
Spiritual Growth: Establishing New Habits

Written by Jennifer Wolf

Prayer

Prayer is simply talking with God. He cares about all of the details of your day! And The Bible tells us to "pray continuously," (I Thessalonians 5:17). While there are certainly times in our lives when prayer is very formal and intentional, we can also benefit from talking to the Lord informally throughout the day, lifting up concerns as they hit us. Here are a few suggestions to help you incorporate both formal and informal prayer into your life.

Formal Prayer

- Use the acronym "ACTS."
Adoration - Praise God for who is He and what He has done
Confession - Confess your sins to the Lord with confidence in His forgiveness
Thanksgiving - Thank God for all that you are grateful for; express your heartfelt gratitude for the ways He has intimately blessed your life
Supplication - Lift up your concerns and prayer requests to the Lord
- Pray The Psalms. Try Psalm 121, Psalm 37, or Psalm 103.

Informal Prayer

- Pray in the moment. Sometimes we say we'll pray for someone, and then we forget about it! Instead, take a moment to pray right when you first learn of the need.
- Keep a Gratitude Journal. Write down five things you are thankful for each day. As you close the book, take a moment to give thanks to God for His Blessings in your life.
- Pray on the way out the door. As your kids are leaving for school, take a moment to pray together about the day. Ask the Lord to guide your children's steps and help them to be a blessing to those around them.
- Respond to the beauty around you. When the sun is shining or you experience the glory of God's creation, take a moment to thank Him.

Scripture

Like prayer, reading Scripture can be formal or informal. I encourage you to incorporate both into your life. Scripture is one of the ways God speaks to us,

and when we're not reading The Bible on our own, we're missing out on the opportunity to hear what He has to say to us!

Formal

- Begin each day with a time of prayer and reading the Word. This might mean getting up before your family to be with the Lord uninterrupted, but you will greatly benefit from it! Try reading one chapter from Proverbs each morning. (There are 31 chapters; one for each day of the month!)
- Participate in a Bible Study. See what your local church has to offer, or check out the many chapters of Community Bible Study and Bible Study Fellowship that are available around the country.
- Go through the Book of Matthew and highlight all of Jesus' words. What is He saying to you today?
- Select one book of the Bible and read two chapters each day. What is God saying to you as you read and study?

Informal

- You've had a rough day. Spend some time flipping through your Bible. What passages have you marked or highlighted in the past? How can these words encourage you today?
- Post a verse or passage in a place where you will see it often. This might be near your computer or your mirror. I have Colossians 3:12-14 from *The Message* hanging in my closet: "So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive any offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it."

Family Devotions

Regular family devotions is a time for you to read and discuss Scripture as a family.

- Try using Words of Hope or My Daily Bread, which may be available through your church.
- Traditionally, family devotions are shared at dinnertime, but you can find the time that best suits your unique family.
- Don't be bogged down by the idea that you have to do this every day or not at all. We're not going for perfection!
- One idea is to plan a regular "Sunday Night Meeting" when your family can go over schedules for the week and talk about what's coming up. This is a great time to incorporate Family Devotions!