

# PERSPECTIVE

OCTOBER 2022



## FINDING TIME TO PRAY

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Marjorie Roberson	



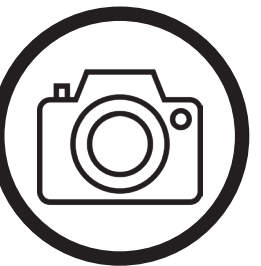
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## Finding Time to Pray

The alarm goes off at 5:30 a.m. I throw on my robe, step into my house shoes, and make my way to the kitchen to pour myself a cup of coffee. I settle into my favorite chair with my Bible, journal, and pen in hand, ready and excited for some *quiet* and *uninterrupted* time with the Lord. But the familiar sound...

Little footsteps, a door opening, and more little footsteps, “Mommy?” asks a soft, groggy voice behind a mess of blonde hair.

“Sweetie, it’s too early for you to be awake,” I reply.

“But I had a bad dream.”

So now I have a little guest, and this time I had carved out to pray is much shorter and more distracted than the peaceful hour I had planned.

Perhaps you can relate. Maybe you’re not a parent to young children, but you have a demanding job that starts early in the morning or extends late into the evening. Perhaps you have chronic pain or sleep problems that make planning a time to pray feel impossible. Maybe your family’s schedule is so jam-packed with time at church, school, sports, and activities that it feels impossible to find time alone to go to the Lord in prayer. Or maybe, if we’re being honest, we just don’t want to think, much less pray, at the end of a busy day and choose to watch T.V. instead.

There is no denying that our lives are busy and full of distractions. However, I would argue that struggling to find time to pray may be rooted in something deeper than the things filling up our calendars. *If we genuinely believe that God is sovereign over our time and circumstances, finding time to pray is an act of faith and obedience to him.*

### TRUSTING GOD WITH YOUR TIME

You will find time to pray if you trust God with your time. But this is easier said than done if you’re anything like me! Like the anecdote at the beginning of this article, often, my best plans to pray intentionally are thwarted by the trials of daily life. However, this isn’t an excuse to give up. Instead, it’s an opportunity to ask for God’s help to pray faithfully in every season, and it’s an invitation to grow in trusting God. So, before we dive into some practical ways to find time to pray, I want to provide you with three reasons you should trust God with your time by giving it to him in prayer.

### FIRST, GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER OUR TIME AND CIRCUMSTANCES.

In Psalm 139, David praises God by describing his omniscience (verses 1–6), his omnipresence (verses 7–12), and his sovereignty over David’s life (verses 13–16). In verse 16, David writes, “Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.” David praises God for knowing his past, present, and future and ordaining his every breath and step. The same is true for us. God knows us fully and has given us our unique circumstances for our good and his glory (Rom. 8:28). He holds our time in his hands.

### SECOND, GOD HAS ALSO GIVEN US FULL ACCESS TO HIMSELF THROUGH THE WORK OF HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time” (1 Tim. 2:5–6). Our loving God made a way for us to not only spend eternity in his glorious presence but also to experience deep communion with him in our present prayer lives. When we pray, he hears us because of the work of his Son. Zack DiPrima helpfully unpacked this truth in July’s *Perspective* article, “Why Do We Pray in Jesus’ Name?” If you haven’t had a chance to read it, I encourage you to find it on the church’s website and dig deeper into how Christ’s work is essential to our prayer lives.

### THIRD, GOD LOVINGLY COMMANDS US TO PRAY.

In the gospels, Jesus taught the disciples how to pray (Matt. 6:5–13). He charged them to seek God’s will to be done (Matt. 6:7:7–11), to ask for laborers of the harvest (Matt. 9:38), and to watch and pray that they wouldn’t enter into temptation in his own darkest hour (Matt. 26:41). There are other examples of Christ modeling, teaching, and commanding his followers to pray. Still, it’s important to note that the one who made a way for us to pray freely to the Father also modeled it perfectly (John 17).

God also commands us to pray through the apostles’ teaching and writing:

- “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will

guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6–7).

- “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5:16–18).
- “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

The God who knows every intricate detail of your day commands you to pray—in *everything* (Phil. 4:6). This is his will for you (1 Thess. 5:18), and it is for your good. In your anxiety, pain, or fear, God promises to provide peace beyond understanding in response to your prayers (Phil. 4:7), and he promises to provide mercy, grace, and help in times of need (Heb. 4:16).

Our loving heavenly Father holds our days in his hands, makes a way for us to come to him freely through Christ, and commands us to pray, promising that he will sustain and comfort us. Therefore, my prayer for you, my church family, and for me is that we will trust him by responding in humble obedience and finding time to pray.

## FINDING TIME FOR PERSONAL PRAYER

Finding time for intentional personal prayer is vitally important to your relationship with the Lord. To me, intentional personal prayer is focused time alone with God to praise him, confess sin, share anxieties, and humbly ask for specific help for yourself and others. In Matthew 11, Jesus said, “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt. 11:28–29). Prayer is one of the most important ways we come to God each day. It is an admission that we are sinners. It is an admission that we need him to pursue holiness and faithfully do the good work he’s called us to.

The Psalms give us a great picture of how intentional personal prayer looks.

- The psalmists praise God for who he is and the works he has done for his people (Ps. 8 & 34).
- They confess and grieve their sin, asking God to forgive them and cleanse them (Ps. 51).
- They honestly come to the Lord in times of deep trouble, anxiety, and despair and humbly plead for

his intercession (Pss. 6 & 88).

- And they ask for God to meet their daily needs and to help them live faithfully (Ps. 39).

The epistles provide similar direction and encouragement for our prayer lives.

- We’re called to praise God by giving thanks in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:18).
- We’re charged to confess our sins and comforted with the truth that God is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).
- And we’re challenged to humble ourselves “under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6–7).

Scripture is clear—intentional personal prayer is essential. But finding time for it can be a challenge for many of us. This kind of prayer requires focus and demands some time alone. If you’re a young mom like me, you may be thinking: *Are there any moments like this in the day?* And my response would be to read the previous sentence one more time. This kind of prayer requires focus and demands *some time* alone. I am intentionally not giving a time limit because I want to challenge you and me to trust God with the time he has given us each day. If you only have five minutes today to give to this kind of intentional personal prayer—Praise God—it is time well spent and a faithful response of obedience to God. If you have an hour for this kind of intentional personal prayer—Praise God—it is time well spent and a faithful response of obedience to God.

However, if you are struggling to find any time for intentional personal prayer, I want to challenge you to ask yourself a couple of questions: Am I prioritizing productivity over my prayer life? Am I prioritizing leisure over my prayer life?

Productivity looks different for all of us, but these are the things we need to accomplish throughout the day. These are good things and a part of the good work given to us by God, but often, we rely on our self-sufficiency to get through these tasks and to live the Christian life faithfully, wrongly thinking we can do it all, cling to truth, and fight sin without God’s help! What will I do when my planned time in the Word and prayer is interrupted in the morning, but the Lord grants me ten minutes during the kids’ rest time to sit and pray?

I could finish folding the laundry, or I could go to my room, close the door, and go to him. If I trust him with my time, I can trust that he'll help me complete the other work he's given me to do *when it needs to be done*.

We all need rest, and the last thing I want to do is suggest that all leisure is wrong. On the contrary, it's good to enjoy God's gifts in this world that help us have fun and relax. However, I know that I am often tempted to idolize "me time" and to pursue comfort more intentionally than prayer. So maybe you and your spouse have planned to watch a movie after you put the kids to bed Friday night. Could you tell your spouse that you haven't had any time with the Lord that day and discipline yourself to go to the Lord first, delaying your movie night by fifteen or twenty minutes for some intentional time in prayer?

Finally, I don't want to naively assume that there aren't unique situations and seasons of life where finding focused time alone to pray simply feels impossible. If this is you, please ask for help—from a fellow church member, a spouse, or a close friend who understands your circumstances. (If you are a mom, I am giving you permission to call me to come and watch your kids so that you can be with the Lord for a half hour!) You are not failing; you need help from your good and loving heavenly Father. Remember, God is sovereign over your time and circumstances.

## FINDING TIME TO PRAY WITH OTHER SAINTS

Acts is full of examples of how the early church saints prayed with one another.

- From the very beginning, they were devoted to making prayer a part of their lives together (Acts 2:42).
- When Peter was arrested, the church prayed for him earnestly (Acts 12:5).
- The church fasted and prayed before sending Paul and Barnabas to preach (Acts 13:3).
- Paul and Barnabas fasted and prayed for the elders of the churches they helped establish (Acts 14:23).

These are just a few examples. Still, it's clear that going to the Lord in prayer with other saints was a vital part of the life of the early church. I also think it's important to note that the epistles were written to churches. Therefore,

though I believe we can and should apply the examples I've given in the previous sections to our personal prayer lives, we should also apply them to how we pray with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not meant to live the Christian life alone; the command to pray is a corporate one. However, praying with other saints will happen naturally when we do not neglect to meet together (Heb. 10:25).

On Sunday mornings at Mount Vernon, we pray together during corporate worship: we confess our sins, we are led in a pastoral prayer, and we praise God for the many ways he's blessed and provided for us. As one person leads each of these different prayers, it is our call to pray along with them together as a church. There's also a natural opportunity to pray with brothers and sisters before or after the service as we engage in intentional conversations with other church members.

The same is true of the Sunday evening service. Yet, this more intimate "family time" also serves as a means for us to take some more specific requests to the Lord as a church family. During this time, we pray for the specific needs of our church and its members, the opportunities and fruit from evangelism, our missionary partners, and our sister churches. Engaging in this extended prayer time with our church family is deeply encouraging and unifying. If you're looking to grow in your corporate prayer life, I encourage you to commit to attending the Sunday evening service regularly.

Another important way to pray with saints regularly is to commit to discipling relationships. Whether you are meeting with a Covenant Group or with another brother or sister in the church, these intentional relationships are designed for fruitful prayer times together and for one another. It is a gift to know and be known by other saints in the church. We must be willing to open ourselves up, confess sin, and share our anxieties with one another to pray for these things together. It is a deep joy and blessing for me to pray with another sister in the church about something and later hear of (or witness myself) God answering this prayer! If you desire to be a part of a discipling relationship but are unsure where to start, I encourage you to reach out to an elder about it. We have the blessing of elders who want to help us engage in fruitful discipling relationships.

You should find time during the week to pray with other saints for mutual encouragement, accountability, unity, and fellowship. This time in prayer helps remind us of what is true, important, and praiseworthy. We need one another to persevere in faith and to come to the God of

our time and circumstances continually.

## FINDING TIME TO PRAY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

It's easy to want to compartmentalize our prayer lives—to check it off of a list of things we should do once a day. However, Paul charged the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:16). In March, Dane Ulett wrote a helpful article for the *Perspective* about praying without ceasing. In it, he helpfully explains what this means: “To pray with frequency means that we should, if possible, do everything throughout the day with conscious thought and reference to God . . . The attitude and habit of our heart should be one of spontaneous, constant prayer.” Praying without ceasing means we're continuously reaching out to the Lord throughout the day, confessing sin, asking for help, praising him for the gifts he gives us, and trusting he hears and cares about our daily needs.

Finding time to pray throughout the day will look different for all of us, but I think a good place to start is simply asking God to prompt you to pray throughout the day. We need the Holy Spirit's nudging and guiding in this, and since this is God's will for our lives, we can trust that he will help us!

Because I spend most of my day with my children, I spend a lot of my time praying throughout the day with them. In doing so, I trust the Lord will use it to help me respond faithfully to the call given me in Deuteronomy 6:7: “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” We praise God for beautiful fall weather, for healing boo-boos, and for good weeks at school. We ask that he will help us obey and live faithfully, and we ask for forgiveness when we sin against him and one another. These prayers may happen before meals, on the way to school, in a one-on-one discipline moment, or on a playdate. They are not complicated or particularly eloquent, but they are real and heard by our faithful God.

How could you find time to pray throughout your day? Maybe you could pray on your way to work, before your important presentation, or with a coworker who shared some sad news. You could perhaps exchange listening to a podcast while you wash dishes for some time praying for a few members in the church directory. Maybe you could commit to walking with another church member in your

neighborhood and spending some time praying for your neighbors' salvation.

Finding time to pray throughout the day will look different for all of us, but we can trust it will deepen our relationships with the Lord as we seek to live in constant communion with him. So, pray that God would set your heart on him and give you a desire to come to him with the big and small things he has planned for your days.

## ASK FOR GOD'S HELP

The Bible does not mandate a certain amount of time in prayer each day. It does not require a specific method or formula for your prayers. However, God does command his people to pray, and we are called to respond in obedience. He knows wholly and entirely the nature of your present circumstances, the details of your most complicated days, and the distractions vying for your attention. Trust him with your time by finding time to pray. The amount of time you spend in prayer will ebb and flow with different seasons of life, but I believe that with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can all grow in going to Lord more often, fervently, and intentionally each day. Ask for his help, and go, find time to pray.

— Marjorie Roberson

<sup>1</sup>Dane Ulett “What Does it Mean to Pray Without Ceasing?” MVBC *Perspective*, (March 2022), 1.

## A Guide to Prayer

*A Free and Rational Account of the Gift, Grace and Spirit of Prayer; with Plain Directions How Every Christian May Obtain Them*

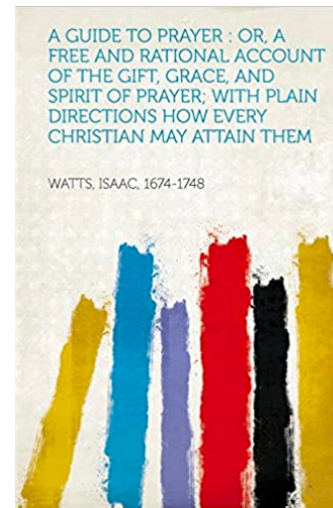
Written by Issac Watts

*A Guide to Prayer* by Issac Watts, published in 1715, outlines his thoughts, guidance, and instructions on prayer. By studying the matter and methods of addressing the living God, Watts desired that the reader's prayers would be acceptable to God, a joyful and profitable exercise to their soul, and an instrument of sanctification.

*A Guide to Prayer* is both imminently practical and deeply encouraging, providing detailed directions on method and passionate support for the practice of prayer. The first chapter of the book walks through "The Nature (or parts) of Prayer" as found in various prayers found in Scripture (invocation, adoration, confession, petition, pleading, thanksgiving, blessing, amen). The second chapter explores the gifts (expression) of prayer, which provides lessons in delivering and phrasing our prayers and includes: a discussion of extremes and patterns to avoid, preparation, self-examination, methods, and even specific directions on body posture and the length of prayer. The third chapter provides an overview of the "Grace of Prayer," which are qualities that are both necessary and developed through prayer, including faith, reverence, heavenly kindness, sincerity, and watchfulness. The fourth chapter discusses the need for divine aid in prayerful worship and how the Holy Spirit assists us in prayer. Watts concludes with an overview of the necessity, significance, and value of developing a rich prayer life.

Watts' *A Guide to Prayer* provides an encouraging reminder that (i) prayer is a glorious gift to be cherished, (ii) prayer is an integral part of worship as demonstrated throughout Scripture, (iii) all believers are commanded to pray, (iii) prayer is a gift not to be neglected but to be developed and pursued, (iv) prayer both requires God's grace to be within us and at the same time, cultivates God's grace within us, (vii) prayer is ineffectual without divine aid from the Holy Spirit, (viii) the prayers of his saints bring pleasure and honor to God, (iv) God accomplishes his purposes through prayer. While the material can be dense and the language requires greater scrutiny and reflection, *A Guide to Prayer* is rich in encouragement and instruction. I recommended it not just as a one-time read to develop a fuller prayer life but also as a helpful reference guide that can be returned to regularly as a source of ongoing guidance and encouragement.

— RECOMMENDED BY REGGIE CLAUS



### Excerpts from the Book

## 1

"And we need always to maintain upon our spirits a deep sense of the evil of sin, of our desert of death, of the dreadful holiness of God, and of the impossibility of our communication with him without a mediator, so that the name of Jesus may be ever precious to us,"

— *Of the Grace of Prayer*, p. 103

## 2

"All the rules and directions that have been laid down in order to teach us to pray will be ineffectual if we have no divine aids. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think one thought, and all that is good comes from God. If we wish to attain the gift or grace of prayer, we must seek both from heaven."

— *Of the Spirit of Prayer*, p. 105

## 3

"Shall we profess to be followers of Christ and not know how to speak to the Father? Are we commanded to pray always upon all occasions, to be constant and fervent in it; and shall we be contented with ignorance and incapacity to obey this command? Are we invited by the warmest exhortations and encouraged by the highest hopes to draw near to God with all our needs and sorrows; and shall we not learn to express those needs and pour out those sorrows before the Lord?"

— *A Persuasive to Learn to Pray*, p. 142

## The Prayer That Turns the World Upside Down

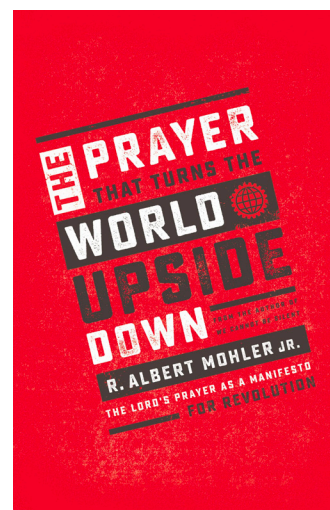
Written by R. Albert Mohler

In his book, *The Prayer That Turns the World Upside Down*, Albert Mohler brings a fresh look at the significance and simplicity of the Lord's Prayer and how it should impact the Christian's prayer life. Many people use the ACTS acronym (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) to structure their prayer. Mohler affirms that formulaic patterns are not wrong and exhorts the reader to consider the structure of the Lord's Prayer as a model. It is, after all, how Jesus responded to his disciples when they asked, "Lord, teach us to pray." After exploring the theological foundation for prayer in the first chapter, Mohler notes in chapter two that before teaching the disciples how to pray, he first instructed them on how not to pray. Next, Mohler identifies four things prayer is not: it is not a matter of self-expression, an act of therapy, an attempt to persuade God, nor a news report. The following five chapters explain each phrase of the Lord's Prayer and how we should apply them to our prayer life.

Authentic prayer begins with hallowing God's name, identifying the character of the one true God to whom we pray. Next, the petition for God's kingdom to come is a reminder that prayer is about God's agenda, not our own. Next, the request for our daily bread reminds us of our absolute dependence on God for the fundamental necessities of life. Next, asking for our debts to be forgiven emphasizes our most significant spiritual need, the payment of a debt we cannot pay. The final appeal to not be led into temptation but delivered from evil is an acknowledgment of our powerlessness. It is a prayer for endurance in the fight against sin. Mohler does an incredible job of demonstrating how each petition of the Lord's Prayer is a theology lesson.

Mohler calls the Lord's Prayer a "manifesto for revolution." It is precisely that: a public declaration of the Christian's belief that there is One, Sovereign, Creator God working to usher in his kingdom. The book is an easy read filled with profound theological truths that challenged me to consider how I view and approach prayer. The temptation to fall back on rote and familiar prayer language and spiritual phrases or to spend more time making requests than confessing sin can be an easy pattern into which one can fall. Prayer is a spiritual discipline that is foundational to the Christian life. Mohler references it several times, and we should constantly remember the old Latin formula "*Lex orandi, lex credenda*" – As we pray, so we believe. I highly recommend this book to all Christians, particularly those struggling to gain a foothold in their daily prayer life.

– RECOMMENDED BY SCOTT SULLIVAN



### Excerpts from the Book

#### 1

"As we approach Jesus' teaching on prayer, we should ask ourselves: How do Jesus' words correct any bad prayer habits I have developed? How is Jesus challenging my prayer life and inviting me to enter into a more God-glorifying pattern of prayer?"

– *Hallowing the Father's Name*, p. 41

#### 2

"By praying 'your kingdom come,' Jesus teaches us that we are ultimately meant to value God's agenda, not our own."

– *Your Kingdom Come*, p. 95

#### 3

"This prayer is a gospel prayer. We can only say these words and ask these things of God when we stand on the finished, atoning work of Jesus Christ."

– *Give Us This Day*, p. 123

# OCTOBER

These Scripture readings have been selected to help you prepare for the Sunday morning message. Take Up & Read!

October 1	Acts 14:1–28	October 17	Acts 27:1–28:10
<b>October 2</b>	<b>Acts 25:13–26:32</b>	October 18	Acts 15:1–41
October 3	Titus 2:15–3:3	October 19	Acts 16:1–40
October 4	1 Timothy 4:1–16	October 20	Acts 17:1–34
October 5	Romans 13:1–7	October 21	Psalms 33:1–9
October 6	1 Peter 2:13–25	October 22	Acts 18:1–28
October 7	Deuteronomy 7:1–13	<b>October 23</b>	<b>Acts 27:1–28:10</b>
October 8	1 Corinthians 6:1–11	October 24	Titus 3:9–15
<b>October 9</b>	<b>Titus 2:15–3:3</b>	October 25	1 Timothy 6:2b–10
October 10	Titus 3:4–8	October 26	2 Timothy 4:14–26
October 11	Romans 3:21–31	October 27	Matthew 18:15–20
October 12	Romans 5:1–11	October 28	Psalms 133
October 13	Romans 6:1–14	October 29	2 Peter 1:3–15
October 14	Joel 2:28–32	<b>October 30</b>	<b>Titus 3:9–15</b>
October 15	Romans 8:1–17	October 31	Acts 28:11–31
<b>October 16</b>	<b>Titus 3:4–8</b>		

\*Sermons in bold

# TAKE UP & READ

# NEW MEMBERS

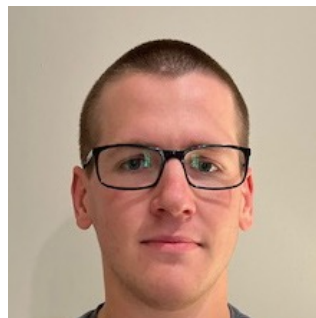
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**Brady  
Ballweber**



**Vivian  
Ballweber**



**Will Crider**



**Scott Fleming**



**Will Hulsey**



**Lynnette  
Hulsey**



**Madeleine  
Sokol**



*Mount Vernon*  
BAPTIST CHURCH