
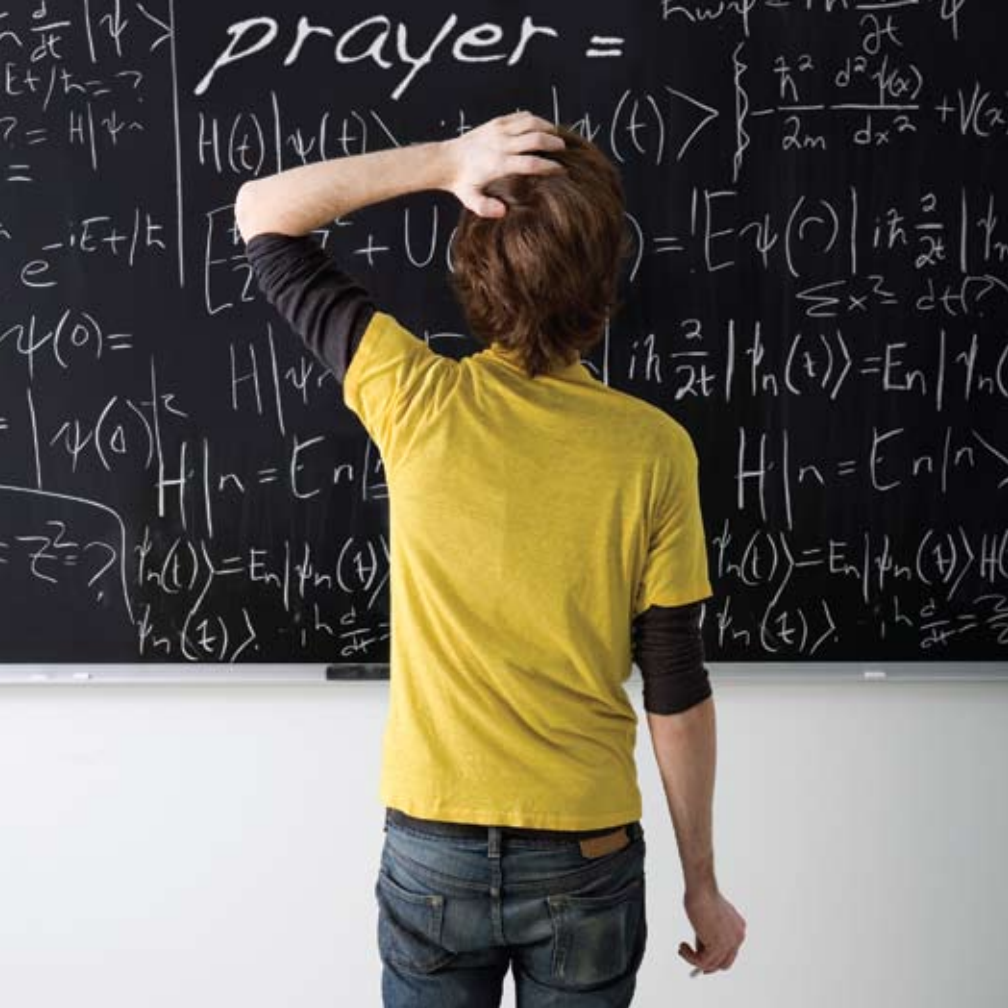




why don't we pray?

by Pete Briscoe



Sometimes I think prayer is like a foreign language. Do you ever feel that way? I honestly do! I struggled to learn Spanish because it was, well, "foreign." That's exactly how I feel about prayer the majority of the time. I feel like such a failure – I'm speaking honestly here – that I just push it to the side, and I start working harder. I start doing more stuff, and prayer gets neglected. The purpose of this small book is to show you that you are not alone in struggling with prayer. It's my hope that you will find the excitement and joy in prayer that God intends for all of us.

WHY DON'T WE PRAY? I could talk about prayer from a theological viewpoint, but that's not how we live. Instead, I looked at the practical, day-to-day reasons that I struggle with prayer in my own life. Recognize any of these?



We Don't Understand How it Works

We think, "If He's completely sovereign, why does He need me to pray?" We have solid intellectual questions. We see prayer go unanswered. That confuses us, befuddles us, and frustrates us. However, we shouldn't neglect prayer just because we don't understand it.

Imagine if during the peak of Michael Jordan's basketball career, when he played for the Chicago Bulls, his coach sat him on the bench. Imagine that he didn't take off his warm-ups the entire game and the team lost. Afterwards, there was a press conference and reporters asked, "Why did you leave the greatest player of all time on the bench?" The coach said, "Well, we still don't understand how he seems to defy gravity. His competitive edge is beyond our comprehension. Someday soon, we'll fully understand Mike and then we'll put him in the game."

RIDICULOUS, RIGHT? So, isn't it equally ridiculous to leave prayer on the bench when it's our most powerful weapon? The fact that we don't understand prayer has nothing to do with its effectiveness. It's effective!





We're Self-Sufficient

We don't think we need prayer. Very few of us would actually say that we don't need God, but most of us live that way. When we go an entire day without praying, preoccupied with our own activities, we have essentially said, "I DIDN'T NEED GOD TODAY."

One way to cure the self-sufficient heart is to realize prayerlessness is sin. I first realized this when I read a book by Andrew Murray titled, *The Believer's Prayer Life*, because that was the thesis of the book. When I first read it, it made me uncomfortable. So I prayed, "Lord, is it true that going a whole day without praying is a sinful day?" God took me to a passage in 1 Samuel 12:19. It tells a story in which the Israelites feared God's wrath because they had been demanding that He give them a king, and He was not pleased. So, they asked Samuel to pray that God would spare their lives. Samuel's response is important. "Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. I will teach you the way that is good and right" (1 Samuel 12:23). Samuel understood that failing to pray was not just ignoring a powerful weapon - it was sin!





We Don't Draw on His Power

We're preoccupied with our comfort, not our discipline. We're preoccupied with our activity, not our inability. We're trying to muster up the time and the desire to pray, but just like everything else we do in the flesh, we fall flat on our face. Like absolutely every other aspect of the Christian life, we've got to do prayer in His power.

Jude 1:20 says, "But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit." **PRAY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT!** It means coming before God in complete honesty and saying, "God, if I am absolutely honest with You, I don't want to pray. I don't even have a desire to pray. I don't have the discipline to pray. I need You to give it to me. From this day forward I want to pray in the Holy Spirit."





Why We Should Pray

The main reason and, in truth, the only reason we should need for spending time in prayer is that God wants us to pray. "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). But God gives us many more reasons in Scripture, too.

PRAYER RELEASES GOD'S RESOURCES. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). Are you wondering why God's spiritual resources aren't being poured into your life? Could it be because your prayer life isn't where it needs to be?

PRAYER GIVES GOD PLEASURE. Proverbs 15:8 says, "The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him." God loves to hear my voice and your voice. What a thought!

PRAYER BRINGS PEACE TO CHAOS. Many Christians have memorized and called on Philippians 4:6-7 in difficult times because of God's promise of peace.



"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Peace is available. God wants you to have it. How do you get it? Through prayer and petition with thankful hearts.

PRAYER ALLOWS ME TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT HE WANTS ME TO ACCOMPLISH. A passage of Scripture that has meant a lot to me over the years is John 15:5. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." What can I do apart from God? Nada, nooka, nothing, zippo. Can you do a little bit without Him? Can you do anything of eternal significance without Him? No!

PRAYER KEEPS US ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD. In Psalm 139:23-24, the author prays earnestly, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." God's a great accountability partner because He sees absolutely everything we do! We need to go before Him occasionally and ask Him to show us stuff in our lives that we're not even aware of.



peace



How to Pray

Just like learning Spanish, prayer takes discipline and commitment. But mostly it requires you to surrender yourself to God and ask for His power. Spend some time this week doing that – just one small part every day.

MON

Take time to confess your prayerlessness to God. If you don't spend any time in prayer, start first by telling God that you are sorry.

TUES

Be honest and admit your struggles with prayer to God. It won't hurt God's feelings if you are honest with Him. He knows. But He wants you to talk to Him about them. Tell Him why you are struggling, what you don't believe, and what you have difficulty understanding. Get it all out on the table.

WED

Prayerfully examine your schedule and activity level, knowing that a preoccupied life can keep you from prayer. Ask the Lord to convict you if your life is too busy. Ask Him what you need to cut out so that you can spend time with Him.



THURS

Confess any self-reliance. If you are going through life as if you don't need God, then that's essentially what you are telling Him. Confess that before Him, ask Him to forgive you, and move forward from that day on.

FRI

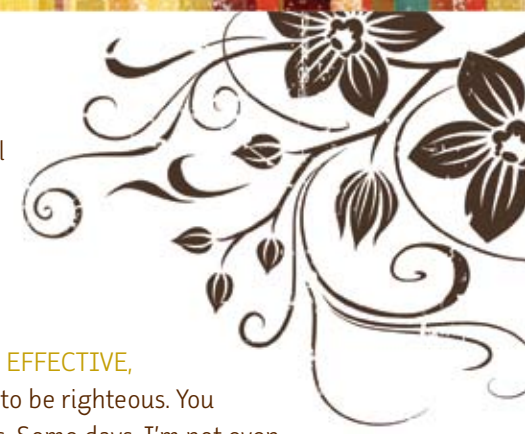
This is a key day. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the ability to pray. Submit yourself fully to Him. Ask Him for help in praying in His power and not in the flesh.

SAT

Ask for God's will to be done in a personal situation - instead of your own. E. K. Bailey said it this way: "Prayer is an awesome instrument for getting God's will done on earth, not for getting my will done in Heaven." I love that!

As you make a renewed effort to incorporate prayer into your life each day, God will respond and do His part in your heart and your mind.





The prayer of an “expert” is powerful and effective. Is that what your Bible says? No! It says, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO DO TO HAVE EFFECTIVE, POWERFUL PRAYER? You only have to be righteous. You may be thinking, “I am not righteous. Some days, I’m not even good.” Here’s the amazing thing – if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you have been declared righteous before God. So, if you have trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you already have all it takes to have powerful and effective prayer!

■ ■ ■ ■ ARE YOU INTERESTED IN DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE TOPIC OF PRAYER? WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BELIEVER IN JESUS? Check out tellingthetruth.org for more resources on prayer and God’s amazing gift of salvation!



***PETE BRISCOE**, youngest son of Stuart and Jill Briscoe, grew up watching and learning from his parents' full-time ministry work in England and eventually Milwaukee.*

While getting his Masters of Divinity degree at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, Pete had a professor tell him that it was "a sin to bore people with the Bible." He has taken that to heart in his role as senior pastor of Bent Tree in Dallas, TX, where he has served since 1992. Under his leadership, the mission-minded church has grown tenfold. Pete and his wife, Libby, have three children.

TELLING THE
TRUTH 
stuart . jill . pete

US: 800 889 5388

UK: 0800 652 4120

tellingthetruth.org