

CORE COMPETENCIES

Core Beliefs

- Trinity
- Salvation by Grace
- Authority of Bible
- Personal God
- Identity in Christ
- Church
- Humanity
- Compassion
- Eternity
- Stewardship

Core Practices

- Worship
- Prayer

"I pray to God to know Him, to lay my requests before Him, and to find direction for my daily life."

- Bible Study
- Single-Mindedness
- Biblical Community
- Spiritual Gifts
- Giving Away My Time
- Giving Away My Money
- Giving Away My Faith
- Giving Away My Life

Core Virtues

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness/Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Hope
- Humility

We're beginning a new series on prayer and the invitation to us all is to enter into this familiar topic in a fresh way. We don't want to add more guilt or duty here, but rather infuse us with a greater desire and delight in knowing God and changing the world through prayer. So please dive in with us—let God's Word instruct you and His presence impact you deeply. Let's journey together in prayer!

In His Love,

Richard Gotthardt, Pastor of Spiritual Formation

Monday

On a scale of 1-10 (1=low, 10= high), how satisfied do you feel with your prayer life currently? Why?

Begin your time today by sitting in silence for a few moments.

Ask God to deepen your understanding and practice of prayer through your time in His Word.

Read James 1:1. To whom was James written?

Read James 1:1-8 as a letter written from a fellow believer who deeply longs for you to grow in your relationship with God.

James wrote to the believers, scattered throughout the nations, to offer practical instructions for facing life's circumstances with righteousness. He begins with instructions on how to endure under trials from outside sources. What benefits does he list for enduring trials?

In these verses, what instruction does he give regarding prayer?

James offers a fresh perspective on facing trials. He instructs the believer to see trials as a maturing opportunity in which we should seek God for wisdom to endure well instead of just seeking an end to the trial.

Reread verses 6-8. Why is it so important that when we pray asking for wisdom, we really believe that God will answer?

Spend a few moments examining your life. What trial, big or small, are you currently enduring?

How are you seeing this trial mature your faith?

Close your time in prayer. Ask God to give you wisdom to face this trial in your life.

Tuesday

Sit in silence for a few moments. Yesterday, how did you see God give you wisdom regarding the trial you are facing? Thank Him for this work in your life.

Read Acts 4:1-31.

To ensure that you understand the context for the believer's prayer in verses 23-30, mentally summarize 4:1-22 as if you were going to tell someone who had never heard this account.

These are intense moments in which Peter and John are told that they can no longer lawfully tell about Jesus and they are forced to openly defy the existing leadership. When they return to the community of believers their first reaction is to go to God together in prayer. When concerns or opposition face your family or community of believers, what is your first reaction?

What oppositions or concerns are you facing today?

We will use the believer's prayer in Acts 4 as a guide for us today.

"Sovereign Lord, You made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them."

***Recognize God's power and faithful character.*

"You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the people's plot in vain? The Kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against His Anointed One.' Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against Your holy servant, Jesus, whom You anointed. They did what Your power and will had decided beforehand should happen."

***Tell God of your circumstances that are causing opposition or concern. He already knows our circumstances, but it is good for us to specifically share our areas of concern with God and recognize that everything is under His control.*

"Now Lord, consider their threats and enable Your servants to speak Your Word with boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of Your holy servant Jesus."

***Ask God to fill you with boldness to be faithful to His Word in the face of opposition and to demonstrate His power in your life.*

Wednesday

Begin your time today in prayer. Ask God to enlighten your heart to the truth of His Word.

Read Mark 9:14-29.

Put yourself in the place of the father in this account. Describe how you would feel about your circumstances and your desire for change.

Reread verse 22-24. The father's encounter with Jesus moves him from despair and unbelief towards belief in God's power. He recognizes that Jesus is the One who can help him overcome not just his circumstances, but also his unbelief.

Verse 23 says everything is *possible* for him who believes. God is all powerful and has it within His power to change any circumstance we face. All things are possible, but God's highest priority is deepening our belief in Him, not just relieving our current difficulty.

In what area of your life do you feel desperate for change?

How have you seen God deepening your understanding of Him and desire for Him through this area of your life?

Jesus healed many people throughout His earthly ministry, but there is a distinction in this healing. The evil spirit came out of the boy through prayer. Jesus, the Son of God, asked God to intervene and do a miracle, resulting in healing for a young boy.

Close your time in prayer today. Here is a suggested format.

**Sit in silence for a few moments. If any tasks or issues distract you, write them down.*

**Tell God of your situation in which you desire change.*

**Express your honest emotions to God about this desire.*

**Affirm your belief in God that He can change your circumstance.*

**Express to God a deep desire to see Him transform and deepen your belief in Him.*

Thursday

Begin your time by praying Psalm 77:11-13 back to God. Allow these words to sink into your heart and mind, reminding you who God is.

Read Philippians 4:6-7. These words are some of Paul's final encouragements in his letter to the church at Philippi.

Spend a few moments examining your life. In the space below, list out the things that are causing you anxiety. In the second column note how you desire to see God resolve this anxiety. Lastly, note how you are thankful for God's work through this area of anxiety.

I am anxious about...

I desire to see God work by...

I am thankful for his work...

Pray through your list of anxieties. Express your desired outcomes to God. Ask Him for wisdom and insight to see His movement and purposes through these areas of anxiety.

Close your time by praying verse 7. Ask God for His peace.

Friday

How have you sensed God moving in your life through your time in prayer this week? Thank Him for this movement.

Read Luke 22:39-46, an account of when Jesus prays before his crucifixion.

Jesus tells the disciples twice to pray that they will not fall into temptation. What kind of temptation would the disciples soon face and why was praying important?

Why was it important for Jesus to get away and pray before He faced the cross?

How did God minister to Him through His time in prayer?

Both the disciples and Jesus would soon be facing intense pain and difficulty. Jesus was fully aware of the impending trials, beatings and crucifixion. The disciples were not aware of the details, but both the disciples and Jesus were in need of strength in order to endure the trials they would face.

Think back on your life. How have you seen God prepare you for a season of difficulty, strengthening you ahead of time so that you would not be tempted to give up?

When we see a time of difficulty on the horizon we must commit ourselves to prayer, as Jesus did, asking for strength to endure.

In what area of your life are you feeling tempted to give in to sin or give in to hopelessness?

Close your time today asking God to strengthen you and help you endure this trial.

For Group Use

Begin your time of group prayer by sitting quietly together for a few minutes. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts and your time in prayer together.

Next: Spend time talking to God about some things that you love about Him. Express them aloud in sentence prayers.

Examples:

"God, I love that you are always listening when I talk to you."

After an appropriate time, close this time by affirming together in prayer:

"God, you are great and you are good."

Now: Tell God how you are feeling about Him right now. If people are comfortable, express this aloud in brief statements:

"God, right now I feel like you are close and attentive" or,

"God, it feels like You are disappointed with me right now" or "God, I feel like You are someone that I should be able to talk to you more easily, but I find it difficult."

After an appropriate interval, someone end the time by praying: "God, we are grateful that You love us right where we are at this moment."

Then: Spend time telling God what you are currently concerned about. Express these things aloud in brief prayers and each person end with the phrase: **"God in Your mercy..."**

And the group responds together, **"Hear our prayer."**

Example: "Lord, I'm concerned about my daughter's friendships right now. I really long for her to make better choices in whom she spends time with. I am asking You to give me greater love and insight and for her to have wisdom, or whatever she needs right now. God in Your mercy..."