

CULTIVATE

PERSONAL PRACTICE: Prayer

April 14, 2021

GROWTH

We believe spiritual growth is experienced as we grow in intimacy with God. One of the ways to grow in intimacy is to participate in a conversation with God.

We pray in 3 ways: abiding, awareness & intercession. In *abiding*, we simply spend time with God in reflection with silence & solitude. In *awareness*, we actively ask God to show us where He is at work and ask God how we can participate. In *intercession*, we bring our requests to God, asking for intervention and for God to visibly move in a certain situation. *All* this we do because of the work of the Father, through Jesus and in the Spirit who advocates through us.

NEXT STEPS

Inspired by J.I. Packer's *Praying: Finding our Way Through Duty to Delight*, pages 157 to 159.

"Two things we should lay before God, as part of our prayer...

[1]... the reasons why we think that what we ask for is the best thing...

[2] ... tell God that if He wills something different, we know it will be better."

As you follow Jesus, it can become common to bring requests to God; to intercede on behalf of ourselves and others. But J.I. Packer brings focus to our intercession. If we bring requests to God, then tell God why AND tell God that if He chooses something else, we know it will be better.

This is the example of Paul's prayers for the early churches. Paul always asked God for growth in the early churches, "so that" God would be glorified and His authority would be on display.

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Examples:

Paul prays that “you may be filled with the knowledge of God’s will... [so that] you walk in a manner worthy of the Lord” (Col. 1-9-12)

“may the God of peace sanctify you completely [so that] your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless (1 Thess 5:23)

When we tell God why....

our faith engages God’s wisdom and bows to His authority.

We tell God why because we know God’s own goals are for generating good things, saving sinners, extending His kingdom, enriching the church of Jesus and glorifying himself by revealing Himself.

We also tell God why because we come with humility and want God’s will and only His will, not our own. We see this example of Jesus, as He prays in the garden saying “all things are possible with you... yet not what I will, but what you will (Mark 14:36)

PRACTICE:

Over the next 7 days, practicing praying the “why”. This, as J.I. Packer writes, brings clarity to our prayers and gives us the “so that” of Paul’s prayers for the early Church.

Day 1:

Praying for self.

Take the opportunity to ask God for growth in your life and give your reasons “why”.

Example: “God, help me to pray more, so that You would know me and I would know you and your glory would be more evident in my life.”

OR

“God, please help me to grow. I am struggling to find hope or joy. I know you are the God of hope and Jesus brought joy to those around Him. Bring it to me too.”

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Day 2:

Praying for an immediate family member.

Think about someone in your household, or a close family member you have relationship with. Pause and ask God what He wants to do in their life. Then ask Him to do it and share your "why".

Example: "God, I am asking You to share with me what You want to do in _____'s life. And because you want to do that, I pray that when you do it, You will receive credit for the way that You worked."

Day 3:

Praying for a neighbour.

Consider who is living around you. If you're in a condo, who do you share a wall with? Or in a townhouse complex, who do you regularly see? Or in your neighbourhood, what do you know about the other houses around you. Ask God to contribute to a growing, peaceful neighbourhood and that He would work to bring His peace and His comfort.

Example: "God, You know my neighbours, even if I don't know them very well. I pray that _____ would experience Your peace today and that, because of it, we would know You more. I pray this so that our neighbourhood would experience a bit of Your kingdom and promises."

Day 4:

Praying for your community.

Think about the headlines that affect our local community. Consider how you could be praying for Kelowna (or your hometown) and share with God 'why'?

Example: "God, I want to pray for those who find themselves without homes or adequate shelter here in Kelowna. I am praying that You would bring them everything they need because we are called to find shelter in You and You tell us not to worry about the needs of tomorrow because You provide for us today."

Day 5:

Praying for your country.

Jesus came to bring a kingdom and demonstrate authority that was outside this world. But, we still experience power and authority structures through organizations and governments. Pray your "so that" for Canada.

Example: "Heavenly King, I pray that our country would experience a move of the Holy Spirit, so that they would see You and know You in a new way and experience Your heavenly authority."

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Day 6:

Find out your biggest need and pray your "so that"

Needs in our lives take the majority of our attention; we need this, we need that. But sometimes our "why" or our "so that" is a reminder of how we are setting our priorities. Today, identify your biggest need and pray that God would meet it, "so that"....

Example: "Hey God, I really need a new job. The one I'm in right now is so frustrating and I feel so much stress. If You delivered me a new job, I would be able to find a better place to grow my faith and experience You... but, if it's Your will to stay in this job, help me come to work, ready to serve and to experience Your joy in my workplace."

Day 7:**REST & REFLECTION**

Take this opportunity to review all the "why" reasons that you prayed. Take a posture of gratitude that God brought you insight to "why" and a hope for what He promises and what He provides.

SO WHAT?

"We walk in the footsteps of our Savior when we tell him and the Father that however much we find ourselves longing for something else, the Father's will has priority for us; we do not want to receive what is not part of that will; we want our Father's will and only his will. Whether or not at the moment we know how much it involves." – J.I. Packer, Praying