to launch some nuclear missiles? Thankfully, thankfully, they don't think that.

At least, they haven't acted upon it. Instead, having the ability to unleash such great power makes the responsibility all the more solemn and waiting.

As Christians, we have untold power available to us through prayer. Think of Elijah. He harnessed God's power to stop the rain for three years just by praying.

And then, he was able to start the rain again just by praying. That's extraordinary power. Now, we might think, well, yeah, Elijah, he was special.

[ 32 : 43 ] He was God's prophet. My prayers can't possibly be as effective. But notice what James writes about him in James 5. He says, this is verse 17, Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.

In other words, he really wasn't different. He wasn't, you know, superhuman. He wasn't half God, half man, or anything like that.

He was a man with a nature like ours. James, he very intentionally makes that point to us. Who is Elijah? He's a human being like the rest of us.

He was a man with like nature as ours. Yet, he prayed fervently, James says, that it might not rain. And for three years and six months, it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again.

And the heaven gave rain. And the earth bore its fruit. Famine over. Everything goes back to normal. Praying fervently.

[ 33 : 47 ] Our prayers can be incredibly powerful. They can be incredibly effective. James writes, the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

And I wonder whether the weightiness of that reality makes us pause. I wonder how often it makes us apprehensive to turn to God in prayer.

And this kind of goes back to the flesh issue. Let's say we are struggling with a particular sin, for instance. And we know we need to go to God for help.

maybe we love that sin too much. And that's the reason we don't go to him in prayer. We don't want him to take it away. But we know he can.

I mean, it's easy enough to turn to a friend and engage in casual conversation. But naturally, I think we know that speaking to God is something else. as his children, we have the ability to tap into extraordinary power.

[ 34 : 56 ] And perhaps that makes it all the more difficult to do. The fourth reason we may find prayer difficult is that Satan hates our prayers.

He hates them. There's a reason the Bible talks about prayer in terms of fighting. And that is because much of our spiritual warfare is fought on the battleground of prayer.

Listen to what Andrew Randall writes in his book Following Jesus. Imagine this. Satan steps onto the battlefield of your life.

Your forces are mustered before him. He sees a battalion representing your determination that you will be faithful to God and resist Satan. He does not fear that.

Next to that is a battalion of your past achievements. He doesn't fear that. Further over is a battalion of your spiritual wisdom. He doesn't fear that.

[ 35 : 58 ] His eye turns to a battalion of your moral upbringing. He doesn't fear that. He turns to consider a battalion representing your knowledge of the gospel. He doesn't even turn back at that.

But then he spots a battalion representing the prayer which will breathe life into everything else and channel the power of God through everything else.

Now where will he attack? In other words, Satan doesn't fear us. He doesn't fear us. The only one he has to fear is God.

And he knows how effective prayer is at drawing upon God's power. What does Randall say?

Prayer breeds life into everything else.

It's great to have a moral upbringing and spiritual wisdom and a knowledge of the gospel and these other things, but we need prayer to breathe life into these things to make them effective.

[ 36 : 57 ] Satan knows that prayer is where the battle is won or lost so he does everything he can to stop us from praying. Think about that the next time you're distracted during a prayer.

Fifth and final, prayer is difficult simply because it's so precious. It tends to be true that the most rewarding things in life are usually the most difficult.

But there's good news in all of this. God knows just how hard prayer is for us and he has promised to help us. Romans 8 verses 26 and 27 say, the spirit helps us in our weakness.

for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words and he searches hearts and he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the spirit because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Here Paul is very clear about the spirit helping us in our prayers. God, he knows we're weak. He knows we struggle. He knows we don't always know what to pray for or how to pray for it, but his spirit intercedes for us.

[ 38 : 21 ] He searches the depths of our hearts. He knows both what we're trying to say and even more importantly what we actually need. And he conveys our prayers to God.

We might say he completes our prayers. prayers. So there's a very real sense in which God he not only commands us to pray, but he also gives us our prayers.

Prays with us. And that's a blessing because number one, prayer can be very hard for us as we've talked about. And number two, we don't always know what to pray for.

We just don't. We pray for what we might, what we think we might need. But just imagine the chaos. If God gave every person on earth every little wish they requested, it would be utter chaos.

But God knows our prayers are faulty. He knows what's best for us and his spirit helps us pray. Just about out of time. So in closing, let me just suggest a few things we can do.

[ 39 : 35 ] to become better at praying. Well, first we have to make prayer a priority. That's essential. We have to think of it as important as it truly is.

And we have to act accordingly. A lot of times we prioritize coming to worship with the church. We prioritize reading the Bible. Let's prioritize prayer.

prayer. Second, the study, we should spend some time studying the subject of prayer in the Bible. Read the examples that are there.

Consider what Scripture says about it. Go back to the Lord's prayer. Go back to sermons you've heard about the Lord's prayer and about prayer in general. Third, pray daily.

And not just by yourself, but with your spouse and with your children. You know, if nothing else, that gives you a degree of accountability when you're praying together. Fourth, and this has become a personal favorite of mine over the years, try writing down your prayers.

[ 40 : 45 ] Shut yourself in a room, sit yourself down, and take the time to write your prayers out on paper. Don't worry about anybody seeing them. You can shred it when you're done if you want.

But just the practice of writing helps clarify your thoughts, but it also helps you avoid distractions.

Because your mind, it's harder for it to wonder when you're forcing yourself to sit there and write it down on paper. And fifth, actively participate in the corporate prayers at church.

When we're praying together, don't let your mind wander. Listen intently when someone else is praying, and try your best to engage your heart in what is being prayed. And sixth, don't be afraid to pray out loud.

It helps. I believe it helps to learn how to pray in front of others. others. And I'll leave you with a quote from a friend of Martin Luther.

[ 41 : 53 ] He said, after listening to Martin Luther pray, he said, Luther's prayer was with so much reverence as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence as if he were speaking to a friend.

God, I don't know that's how we pray. Let's pray now. Father, we thank you that we are able to so readily approach your throne of grace.

We thank you for your spirit who helps us to pray. Because, Lord, we confess we don't always know what to pray. We don't know how to pray.

pray. We're, even after years of praying, we feel inadequate. We thank you for your son who intercedes for us, who made it possible for our prayers to be heard and answered.

Lord, we thank you for this means of grace. It is such a wonderful thought to know that we can turn to you, our almighty God, the creator and sustainer of the universe.

[ 43 : 09 ] And cry out so intimately, Abba, Father. And not only that, we know that you hear these prayers, that you care what we're praying, and that you answer.

Thank you, Lord. In Christ I pray. Amen. Amen.