

>> *BE STILL*

We can spend ages deciding to start new habits of praying and reading the Bible, but just as important is not busying ourselves too much. A relationship with Jesus isn't about what we do but who we are with.

Read the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42. Martha is so busy cooking and preparing for Jesus that she misses time *encountering* Him! We can so easily do this too - is your time praying and reading the Bible a time of encountering Jesus? When we read the Bible it should transform who we are and how we live our lives.

It's the same with prayer as well. God doesn't want us to 'do' all the time, He calls us to 'be', quietly listening to Him. When we have no words we can open our hands and in stillness escape from our busy world into the knowledge that God is good and He is in control. Maybe read a passage of Scripture and ask God what He wants to say to you through it or simply bring your thoughts and emotions into the presence of God.

Maybe set aside a time to spend in stillness every week, see what God says and see how you change when you stop and sit in the presence of Jesus.

Be still and know that I am God.

PSALM 46:10

prayer | bible reading

HOW TO GO DEEPER WITH GOD

>> PRAYER

>> HOW DO I PRAY?

First of all, don't feel bad if you don't really know how to pray because you're in good company. Jesus' disciples weren't too sure in Luke chapter 11 verse 1. There is no ONE WAY to pray. Prayer is about a relationship with God, and just like a relationship, sometimes you talk, sometimes you walk together, sometimes you just sit in silence, etc.

Here are some helpful tips:

- > Set aside time to pray. You make time for things you think are important.
- > Try to find a place where you won't be distracted.
- > Try not to spend all your time praying for yourself!
- > Be honest! If you're not sure God is listening, tell him that is how you feel.
- > Try to be specific. When God answers your prayers, you'll be even more amazed at his goodness.
- > Keep a notebook and pen handy. Write down what you pray for, and write down any thoughts which distract you. These 'distractions' may be things you really need to pray about. Write down questions which you may need to look at in the Bible or ask a more mature Christian about.
- > Keep going! PUSH - Pray Until Something Happens!

>> TRY ACTS

Some people find the following structure for prayer useful...

>> ADORATION

Start by praising God.

Thinking of words is often difficult so why not echo the words of a Psalm e.g. 18 (1-6), 23, 37, 33, 36 (5-10), 40 (1-11), 47, 66, 95 (1-7), 100, 103, 111, 145, 146?

>> CONFESSION

Then move on to confession. Talk to God about the things in the last week which you have done which you know you shouldn't have. Also remember the things which you haven't done which you know you should have. **BE HONEST!** Pray about each one specifically, don't just say, 'Sorry for everything I've done wrong.'

>> THANKSGIVING

Say 'Thank you!' to God for everything he has done. This can be for you individually, for your family, friends, youth group, church, the nation, the world. If you keep a record of the prayers you have prayed, this is a good time, to look back over those prayers and tick off ones God has answered, and say, 'Thank you!'

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 JOHN 1:9

>> *SIMPLY ASK*

This is simply asking God for things! For most people, these type of prayers are the ones they offer up the most - the 'Dear God, help my friends, amen' prayers. To pray wisely, we need to know what God's will is.

To know what God's will is, we need to be people of his word. When we study the Bible we know what God is like, so we can pray more often in line with what he wants. So, because God is a God who cares for people, we might pray for others. Here are some suggestions - **but don't be overwhelmed, you don't have to pray for all of them all of the time!**

>> *PRAY FOR THE WORLD*

- Pray for everybody in the world
- Pray for God's kingdom to come/God's will to be done
- Pray through a reliable news website, reading each story through prayerfully (not just the ones you find interesting!)
- Pray for the people & situations you read about, that they find love, forgiveness, holiness, peace, justice, etc.
- Pray that the people involved may come to know Jesus
- Pray for whatever comes to mind as you read

>> *PRAY FOR THE NATION*

- Pray for the Queen & the Royal Family
- Pray for the Prime Minister, the government & Members of Parliament
- Pray for the media & culture in this country
- Pray for all who work to keep our nation safe (armed forces, police, doctors, firefighters, prison officers, healthcare staff etc.)

ROMANS 13: 1-7

>> *WRITE HERE THE NAME OF 6 PEOPLE YOU ARE PRAYING FOR DAILY*

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>> *PRAY FOR THE CHURCH*

Worldwide

- Pray for growth in numbers & holiness
- Pray for an end to persecution
- Pray for missionaries working abroad
- Pray for Christian organisations (many would love to send you prayer notes)

In the UK

- Pray for the Archbishop of Canterbury & other leaders
- Pray for Church involvement in politics
- Pray that we may be salt & light

In your local area

- Pray for church leadership & the staff there
- Pray for those who serve in the church
- Pray for Christian teachers
- Pray for youth groups & Christian Unions
- Pray for growth in numbers & holiness
- Pray for evangelism
- Pray for Christian unity

>> *PRAY FOR YOU*

- Pray for those you know who don't know Jesus (perhaps choose & write down 6 to pray for daily on the opposite page)

- Pray for your family and friends
- Pray for your enemies
- Pray that you will be filled daily with the Holy Spirit
- Pray for your daily needs
- Pray for anything relevant in your life at the moment
- Pray for personal holiness & for help resisting temptation

HOW TO PRAY FOR OTHERS IN 8 "P" S

Pray that God's **PEACE** would be with them.

Pray for God's **PROTECTION** over them.

Pray for God's **PROVISION** for them. Be specific. What do they need?

Pray for God's **POWER** to rest on them, to be the person God is calling them to be and to do what God is calling them to do.

Pray that they would know God's **PATH** for their lives.

Pray for them to know God's **PRESENCE** each day.

Pray for them to have **PASSION** for Jesus, his word and his ways.

Pray the **PROMISES** of God over them.

>> BIBLE

>> HOW DO I READ THE BIBLE?

The Bible is massive. It can be so intimidating and hard to know where to start! It is key to remember that every single part, from poetry to prophecy to prose or to parable, is part of ONE huge narrative of God's faithfulness to us. In the same way that everyone prays differently, everyone reads the Bible differently; here are some suggestions:

- > Try to read the Bible daily - find a set time to do it and a place where you won't be distracted.
- > Consider the translation you are reading; do you understand it? Think about how you process information best. Is written text the best or would you prefer listening to it?
- > Consider using Bible plans on the YouVersion Bible App or the Read Scripture app to provide context and information about what you are reading. Maybe commit to the Bible In One Year App and try to read the whole thing (or just the New Testament) this year. Use videos from The Bible Project YouTube channel to help overview whole books or look at the context of one specific word.
- > If you don't know where to start, talk to someone you know and trust.
- > Try annotating the Bible with what you are learning about. Highlight key verses and try learning them. The 'Remember Me' app is helpful for this.

>> TRY SOAP

Here is a way of studying the Bible using the acronym SOAP. Maybe use a notebook, choose a book of the Bible and go through a chapter or small section at a time.

>> SCRIPTURE

Read through the passage prayerfully and write down a verse or two that stand out to you particularly. Maybe even write out the whole passage - you will be surprised with what God says through slowing down enough to write it out.

>> OBSERVATION

Consider what is the main point of the passage. What words stand out or are repeated? Write this down below or annotate the passage.

>> APPLICATION

This is when it gets personal! How can we apply this scripture to our daily lives? What can you do **TODAY** as a consequence of reading the passage?

>> PRAYER

Finish your Bible study by praying. Pray about what God has revealed to you through His word and pray that He will help you to respond well. Confess anything that has come up and use prayer as a springboard from your reading.