

# Prayer

*Pray as if everything depended on God,  
Live as if everything depended on you.*



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## 1<sup>st</sup> break:

How did Spong's experience with Cornelia start to change his understanding of prayer? How does it affect your understanding of prayer?

## 2<sup>nd</sup> break:

Bell talks about "what we sing shapes our faith" and "ultimately, what we sing repeatedly shapes our belief, our discipleship, and our faith." What are your thoughts on song as a form of prayer?

How does the idea of prayer being legitimately different for people and changing over time resonate with your experience?

## 3<sup>rd</sup> break:

What place do words have when trying to "authentically listen" or achieve the silence of "deep knowing?"

Describe how patience and humor enhance Hauerwas' understanding of prayer.

**4<sup>th</sup> break:**

Spong relates a story regarding prayer for his wife. What stands out for you in this story?

Kelli mentions that much of prayer's real power is in changing us. Share how prayer has helped you see things in a new way.

**General Reflection:**

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

## Words of Wisdom

Many people approach prayer in a way that makes God into a cosmic vending machine: insert prayer into slot, make your selection, and if you're good, voila! The outcome you had in mind. The proof texts quoted regarding prayer would seem to support such an understanding. What do you think?

***Read Matthew 21.22 and Luke 11.9***

In Matthew 7, Jesus seems to say that whatever we ask will be given to us. In Luke 18, Jesus tells a parable about persistence in prayer: pray, pray, pray and God will eventually give in. Matthew 18.19 has Jesus saying that, "If two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven."

***Read and reflect on the passages mentioned above***

Paul claims that the purpose of prayer is not to let God know what we need or want.

***Read Romans 8.26***

When Paul tells the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing," he's not advocating that they constantly pray for more stuff. Nor are they to pray to change the "mind" and the behavior of a controlling "theistic" deity. Instead, they and we are to seek an attitude toward life in which prayer is seamlessly integrated into our very being, where we can give thanks no matter what happens.

***Read 1 Thessalonians 5***

*"Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer." – Romans 12*

## Spirit Practice

1) Consider activities in your life where conversation or computation is not necessary. It may be in your home, or at a copy machine, or on your morning walk. Give thanks to God for the loved ones and guests in your life. Ask that your heart be formed into a more loving and patient sanctuary for each of them.

During these prayer times, you might try addressing God with a name different than you normally use for the Holy One.

2) Search a current newspaper or news magazine and find two articles about issues that are troubling to you. Choose one article about a local issue and one about a global issue.

Cut out the two articles and secure them in an area where you will see them often or near where you can carve out time for prayer.

Each day for the next month, when praying with this news, pray only these two questions:

God of love, what would you have me learn?

Merciful God, how can I offer your compassion?

## Try it

“Yah-weh” breathing exercise

The common name for God in much of Hebrew scripture is represented in English as “Yahweh,” derived from the four Hebrew letters, YHWH. It has been suggested that this name may have primal origins in the sound of one’s breathing. When breathing in, the natural sound of the breath is similar to “Yah.” When breathing out it sounds like “weh.” Rabbi Arthur Waskow suggests:

“Try pronouncing those letters (YHWH) with no vowels between, not “Yahweh,” just “Yyyyhhhhwwwhhhh,” so that it becomes just a rough-breathing. God as the Breath of Life...what we breathe in is what the trees breathe out, what the trees breathe in is what we breathe out. The Name that exists in all languages, all species.”

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Sit quietly in a comfortable position. With eyes closed quietly listen to your breathing and the sound that is made by breathing through your mouth. In a practical expression of centering and prayer, the ancient name of God and the idea of the Divine becomes integrated with your breath and life.

“So in prayer we address God not as King (Melech ha-Olam), but as “Breath of Life, Ruach ha-Olam.”

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