

# How to Spend a Half Day in Prayer

## The Purpose of the Half Day of Prayer

It is nice to be able to spend extended lengths of time meditating on anything that comes to your mind, but this is not the time to do that. This is the time to meditate on God and His Word, to get to know Him, and to truly communicate with Him. That is the foremost reason to take the time to do this half day of prayer. It is not to just pray a super long prayer list. Think about this; as Christians the more we get to know God and His Word, and to comprehend what He has done for us, the more our faith, trust, and love for Him will increase. As our trust in Him and love for Him increases, our trust in His Word will be strengthened so that we will be more desirous to live out His Word and communicate with Him. Make this time an intimate meeting with your God!

## How to Get the Most out of this Booklet for the Half Day of Prayer

Read through this whole handout first. (There are 4 parts to the structure of this half day of prayer.) Then you can prayerfully plan how long and what you are going to do during your half day of prayer. Let the Spirit guide you in how to spend this time. This booklet is just a guide to hopefully give you a general structure for your time of prayer. Don't get legalistic about using this guide or your time. Suppose you have planned to spend 3 hours praying. Maybe you are enjoying sitting in your car seeking God when your husband calls. He is frantic because the kids are out of control. He needs you home before those 3 hours are up. The loving thing to do is to go home.

This guide can be used in a group setting. I wrote this handout for a church's half day of prayer. For the first 45 minutes, they had a corporate time of worship and gave directions for the rest of the morning. Then they went individually to seek God and pray alone for 2 hours. Finally everyone came back for a time of sharing.

If you feel God is leading you to fast, a half day of prayer goes along nicely with a time of fasting. (God's Word tells us in Isaiah 58 that our fasting should be a time of seeking God and His will for our lives and looking within ourselves for any sin.) But don't feel you have to fast to be heard by God. He hears you because of Who He is and what you mean to Him.

The structure I have for this prayer handout would also be a great guide for your normal devotion time too. During this time you would:

- First, seek God through His Spirit and through reading His Word, and confess your sins as the Spirit leads you.
- Second, praise and thank God for Who He is and what He has done for you.
- Third, pray for others.
- Fourth, pray for yourself.

## God's Word is a Must for Communication with God

True communication is listening and responding. We listen to God by hearing, reading, studying, and mediating on His Word through various ways. We respond to God by talking to Him. We call this prayer. We also prove we are listening and responding to God by doing His Word. Jesus stated that we show our love for God by obeying His Word, so if you love God you need to make an effort to know His Word and obey it. God's Word says:

*"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me... but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do..." John 14:23-24,31 (NASB)*

You might be thinking there is no way I can do God's Word! You are right. That is one of the main reasons the Holy Spirit is living within you. He will empower you to do God's Word. The Bible says,

*"...but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." Acts 1:8a (NASB)*

Did you know the Bible can be quite interesting? It is an exciting book, with the God of the universe as the King of Kings, and us as His Beloved. The Bible is full of His mysteries. It talks about the greatest mystery of all, which is, why our God would sacrifice so much to be with us, love us, and constantly forgive us as we turn our backs on Him. The Bible also has the most passionate, unselfish love affair of the ages in it. It speaks of the King of Kings' relentless, loving pursuit for a woman who was His enemy and then when He finally wins her, she still runs after other lovers. This great love of the ages is towards each one of us, as if we were God's only love. We need to read the Bible as if it is a personal love letter to us, because it is. Because of this, we should want to communicate with the One who wrote it to us.

The Bible also reads like an adventure novel and history book. It often uses poetry, to explain God's heart. You can also read it as a "how to have purpose on this earth" manual. It is also a "how to be prepared to live in the far reaches of the universe or eternity" manual. This book is a non-fiction book, though some people think it is too good or unbelievable to be true. It is a huge piece of the life of our God and Husband. It is His autobiography, explaining how He has pursued us and waited for us to be His, even before time existed. Read His autobiography like you would a book that someone you love and who loves you authored, and you will have a very fruitful half day of prayer.

Our communication with God needs to be based on God's Word! His Word expresses His desires, His will, and His thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-11). So as you meditate on God and His Word, let His words lead you into conversation. This will enable you to pray His will for your life and others. Jesus says,

*"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 (NASB)*

Furthermore God will answer your prayers according to His Word. If the answer to your prayer contradicts God's Word then your answer isn't from God. The Bible says,

*"And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." 1 John 5:14-15 (NASB)*

Most important, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you read God's Word and seek Him in prayer. He is our real Teacher! His Spirit knows what He wants you and others to do, how and when it should be done, and of course what is best for all concerned with eternity in mind. God's Word says,

*"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things even the depths of God." 1 Corinthians 2: 10 (NASB)*

## **Divide Your Time into Four Parts**

### **PART ONE: Spend Time Seeking God First**

Seeking God gets your heart and mind filled with Him, so that you are ready to spend a half day in prayer. Seeking means striving to find. God has promised us in Luke 11:9-13 that if we will seek Him we will find Him. You seek God by asking the Holy Spirit to help you sense God's leading. This enables you to hear His insights for your life and His heart's desires for you, as you prayerfully read, study, and mediate on His Word. As God is speaking to you, I would highly recommend you journal what the Holy Spirit is showing you, so that you don't forget. At times, I write what God is showing me in my Bible. Make it personal and apply it to your life. Let me give you an example from my life. I have been seeking God's will for the last few years concerning a troubling relationship. As I was reading Psalm 138, I felt the Spirit saying to me in verse 8a that I need to continue waiting for Him to accomplish what concerns me in this relationship. Then, I will understand why He did things the way He did. Just to tell you, seeking God takes time, desire, and effort. It's generally not a half day thing, it's a lifetime thing.

I also have found that if you spend enough time seeking God, the rest of your time with God seems to flow better. Jesus tells us,

*"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you." Matthew 6:33 (NASB)*

Seeking God also builds intimacy between you and Him. God tells us,

*"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB)*

Seeking God is very much like waiting for Him. Scripture promises that if we wait for Him we will gain new strength and fly like eagles.

*"Yet those who wait for the Lord, Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary." Isaiah 40:31 (NASB)*

I have watched eagles fly over our desert wash, allowing the air currents to gently lift and lead them. They seem to glide effortlessly on the currents God specifically designed for them. I have understood as I watched them what Isaiah 40:31 is trying to tell me. If I wait for God, by His strength and wisdom I will be gently and effortlessly taken in the direction He intends for me to go.

This is also the time to read a Psalm, or chapter or maybe a whole book in the Bible, seeking or looking for what God wants to speak to you about. The issue here is quality of time, not quantity of Scripture. Listen to God speaking to you! Sometimes I read one verse and wow, God speaks greatly through that verse as I meditate on it and study it.

As you are seeking God, ask Him to search your heart for sins. It's very important to get known sin out of your life. This is important because sin, even in a Christian's life, affects your relationship with God. Remember God is holy and can have nothing to do with sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). Psalm 139 says,

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way." Psalm 139:23-24 (NASB)*

His Word and His Spirit show us sin in our lives. The Bible tells us,

*"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)*

If He shows you any sins, confess them to Him, which means agree with Him about your sins. 1 John says,

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9 (NASB)*

Ask Him to give you an attitude of repentance towards that sin. Repentance means to have regret or sorrow over your sin accompanied by a change of mind or heart towards God about that sin. (Repentance has the idea of returning to what God wants in your life.) Jesus says,

*"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent." Revelations 3:19 (NASB)*

In other words, agree with God about your sins, then allow God to take you a step further. This is done when you desire that He change your heart by getting sins out of your life. This will allow Him to strengthen you and give you victory over sin.

When I do my daily devotions, seeking God is what I do first. When I don't have much time, I try to at least spend time seeking God. Sometimes when I spend a half day in prayer I don't get much past this part. I desperately need God to speak to me, or I quickly start running around like a chicken with its head cut off. In Ephesians 1:22 Jesus is called our head. No wonder I get that way without spending time with Him.

## **PART TWO: Spend Time Praising and Thanking God**

This is the part I feel I struggle with the most. I am not sure exactly why. I think that it's because I am so needy of God working in my life. When I spend time with God, I want Him to speak to me. It is for this reason I often forget to appreciate Him for Who He is. I can also relate to what Jesus' disciples said in Mark 4:41b (NASB), "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" At times I find it hard to talk to God about Who He is because He is so beyond my thoughts and reasoning. That is why I teach God's characteristics so much. This enables us to know Him more intimately and in turn love and praise Him better.

Let me give you two suggestions on how to praise and thank God as you do this half day of prayer. First, I have found for myself that the best way to praise God is to read Bible passages that talk about His character, Who He is, and praise Him as I read. Isaiah 40 is one of my favorite passages for this. Next, ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your remembrance what God has done for you and praise Him for those things. In the Psalms, King David says,

*"O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth; And I still declare Thy wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Thy strength to this generation, Thy power to all who are to come. For Thy righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens, Thou who hast done great things; O God, who is like Thee?" Psalm 71:17-19 (NASB)*

As the Spirit brings to mind more of the things God has done for you, you might want to make a list of all you are thankful for. Add to it throughout your day of prayer. Did you know that in John 14 we are told that one of the Spirit's neatest jobs (at least for me) is to bring remembrances to our minds? At this point in my life, I need that dreadfully. An added benefit to remembering what God has done for you is that it helps you to get God's perspective on your concerns, so you don't worry as much. Philippians says,

*"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Philippians 4:6 (NASB)*

## **PART THREE: Spend Time Praying for Others**

If you are spending the half day of prayer because you need God's wisdom and leading for yourself, you might want to skip praying for others all together or save it for last. Many times, I spend a long time in prayer because I need God's direction. He desires so much to give us His plans for our lives. From Isaiah 30:1 it seems if we don't want His plans, we are in sin.

*"'Woe to the rebellious children,' declares the Lord, 'Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, In order to add sin to sin.'" Isaiah 30:1 (NASB)*

Now you have the time to pray with more detail for your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, missionaries, etc. We need to be praying for each other continuously, as the Bible says in Ephesians 6:18. I have found prayer can provide some miraculous results for all of us. God uses it to change hearts. It can give someone peace instead of tumult. It fights and protects against the world forces of darkness. It has changed the course of battles. It can protect against all odds. My son and his 28 men in Iraq had bullets flying past them constantly. Mortars exploded around them and not one of them was hurt (except for one small cut on one of them). I have also found that when I keep praying for someone, even a so-called enemy, it is hard to dislike them. So prayer strengthens our love for others.

How should you pray for others? I try to imagine what they might need prayer for, while asking God how to pray for them. Of course if you can ask them how to pray for them, do. Another way you can pray for others is to ask God to lead you to a Scripture that you can pray for that person. A friend of mine told me she felt the Lord leading her to pray Isaiah 54:10 for me when I was struggling with a problem. Just knowing she was praying that verse for me gave me hope. How you pray for yourself in a lot of ways is how you can pray for others. If you are struggling with trusting God in something, your friend probably is too, but in a different something.

I know some of you don't like to make lists and some of us make enough lists to paper our walls. But this is the time to do a list so you can be blessed and thankful when God answers your prayers for that person. Remember God answers prayer His way, which isn't always how we want it answered.

## **PART FOUR: Spend Time Praying for Yourself**

From Part 1 of this study, what did the Spirit speak to you about as you prayerfully read God's Word? What verse or verses did God use to speak to you? Take what God spoke to you and pray that for yourself. It would also be good to ask the Spirit to work that verse out in your life, in other words, as you are praying, ask God to help you know how to apply that Scripture in your life. James 1:22-25 tells us to be doers of God's Word and not just hearers. Also, applying God's Word to our lives doesn't need to be drudgery. Remember, God created us in His image. We like to have fun and be creative. So where do we think we got those desires? Of course we got them from God, and He certainly is creative and is the giver of good gifts. Yes, at times applying God's Word can be very hard, because our sin nature seems to want to do the opposite of what God wants. This doesn't mean God can't help us to be creative though and see the good in the hard things.

Years ago a dear friend of mine struggled with cancer. She was very anxious about the whole situation. (And who wouldn't be.) While she was seeking God, He spoke to her greatly through Matthew 6:25-34 about not being anxious. God brought to her mind how to apply these Scriptures to her life. She would take one verse at a time and make it personal. She would meditate on that one verse until she felt a need to do the same with the next verse. She spent a lot of time in God's Word

getting to know Him better. As time went on, she saw the good from the cancer, and looked for the funny things in the ordeal. Every time I called to encourage her, she ended up encouraging me.

This is the time to ask God what He wants for your life, His will. You could ask questions like these. Does He want your activities or schedule to change, or maybe your ministry or job? Then, ask Him what the change should be and how to go about it? Does He want you to work on loving your husband or friend better? Ask Him how to specifically love them. If you are dealing with a problem, ask Him about how to handle the problem in your life or how to make the right decisions concerning the problem.

There are three principles I would like to share about God's will from scripture. First, His will for your life is defined by His Word. His will never contradicts His Word. Isaiah 55 tells us,

*"So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11 (NASB)*

Second, you can't do His will without Him. Frankly doing His will without Him is sin because you are trusting in your flesh or yourself to control you. In Galatians Paul says,

*"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. Galatians 2:20 (NASB)*

Finally, human busyness and programs, even if they are Christian based, aren't necessarily God's will for your life. A dear friend of mine said to me, "I sat down on the kitchen floor one day and cried out to God, and said, 'Lord, I can't do it all anymore!'" His reply to her heart was, "I didn't ask you to." I have to admit as I write her comment, I am laughing to myself, because aren't we all like her, running here and there, thinking we are doing God's will? In reality, God just wants us to enjoy Him first and then to do what He has for us. This might be a good time to ask God to show you if you are doing His will, or just running around doing your own. Read the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10.

When I think that, Jesus, the God of the universe, gave us a special prayer to pray for ourselves, I am blown away and think "by golly I should be praying it". So a great prayer to pray for yourself is, the "Lord's Prayer", which is found in Luke 11:2-4. Jesus said to them,

*"When you pray, (Gini) say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'" Luke 11:2-4 (NASB)*

In this prayer Jesus is telling you to pray that you would bring glory to God's name, that you will know and want His will in your life, that God would meet your daily needs and forgive your sins, and that He would empower you to forgive others and stay away from sin.

Warning! Warning! (I sound like the robot on the old series, "Lost in Space" and I certainly am dating myself.) Don't think you need to end your half day of prayer with some new insights or conclusions about your life (yes, there is a good chance you will), or that you need to feel an emotional high. At times I feel drained after a half day of prayer because God has shined His light on some things, or some sin that will be hard to change in my life. I know working these things out of my life will take time, and probably cause some distressing moments. We need to remember, when God changes your life, it is always for your good (Romans 8:28-39). The key to whether this time was beneficial for you, or not, is the results it produces in your life with God in the long run, not what you are experiencing now!

*May the God,  
Who does exceedingly beyond all we ask or think,  
be with you abundantly,  
as you give Him your time!*