

When Can I Go Meet with God?

Developing a deep devotion to prayer

Like a deer drinking from a stream, I reach out to you, my God. [2] My soul thirsts for the living God. When can I go to meet with him?

Psalms 42:1-2 ERV

What's your attitude toward prayer? Do you have an attitude of eagerness, as the psalmist describes in Psalm 42? His question "When can I go meet with God?" reflects a deep desire to be with God and respect that he has needs only God can fulfill.

Unfortunately, our hearts can easily drift from this deep desire to pray, and we can develop bad habits in our relationship with God. Some of these bad habits include:

- **Squeezing in prayer** - You pray "as you go" but don't take time in your day to stop everything else and talk to God.
- **Skipping prayer** - You make many excuses for why you can't pray - your schedule, your kids, you need to work out, or you tell yourself you'll do it later.
- **Superficial prayer** - Prayer has become an empty religious ritual. You pray only because you know you should, but it doesn't bring peace, faith, strength, or intimacy with God.

If you have built some of these bad habits in your relationship with God, he can help you change them. Prayer is an essential source of spiritual strength. Through prayer, God satisfies the thirst in our soul, quiets our anxious hearts, and gives us the strength we need for spiritual warfare.

This devotional is meant to kindle your desire for prayer and help you develop a deep devotion to spending quality time with God.

Spiritual Battles Require Spiritual Weapons

Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.

Ephesians 6:13 MSG

The Bible describes prayer as an essential spiritual weapon. In each of our lives, we will come up against far more than we can handle on our own. We will face problems and trials in our lives that we won't be able to handle without God's help. What are you up against right now that is "more than you can handle on your own"?

Pray "Hard and Long"

The Bible also says we are in the midst of spiritual warfare, and we should pray "hard and long." We are up against Satan and evil rulers of an unseen world, mighty satanic beings, great evil princes of darkness, and a huge number of wicked spirits:

Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand

safe against all strategies and tricks of Satan. [12] For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies—the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.

Ephesians 6:11-12 TLB

When you really stop to think about being up against enemies like that, it should bring some sobriety about the level of spiritual armor we need. How arrogant is it to try to fight this spiritual war without "hard and long" prayer?

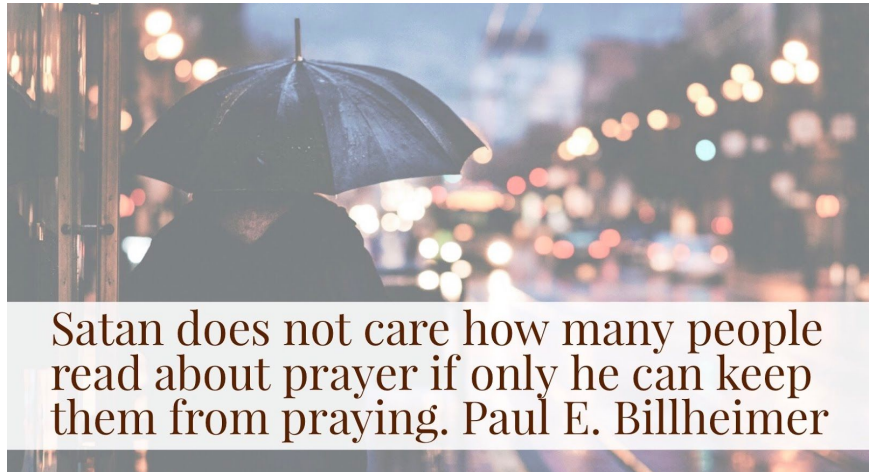
If you are a religious person, it's easy to agree with prayer as a theory. *Of course I pray, we think to ourselves. Prayer is awesome! I pray while I shower, I pray while I drive, I pray all day long.* While these "as you go" prayers are great, they can't substitute for praying "hard and long." And often we deceive ourselves with these short prayers into thinking we are praying more than we really are.

- Would God say you pray "hard and long"? What do you think this would look like?

Alone Time with God

Immediately after this, Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people home. [23] After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone.

Matthew 14:22-23 NLT



Satan does not care how many people read about prayer if only he can keep them from praying. Paul E. Billheimer

Jesus made sure he had alone time with God. He had special places he could go where he could be undistracted by the demands of the world around him. He didn't give into excuses to avoid prayer. Despite the demands of people around him, and a full busy schedule, Jesus made sure he had quality alone time with God.

How often do you get away to alone spots with God? Do you have favorite prayer spots where you take time out of your day to go "meet with God"? If we have prayer spots that we like, we will be more likely to make the effort to go to them.

Take time to find a favorite bench, path, or peaceful place where you can pray regularly to God and tune out the distractions of the world around you.

Spreading Prayer

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.

Luke 9:28 NIV

Jesus brought his friends with him to pray. What's your spiritual influence on people around you? Do you initiate prayer with your friends or your spouse? Time spent in prayer was part of Jesus' relationships with his friends. How much time do you spend praying with friends?

We need prayer with friends because none of us can fulfill God's role for one another. God loves us perfectly, listens to every detail of our lives, understands our hearts, and never gets tired. No human can do this perfectly; if we don't help each other pray, we will put too much pressure on our friends, family, and spouse to fill a role only God can fill.

Prayer > temptation

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Mark 14:38 NIV

Prayer helps us not give into temptation. As much as we may strain against temptation, the Bible says our flesh is weak. We need spiritual strength to say "no" to ourselves.

Do you pray humbly for help with your temptations, before you give in to them? Do you look ahead at your day and what sins you will most likely be tempted with? If we are humble and ask God for help he can give us the strength we need to say no to those temptations.

Why We Avoid Prayer

In his pride the wicked man does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.

Psalms 10:4 NIV

Pride prevents us from seeking God. Pride fills our minds with thoughts about ourselves - our abilities, our success, our own strength, etc.

What does "not seeking God" look like for you? Do you avoid prayer altogether? Or pray out of dutifulness but avoid certain topics? Or think about yourself the whole time you are talking to God?

Why We Should Pray in the Morning

In the morning, LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.

Psalms 5:3 NIV

A good time to pray is in the morning! You can set your mind for the day on God and what he will do. Of course, you can pray anytime during the day. But starting off your day with prayer shouldn't be neglected or underestimated.

- What can you change about your mornings to be more focused on prayer?

Distracted Prayer

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:6 NIV

Are your prayers distracted? This verse directs us to go to places where we can be undistracted so that we can focus on the God we can't see.

Can you relate to any of these common prayer distractions?

- Your phone notifications
- Thoughts in your own mind about things you have to do
- Thoughts in your own mind about what a "good prayer" should look like
- Things you have to do around the house
- Thoughts in your own mind about another person (spouse, friend, boss, etc) and what they think of you
- Your own emotions

According to Matthew 6, it's important to God that we turn off our distractions and focus on him while we pray. Do you have undistracted prayer time? What distractions are affecting your conversations with God?

Identifying your distractions is the first step toward letting go of them. Tell God about your distractions and make active decisions to put those things aside while you talk to him. The Bible says God will reward you for taking the time to be undistracted with him!

Prayer and Faith

If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Matthew 21:22 NIV

Prayer and faith go together. Sometimes we don't pray because we don't have faith. Faith comes from Scriptures (Romans 10:17); if your faith is low, bring God's Word along with you while you pray. Read Scriptures as you pray and talk to God about what they make you think and feel. Decide to believe the Scriptures more than your emotions or doubts.

Prayer Puts Our Thoughts and Hearts at Rest

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers. [7] If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7 TLB

Through prayer, God can put your thoughts and hearts quiet and at rest. The Bible promises we will experience this if we do two things - tell God all our needs and thank him for his answers.

- What needs do you need to express to God?
- What are some answered prayers you are grateful for?

Develop a heart that is devoted to prayer and you can experience a quiet and peaceful heart no matter your circumstances!