

The Cycle of Prayer

How does prayer actually work? The best and simplest answer we have ever heard to this question involves a wonderful graphic developed by Dr. Alvin VanderGriend. Follow the directions below to get a good visual as we walk through the amazing miracle called prayer!

Do this quick exercise with a paper and a pencil or pen:

1. Draw a circle on your paper.
2. At the top of the circle write GOD.
3. Going clockwise, to the right of the circle write HOLY SPIRIT.
4. Continuing clockwise, at the bottom of the circle write BELIEVER.
5. Continuing clockwise, to the left of the circle write JESUS.

Next, we will work our way around the circle beginning at the top:

1. God – All prayer originates in the mind and heart GOD, for He is the Creator. His word says that God desires for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). He created us, and created prayer as the way for us to have intimacy with Him and to communicate with Him. God wants us to seek His kingdom and righteousness first and then all of the rest will be added (Matthew 6:33). God cares about what we need, and hears the desires of our hearts. However, He wants us to focus our prayers on seeking His kingdom first...and then He will add the rest as it lines up with His kingdom plans and purposes. So, if prayer is about what God wants to have happen in His kingdom FIRST, how do we learn to pray the kingdom way rather than to focus on ourselves first?

Here is where the Holy Spirit comes into the process of prayer as we move around our circle.

2. Holy Spirit – In our humanity, we cannot know the mind of God. But the Holy Spirit knows the mind of the Father.

1 Corinthians 2:11 says: “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.” The Holy Spirit brings what is on the heart of God to the believers, so that we can pray the will of God. If we will pay attention to the Spirit, we will be able to pray effectively for the things God wants to accomplish on earth as it is in heaven.

We have an important role in prayer!

3. Believers – The Holy Spirit, having heard and knowing what is on the heart of God, brings the desires of the Father to God’s people – the Believers. This can come through the word of God, the prompting of the Spirit moving in our hearts, and through others who have heard from the Spirit. Always test anything you think you hear from the Spirit by making sure it aligns with and agrees with God’s word. Just because another person tells you he or she has heard from God, doesn’t mean they have heard correctly. It is the same with our own prayers. Be sure that what you think you hear doesn’t go against what God teaches. Sometimes we need to be submissive to the things we do not know, and recognize that we may be praying selfishly (“My will be done on earth” instead of “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”)

God’s best outcome is often outside of our knowing, which is why the Holy Spirit comes alongside of us to help. To punctuate this point, Romans 8:26-27 (TLB) says, “And in the same way—by our faith—the Holy Spirit helps us with our daily problems and in our praying. For we don’t even know what we should pray for nor how to pray as we should, but the Holy Spirit prays for us with such feeling that it cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows, of course, what the Spirit is saying as he pleads for us in harmony with God’s own will.” Isn’t it good to know that the

Holy Spirit will help us pray what is on the heart of God when we don't have the words, or when we aren't sure how to pray in certain situations?

Jesus Himself tells us, "This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

This passage compels us to believe that those things which we know are on the heart of God are things He wants us to pray. He states clearly that He will answer these kinds of prayers. Here are a few that prayers we can pray with full confidence that God wants to answer:

- Father, we ask that all people will have an opportunity to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ: "And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it, and then, finally, the end will come (Matthew 24:14).
- Lord God, I pray that Your people would be one, just as Jesus prayed: "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me" (John 17:22-23).
- Father, please help me to love others as You have loved me: "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you (John 15:12).

Our prayer ascends to the Father through Jesus Christ:

4. Jesus – When we have aligned our prayers with the will of God, and have put our hearts in a posture of submission to the Holy Spirit, we can confidently take our prayers to God through the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we now have direct access to God the Father.

This compels us to trust what God's word says: "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Praying "in the name of Jesus" isn't a magic formula and doesn't mean tacking on five words at the end of every prayer. It doesn't mean that if we don't say these words, God won't hear our prayer. It does mean that we are taking our prayers directly to God our Father through the power of the Risen Christ because we are His followers and believe the words of Jesus. When we pray, we stand before our Father's throne of grace and He hears us because we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. We believe that Jesus and the Father are One. Here are two scriptures to help us understand what Jesus means:

- "Then you will present your petitions over my signature! And I won't need to ask the Father to grant you these requests, for the Father himself loves you dearly because you love me and believe that I came from the Father "(John 16:26-27).
- "Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you" (John 16:23).

Where is the weak link in prayer?

What's so amazing for us to realize is that prayer is three-fourths GOD, interacting with the one-fourth that is...us! The Trinity is actively involved in prayer, and we, as the believers, have been invited into the process by our Creator, who made us in His image to commune and to communicate with Him.

So, if prayer breaks down on some level, where is the weak

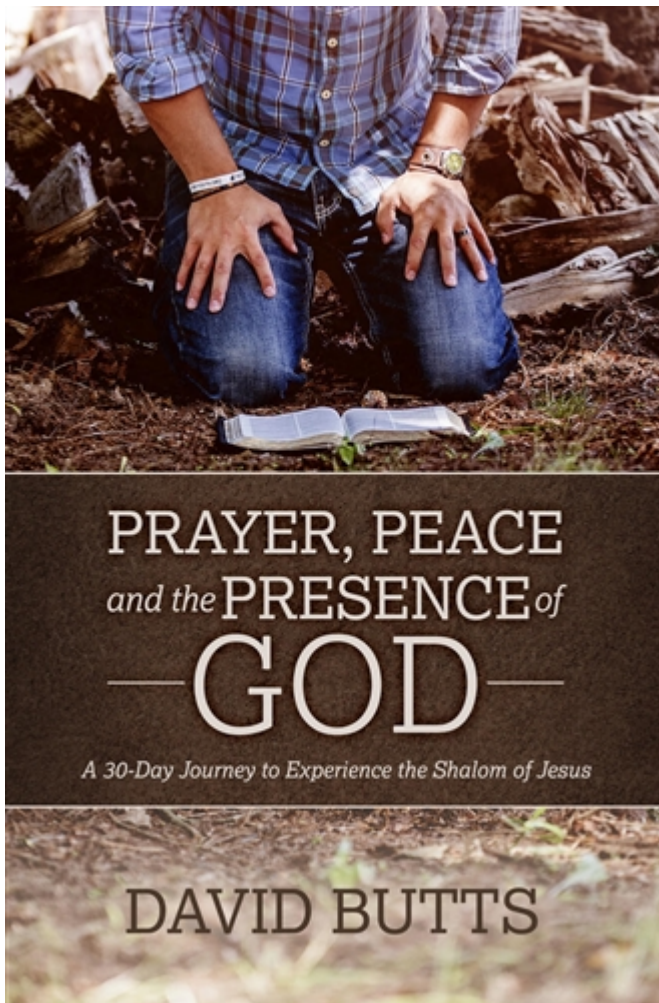
link in the cycle? If you said, "Me!" or "Us!" you are correct!

Many times we try to do everything on our own – to be the answer to our prayers apart from God, but "we do not have if we do not ask" (James 4:2). Sometimes our last resort instead of our first response to needs or situations is prayer...we try everything else first.

This should compel us to spend more time praying! Prayer is not simply something we are supposed to do because we are Christians. It is something God has told us we MUST do, and that He desires us to do. Sometimes prayer is our worship (loving on God). Other times, it is just sitting in His presence enjoying His company. It can also be listening to discern what the Holy Spirit is telling us about the heart of God, and what He wants us to pray about. Once we align ourselves with His will (plans and purposes), we can feel confident approaching God at this point to intercede (praying for others and situations) and petition Him (praying for our own needs). Seek first the kingdom of God a

Understanding this cycle of prayer will help you as you gain confidence in praying! Soon, connecting with God in prayer will be second-nature and you will be able to come to His throne of grace with boldness!

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PRAYER, PEACE, and the PRESENCE of GOD by David Butts

As believers, we are supposed to walk in the peace of Christ, yet we all have stressful issues and circumstances that rob us of this peace. Subtitled “A 30-Day Journey to Experience the Shalom of Jesus,” *Prayer, Peace and the Presence of God* powerfully encourages the reader on how to hold onto that peace in any circumstance.

When author, David Butts (1953-2022), first started writing this book, he got word ten days into the project that he was in stage 4 with a rare form of lymphoma. God not only allowed him to complete the book, but to live for five more full-strength years. His 30-day devotional will encourage, inspire and challenge you to walk in the peace of Jesus no matter what situations or struggles you are walking through.

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