

Let's try praying like this...

## {#8 – Prayer Journal}

### What's it like?

It's like writing your prayers instead of thinking or speaking them. It's like a diary or journal to God. It's like a place to collect all your random and scattered thoughts, prayers, worries, concerns, and joys. It's like having a constant confidant you can tell anything to, a concrete paper or electronic companion where you keep your notes to God. It becomes a record and archive of your relationship with God, a scrapbook to your maker.

### What's it for?

It's for when you feel a little disorganized, and you want a way to inventory your prayers. It's for when you just want to write a note to God. It's also for when you'd like categories to put your thoughts and prayers into. It's for making a record of your prayers, worries, joys, and thanksgivings that you can revisit after a while like a scrapbook or album and so remember what you had been praying for and think about how God answered those prayers since then.

### When could I use it?

You could use it at the same time every day, like right before bed, to jot down the prayers the day has inspired. You could use it throughout the day, whenever you have an impulse to pray and you want to write it or type it. You could use it almost any time.

### Where could I use it?

You could use this wherever you have your journal with you. Your journal could be a notebook, a tablet or phone, a computer, or any other thing that you could input words into. You could use it wherever you'd be free to stop and jot down a few words or even a long letter.

### How it works...

Well, you write stuff down. You can be open-ended with what you write, or you can use different categories. Those categories could be the same ones from Structured Prayer (Session #1), like TRIP or ACTS. They could be basic, like "Things I pray for," or more complicated, like "Where did I see God today?" They can be one-time prayers or on-going prayers. They could be highs & lows. You can write them on paper or type them into some device. You should write the date on each journal entry, and maybe even a few words about what's going on in your life that day, or some doodles. You can even go back and pray out loud what you've written. Journals work best when you use them regularly, like once a day or once a week. Then, after a good chunk of time passes, you can go back and re-read what you prayed about before, and think about how God has heard and answered the prayers so far. You will probably write things by yourself, but you can always share them with others later.

### Try it!

Today, write down the date and a little bit about your life right now. Then choose some of the questions and categories on the next page and journal about them. Do this for seven days, for a month – you set the time frame. Commit to writing regularly. Mark your calendar or set a reminder for a couple of months out and come back and look at your journal again. How has God been responding to your prayers? What's changed since then?

### What did you think?

Learning goal: Mainly, that prayers are not "one-and-dones," shot up into God's consciousness and never thought about again. A journal is a visible sign of ongoing relationship, which is what prayer is all about. Just like relationships, prayers have context, and history, and they change and grow over time.

People

Places

Things

Actions

Ideas

How has God been speaking to me?

How am I growing closer to Jesus?

**T** = Thanksgiving

**R** = Regret

**I** = Intercede

**P** = Purpose

**A** = Adoration

**C** = Confession

**T** = Thanksgiving

**S** = Supplication

**Highs**

**LOWS**

Where did I see or experience God today?

What did I learn about God and me today?

Where can I get closer to God in the future?

How can I stick to that commitment?

Let's try praying like this...

{#9 – Centering Prayer}

What's it like?

It's like giving your full and complete attention to God. It's like removing as many distractions as possible and letting go of your own "stuff." It's like listening more than talking. It's about letting God be at your center, even if only for a little while. It's about letting *God* center *you*, especially in our full and busy lives.

What's it for?

To repeat: it's for centering yourself on God and letting God center you. It's for consciously and purposefully devoting yourself, for a set period of time, to God. It's for listening and being receptive to God, with as few distractions as possible. It's for making a concrete act of putting God first.

When could I use it?

You could use this any time of day, but you need to schedule it. You could use it whenever you have a decent chunk of time – like 20-30 minutes – to devote to this prayer.

Where could I use it?

You could use this wherever you can "shut out the world" for a chunk of time. You could use this, preferably, in a room with a door you could shut, a window you could cover, and a comfortable place to sit or lie down.

How it works...

First, remove distractions. Shut the door; cover the windows; turn off any screens, phones, or other devices, and also any lights. Second, you get comfortable, sitting or lying down. Third, a candle is lit: the flame helps you focus and re-center if your mind wanders (use a small light if a candle is not an option). Fourth, you listen to some words to start your prayer time – they could also be from scripture, the words of a hymn or some other spiritual reading. If you can't listen to something, choose a word or phrase that you can use like the candle flame: if your mind wanders, keep repeating it to yourself to re-center. Fifth, be still. Just be still. If your thoughts wander, use the candle or your word(s) to come back and re-center. If you have someone to help you, they will let you know when your time is done (try for anywhere from fifteen minutes to thirty minutes to start out). If you try this on your own, set an alarm but then put the alarm out of sight – no peeking. Be aware: we lead busy lives, so this might be a tough one. And if you fall asleep – God must have known you needed the rest, and won't take it personally. 😊

Try it!

What did you think?

Learning goal: Regular prayer is one way to make God your one and only priority and guide in life. This type of prayer in particular strips away all else and leaves only you and your Lord. (This prayer also stresses once again the listening side of prayer.)