

PRAYER

90 DEVOTIONS FROM
OUR DAILY BREAD

COMPILED BY DAVE BRANON



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from Our Daily Bread Ministries

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ISBN: 978-1-62707-518-3

Printed in Indonesia

First printing in 2016

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FOREWORD

Think of those times in your life when you were brimming with excitement to talk to someone. Perhaps it was when you were a young adult and you had fallen in love. Each time you were able to talk to your special person, your heart beat faster and your smile grew wider.

Or maybe it was later in life when you knew you would be with a friend you hadn't seen in years. You had so much to catch up on, and you couldn't wait to start the conversation.

Do you feel some of that can't-wait-to-talk-to-Him excitement in your heart toward God?

He is the One who created a world of wonders and allowed us to live in it. The One who has existed in eternity past and will exist into eternity future. The One who knows us better than we know ourselves. The One who sent His perfect Son to earth to rescue us.

And we can talk to Him.

How do you view prayer? Does it sometimes seem to be less exciting than you know it should be? Do you wonder at times why you don't eagerly look forward to talking to God as much as you know you should?

Sometimes we simply need to reacquaint ourselves with the wonderful privilege we have to converse with our heavenly Father. That's what this book can help you to do. Through the ninety articles from *Our Daily Bread* writers, you can have your view of prayer refocused and your desire to talk with God reinvigorated. You'll be reintroduced to important Bible passages that remind you of the value and purpose of spending time in fellowship with the triune God.

Allow me to share one paragraph from the first article in the book—an article written by Keila Ochoa. Perhaps it best captures the essence and the excitement of prayer:

God desires a relationship with us. In the morning we can invite Him into our day, and then we can praise Him and ask Him for His help throughout the day. At other times we can treasure some time alone with Him and reflect on His faithfulness. As we spend time with God in prayer and in His Word, we grow in our relationship with Him and learn to become more and more like Him.

Doesn't that sound like what you want in your relationship with God? Dive into this collection about prayer. Perhaps as you read, you'll again sense that excitement and thrill that comes from being able to talk with the God of all creation.

—Dave Branon

CRUMBS OF TIME

Read: Daniel 6:10-23

Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. —DANIEL 6:10

A friend was coming to town. He is a very busy man and his schedule was tight, but after a difficult day in important meetings, he managed to see my family for half an hour for a late dinner. We enjoyed his visit, but I remember looking at my plate and thinking, “We only got the crumbs of his time.”

Then I remembered how many times God gets the crumbs of my time—sometimes just the last minutes before I fall asleep.

Daniel was a busy man. He held a high government position in the ancient kingdom of Babylon, and I’m sure he had a full schedule. However, he had developed the habit of spending time with God—praying three times a day, praising God, and thanking Him. This routine helped him develop a strong faith that did not waver when he faced persecution (Daniel 6).

God desires a relationship with us. In the morning we can invite Him into our day, and then we can praise Him and ask Him for His help throughout the day. At other times we can treasure some time alone with Him and reflect on His faithfulness. As we spend time with God in prayer and in His Word, we grow in our relationship with Him and learn to become more and more like Him.

As time with God becomes a priority, we enjoy His company more and more.

—Keila Ochoa

Prayer Tip: Get away as Jesus did (Luke 5:16).

WHEN GOD IS QUIET

Read: 1 Kings 19:1-12

Then [Elijah] lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” —1 KINGS 19:5

I love to take pictures of sunsets at Lake Michigan. Some are subtle shades of pastel. Others are bold strokes of bright color. Sometimes the sun sinks quietly behind the lake. Other times it goes down in what looks like a fiery explosion.

In pictures and in person, I prefer the latter. But both show the handiwork of God. When it comes to God’s work in the world, my preferences are the same. I would rather see dramatic answers to prayer than ordinary provisions of daily bread. But both are the work of God.

Elijah may have had similar preferences. He had grown accustomed to being the center of God’s grand displays of power. When he prayed, God showed up in dramatic ways—first in a miraculous victory over the prophets of Baal and then in the end to a long and devastating drought (1 Kings 18). But Elijah felt afraid and started to run. God sent an angel to feed him and strengthen him for his journey. After forty days he arrived in Horeb. God showed him that He was now communicating in a still small voice, not in flashy miracles (19:11-12).

If you’re discouraged because God hasn’t shown up in a blaze of glory, be encouraged anyway. Perhaps He’s revealing himself with His quiet presence.

—*Julie Ackerman Link*

Prayer Tip: Be honest with God (1 John 1:9).

WAITING FOR AN ANSWER

Read: Psalm 9:1-10

Those who know your name trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you. —PSALM 9:10

When our daughter was fifteen, she ran away. She was gone more than three weeks. Those were the longest three weeks of our lives. We looked everywhere for her and sought help from law enforcement and friends. During those desperate days, my wife and I learned the importance of waiting on God in prayer. We had come to the end of our strength and resources. We had to rely on God.

It was on a Father's Day that we found her. We were in a restaurant parking lot, on our way to dinner, when the phone rang. A waitress at another restaurant had spotted her. Our daughter was only three blocks away. We soon had her home, safe and sound.

We have to wait on God when we pray. We may not know how or when He will answer, but we can put our hearts constantly before Him in prayer. Sometimes the answers to our prayers don't come when we would hope. Things may even go from bad to worse. But we have to keep persevering, keep believing, and keep asking.

Waiting is never easy, but the end result, whatever it is, will be worth it. David put it this way: "Those who know your name trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you" (Psalm 9:10).

Keep seeking. Keep trusting. Keep asking. Keep praying.

—James Banks

Prayer Tip: Forgive others before praying (Matthew 5:23-24).

SLEDDING AND PRAYING

Read: Mark 14:32-42

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. —LUKE 6:12

When the snow flies in Michigan, I like to get my grandkids, grab our plastic sleds, and go slipping and sliding down our backyard. We zoom down the hill for about ten seconds and then climb back up for more.

When I travel to Alaska with a bunch of teenagers, we also go sledding. We are hauled by bus nearly to the top of a mountain. We jump on our sleds and, for the next ten to twenty minutes (depending on levels of bravery), we slide at breakneck speeds down the mountain, holding on for dear life.

Ten seconds in my backyard or ten minutes down an Alaskan mountain. They're both called sledding, but there is clearly a difference.

I've been thinking about this in regard to prayer. Sometimes we do the "ten seconds in the backyard" kind of praying—a quick, spur-of-the-moment prayer or a short thanks before eating. At other times, we're drawn to "down the mountain" praying—extended, intense times that require concentration and passion in our relationship with Him. Both have their place and are vital to our lives.

Jesus prayed often, and sometimes for a long time (Luke 6:12; Mark 14:32-42). Either way, let us bring the desires of our heart to the God of the backyards and the mountains of our lives.

—Dave Branon

Prayer Tip: Set aside a place
to meet with God.

