



Rapha's Step Studies for Overcoming Sexual Addiction

STEP 11

We seek to grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer, meditation, and obedience, praying for wisdom and power to carry out His will.

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

James 1:5–6

PRAYER

Some of us are uncomfortable with prayer. We find it difficult to concentrate on conversation with an invisible God with whom we experience no audible dialogue. Perhaps, too, we are disappointed with our prayer lives; frustrated because we can't seem to get any answers. What is God's response to prayer?

1. Read Jeremiah 29:11–14; 33:2–3.
 - Have you been discouraged about praying? Why, or why not?
 - In what ways are you encouraged by these passages?



GOD'S REASONS FOR PRAYER

God spoke through the prophet, Isaiah, to tell His people: "It will come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear." If God is in the process of answering before we call on Him, and if He hears us even before we speak, why should we pray? Does it really make a difference? Let's examine what the Scriptures say:

1. Read 1 Chronicles 16:11; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalms 50:15; Luke 18:1-8; 1 Peter 3:12.
 - From these passages, why should we pray?
2. Why do you usually pray?
3. What kinds of things do you usually ask God for when you pray?

GOD'S REQUIREMENTS FOR PRAYER

Those of us who feel we are doing God a great service when we pray may be surprised to learn that He has requirements for prayer. After all, doesn't He want to hear from us? Isn't He the God of love, who freely accepts us? The answer to those questions is yes, definitely! Yet, God is holy. We hear much about the Lord being "our friend," and this is true. Yet He is also God. In His holy righteousness, He has set up some ordinances for how we can approach Him most effectively. He has told us what He does and doesn't like to see in prayer.

1. Read Psalms 66:16–20; Matthew 5:23-24; 6:5–15; 2 Corinthians 7:9–10; James 1:5–6; 1 John 1:9.
 - Give as many requirements for effective prayer as you can find from the passages just read:



- What do these passages say about forgiveness as it affects our relationship with God?
- What, according to these passages, are we to avoid?
- What does Matthew 6:5–15 tell you about God's desire for you to be alone and quiet with Him?
- What are some practical ways you can meet with Him on these terms?

GOD'S RESOURCES FOR PRAYER

As we mentioned already, God has given us His Holy Spirit as our Helper in prayer. He has also given us His Word, another tool we can use for communicating with Him. Sometimes, our lives are in crisis, and we are simply too distraught to pray. On other occasions, we may be filled with so much joy and gratitude that we are beyond words of expression. God's Word holds many promises we can take directly to His throne and claim before Him. The Lord delights in this! When we have asked the Holy Spirit to guide our prayers, and are citing the truths of His Word to Him, we can be sure that we are praying in His Will.

The Psalms also are an excellent resource for "prayer material." David knew the heights of ecstasy and the lonely depths of despair. The Psalms will be of great help and support to you as you pray. They also provide a marvelous example of what true communication with God can be.

Finally, God has given us His people—other Christians—as supporters in prayer. He truly honors a "network" of prayer (Matthew 18:19).

This does not mean, of course, that we should rely solely on the prayers of others for our needs. God desires for each one of us to be in direct contact with Him at all times (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

1. Do you have a "prayer network" of believers with whom you can pray?

- Whom can you enlist for prayer support?



PRIORITY OF PRAYER

Many of us know we should be cultivating a personal relationship with God, but we often are so busy—perhaps even in Christian service—that we just don't seem to have time to pray. We may also have the perception that our prayers need to be lengthy to be effective. We will discuss the time element later in this chapter. For now, let's look at the priority Jesus placed on prayer.

1. Read Mark 1:34–35; 6:45–46; and Luke 5:16.

- Why do you think it was important for God the Son to spend time alone with God the Father?
- What did Jesus do to ensure that He could be alone with His Father?

ESSENTIALS OF PRAYER

There are many methods and varieties of prayer, and God certainly does not restrict us to any one formula! We should feel free to communicate with Him in the ways we are led by His Spirit. However, for those who may just be getting started, we offer a simple suggestion which is easily remembered by the acronym, **ACTS**.

A**ADORATION**: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised..." (Psalms 48:1).

C**CONFESSION**: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear" (Isaiah 59:1–2).

T**THANKSGIVING**: "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

S**SUPPLICATION**: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).



MEDITATION

Having established a foundation for the importance of prayer, we are now ready to examine God's communication with us through His Word. Let's look at a few of the many reasons we need to develop a knowledge of God's Word:

1. Read Isaiah 40:8; 55:10–11; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; Hebrews 4:12.
 - From the above passages, describe some characteristics of God's Word:

OBEDIENCE

As we mentioned earlier, we can't hope to be obedient to God without knowing His commands. While our goal in Christian living is not perfection, we make progress in our relationship with God as we practice obedience to Him in our daily affairs.

And Samuel said, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry....

1 Samuel 15:22–23

Jesus Christ has paid for our sins, averted the wrath of God, and made us dear, beloved children of God. He is worthy of our obedience! He is Lord! He truly is excellent and He deserves our affections and our efforts. There are no political causes, persons, material goods, no fame or prestige that can compare to the One who "died and rose again on our behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:15). As Christians, we have the unspeakable privilege of representing the King of kings. We can do this effectively—for eternal purposes—only as we allow the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us through prayer and personal Bible study. Let's look at some ways we can make both a part of our daily routine.

MAKING TIME FOR GOD

Earlier, we mentioned that one of the biggest obstacles to our personal relationship with God is T-I-M-E. Many of us resist approaching God because we feel like we owe Him a large chunk of our time. We do owe everything to God. But the truth is that He is delighted with any effort we make to spend time with Him, and especially if it means having to say no to something else in order to keep the appointment.



These are some suggestions for pursuing time alone with God:

- **Start slowly, but be consistent.** You may want to spend ten minutes with God each day at first. You can read five verses of Scripture, and spend the rest of your time in prayer. The point is: do it every day.
- **Make an appointment and keep it.** Set aside one special time each day, reserved specifically for you and God.
- **Find a quiet place.** Take the phone off the hook if necessary.
- **Choose a time when you'll be free of interruptions.**
- **Ask the Holy Spirit for help and guidance.**

Every relationship takes time. God, more than anyone else, knows this. As you continue to grow with Him, you'll find yourself wanting to spend more time with Him. And you'll gain a special blessing in knowing that God isn't just everyone else's God, but yours.

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