

BEGINNING YOUR NEW LIFE IN PRAYER

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WHAT IS A “BEGINNING YOUR NEW LIFE” BOOKLET?

The Christian life, as God intended it, is a vital, personal relationship with God as He has revealed Himself to man through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is *not* a mere standard of performance, a code of ethics, or a life of ritual.

The Christian life, when lived according to the instructions and commands of God’s inspired Word, is the most exciting adventure that a persona can imagine or ever hope to experience.

As in any human relationship, your personal friendship with God began when you first met Him. For this relationship to grow past simply knowing God as an acquaintance to the point where you can honestly consider Him your best friend, an understanding of certain principles is necessary. This booklet is the fifth in a series of five to help you develop a healthy relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You will benefit most if you work through the entire series.

After studying this booklet, you will be able to:

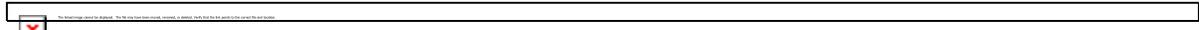
- Understand better what prayer is and what it is not.
- Listen and explain five ingredients of prayer.
- Develop a plan of action to begin developing your prayer life.

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Note: If you do not have a Bible you may read various online versions at:
<http://www.gospelcom.net/>

Also, you may purchase Bibles from The International Bible Society at
<http://www.ibs.org/> and from the American Bible Society at
<http://www.americanbible.org/>



BEGINNING YOUR NEW LIFE IN PRAYER

I. TALKING WITH GOD

“Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things,
which you do not know.”

(Jeremiah 33:3)

Any fulfilling relationship involves two-way communication. A look at the biographies of people recorded in the Bible clearly shows the importance of two-way communication between God and His people. As long as these individuals listened to God, obeyed Him and prayed, their spiritual lives were radiant. When these same people, however, failed to hear and obey God and talk with Him through prayer, spiritual problems crowded in.

The same thing can happen to us today. God communicates with us through his Word, the Bible. If we desire a rich and fulfilling Christian life, we also need to learn to talk with God. To pray is simply to converse or talk with Him.

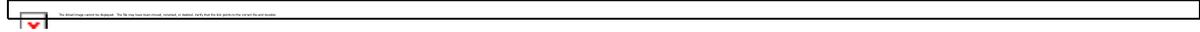
Prayer was an important emphasis in the life of Jesus. His desire to seek His Father’s presence and know His will through prayer is apparent throughout His earthly life. The life of Christ was a living conversation with God the Father. Prayer was the backbone of Jesus’ life and ministry. To become like Christ, therefore, we need to learn from His life.

When you consider sharing your life with people you love, there are at least five ingredients in your communication:

1. You express your enjoyment of what they are like,
2. apologize when you have hurt or offended them,
3. express appreciation for the things they do,
4. inform them of your needs
5. and listen to what they wish to say to you.

In our relationship with God through prayer, we learn to worship God, confess our sins, thank Him for all that He has given us, ask Him for His help and direction, and listen for His answers and instructions. This booklet is designed not only to familiarize you with these concepts, but also to give you the chance to begin using them. After exploring what each aspect means, you will have the opportunity to pray specifically in that area.

If you are studying this booklet with a friend, praying aloud together will give you both a chance to learn about prayer from each other. This kind of prayer, incidentally, is called “conversational” because it involves God, you, and at least one other person. (An example of conversational prayer occurs on Page 4, II).



II. FIVE INGREDIENTS OF PRAYER

Praising God

In a love relationship, one often comes to adore the other person. The result is spoken communication that expresses how much you appreciate that individual – you can’t keep your feelings a secret! You talk about the positive qualities that you see in the person and express your appreciation and enjoyment of those qualities. For example, a woman might tell the man how his understanding attitude increases her affection for him.

1. How would you apply the concept of adoration to your relationship with the Lord? *

2. Read Psalm 145. What aspects of God’s character can you identify in this passage?

Are they worthy of your adoration?

Why? _____

*The answers to this question and those on the following pages begin on Page 7.

Take a couple of minutes right now to talk to God. Tell Him how much you appreciate Him and why. Select at least three of the character qualities you noted about Him in Psalm 145 and tell God your thoughts about them.

If you are studying this booklet with a friend, pray together, using conversational prayer. Perhaps you would like to take turns talking aloud to God about the different aspects of His personality that you see in the psalm. One of you might pray, for example: *“Lord, thank You for Your loving kindness and for sending Your Son to die for me. I appreciate Your love.”*

The other might pray, *“Lord, I agree, and I thank You for Your great mercy in forgiving us.”*

Confession

1. In any close relationship, situations inevitably occur where one person is hurt or offended. What happens to a relationship if the person causing the hurt refuses to admit his mistake, rationalizes, or blames others?

2. How can a sincere apology help a damaged relationship? How is a sincere apology different from an excuse?

3. How would you apply these principles of confession to your relationship with the Lord?

4. What is God's promise in 1 John 1:9 regarding His response when we confess our sins?

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Are you aware of anything in your life that is not pleasing to God? You may wish to take a minute right now to ask God if there is any sin in your life. Then silently admit to the Lord that you have been wrong. You can then thank Jesus that, because of the cross, His forgiveness is always waiting for you, and you can appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit by faith.

Confess your sin to the Lord as soon as you are aware of it. The longer you wait, the more difficult confession becomes. Soon, as in human relationships, little things begin to build up and the relationship becomes negative and filled with tension.

Thanking God

One of the most obvious ingredients in a healthy, growing relationship is thanksgiving. Giving, and giving results in appreciation characterize friendship. When someone you love gives you something that pleases you, is your response cold and indifferent? Probably not. Normally, you would respond with expressions of thanks and gratitude.

1. How does your concept of thanksgiving fit in with your relationship with God?

The book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament records the faithfulness of God and His provision for the nation of Israel. This book provides a list of the many things God did to prove His love to the people, as well as additional lists of promises He would fulfill if they would obey Him.

2. Read Deuteronomy 8:10-19. (If you need information on where this book is in the Bible, check the contents page at the front of your Bible.) This passage records

God's offered blessing and also a warning. What is the warning given in Deuteronomy 8:19?

3. _____
According to verses 14 and 17, what can cause us to forget the Lord?

4. _____
Why, then, is thanksgiving so important for a follower of Christ?

5. _____
Write down the specific things you can think of right now for which to thank the Lord.

6. _____
Read Psalm 95:1-7. What ideas does this suggest to you for giving thanks?

Take a couple of minutes to thank God for the reasons you have listed. Giving our thanks to God should be an unending habit or mindset (I Thessalonians 5:18). In addition to pleasing the Lord, thanksgiving will produce in your life the inner character quality of reliance upon God. Without this attitude of thanksgiving, feelings of pride and asserting your independence from God will inevitably result.

Asking God

An important part of our relationship with God is asking Him for help. Any worthwhile friendship includes the freedom to ask for assistance. When you ask for help, you are saying, "I am not self-sufficient. I need you."

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-
1. _____
According to Matthew 11:28-30, what does the Lord want us to do with our problems and needs?

 2. _____
In Luke 11:9-13, what does Jesus say will happen when we express our needs to God?

 3. _____
What are some needs in your life you want to give to God?

Before you read on, take time to pray about these needs.

Asking God involves taking the position of need before God. This position gives birth to the character quality of humility. Humility is not a denial of who we are. Actually, it is recognizing the need for help to go beyond our own capabilities. We exchange our limitations for God's all-sufficiency.

Listening to God

"Be still, and know that I am God..."

Psalm 46:10, KJV

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know."

There might be a tendency, as we pray, to make our prayers one-way – just talking to God. What is wrong with this, according to Psalm 46:10 and Jeremiah 33:3 (quoted above)?

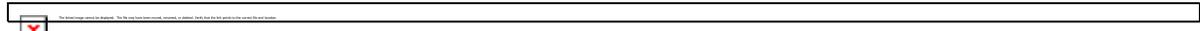
Prayer should also involve listening to Him. As you wait quietly, God may bring to your mind verses of Scripture you have studied, or He may speak to you in the silence of your heart. Remember that God's Spirit not only speaks to you but also intercedes *for* you according to the will of God (Romans 8:26,27).

III. ACTION POINT

Prayer can become especially enjoyable when you write your prayers in your devotional journal. This provides a permanent record of your requests and thoughts about God. It also is exciting to review your requests periodically and see the many ways God has answered and has actively involved Himself in your life. Then you can thank Him.

1. During the next week, each day write down a prayer – or several prayers – to the Lord. Keep in mind the five principles of prayer stated in this booklet.
2. Write in your own words a brief description of prayer.

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3. List the five ingredients of prayer.

Suggestions for further growth: Read the *Transferable Concept* booklet #9, “*How to Pray*,” by Bill Bright. This booklet is available from <http://www.nlpdirect.com/>

For additional materials and training resources to help you develop your prayer life, visit <http://www.prayertoolbox.org/> or write to:

Great Commission Prayer Crusade
100 Lake Hart Drive
Orlando, FL. 32832

ANSWERS

PAGE 4

1. (Your personal answer.)
2. His authority; His name; His greatness; His works; His mighty acts; His abundant goodness; His righteousness; His graciousness; His slowness to anger and the greatness of His loving kindness; the glory and majesty of His kingdom; that His kingdom is everlasting; that He sustains all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down; that He provides and satisfies the desire of every living thing; His kindness; His nearness; that He hears our cries and saves us; that He keeps those who love Him; that the wicked will be justly punished. How amazing to realize that all of these characteristics are found consistently in one person, and that they are all directed toward us!

PAGE 4

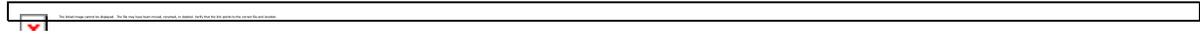
1. A barrier of tension and guilt blocks communication between the two individuals.
2. A sincere apology can bring about forgiveness and a new quality of openness between the two people.
3. Your personal answer might include some of the following ideas:
When we rebel against the Lord, we must learn to confess our sins – to agree with God that we have been wrong. If we do not confess our sins, our fellowship with God will be broken. We begin to feel guilty and no longer experience God’s love and forgiveness.
4. He promises to cleanse and forgive us.

PAGE 5

1. We can thank the Lord continually for all that He has given us and for what He gives us daily.
2. The warning is not to forget the Lord.
3. Pride. We think we are responsible for our success when, in reality, our success is a gift of God.
4. Giving thanks reminds us that God is the source of everything we have and enjoy.
5. Your personal answer may include your health, friends, family, job, schooling, physical provisions (food, shelter, etc.), the Lord Jesus, the Bible.

6. For salvation; for the beauty of creation; for making us; for being a personal God; that we can call ourselves His people; that He “shepherds” (guards, guides and watches over) us.

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PAGE 6

1. When we come to the Lord, we are saying, “Lord, I cannot work this out myself. I need You.” This attitude is the opposite of pride, and the results of these two actions are opposite as well – expressing our needs to the Lord draws us closer to Him; pride, however, takes us away from God.
2. He promises to give us what we need.
3. (Your personal answer.)

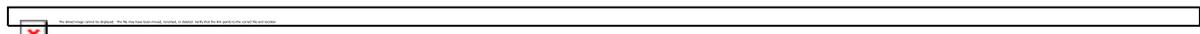
PAGE 6

While God is interested in everything on our hearts, He also desires to speak to us by the Holy Spirit using the Word.

ACTION POINT

1. (Your personal answer.)
2. You might say something like this: Prayer is talking to God and letting Him talk to me.
3. Praising God; confessing; thanking God; asking God; listening to God.

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**Make Plans Now to Meet with Others
Who Are Learning More About Their New Life in Christ.**

A Discovery group will be meeting at:

(Place)

(Street)

(Date)

(Time)

Feel free to bring a friend with you.

Please contact the person below for information on the Discovery Group or for answers to any other questions you may have about beginning your new life in Jesus Christ.

(Name)

(Address)

(Phone)

(E-Mail)

For information on how to begin Prayer Groups or Bible Studies, visit:
<http://www.worldlinc.org/>, <http://www.discipleshiptoolbox.org/>, or
<http://www.prayertoolbox.org/>