



ROSE VISUAL
BIBLE STUDIES

6 SESSIONS

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Bible Study



SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

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Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Isaiah 30:21

Spiritual Practices



All of us have felt it. That gnawing feeling that something is amiss in our relationship with God. We know that a deeper walk with him is possible because we have seen others—perhaps a pastor, friend, or mentor—demonstrate an enviable and infectious love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But somehow that intimacy has eluded us. We sense a distance, but do not know how to bridge the gap between our longing and our experience of the Holy.

Hopefully, this study will help change that.

In *Spiritual Practices Bible Study*, we'll explore six different on-ramps to a richer relationship with God: prayer, solitude and silence, interacting with Scripture, Sabbath, worship, and community. These practices are not techniques, guaranteed steps, or magic formulas. They are simply ways of being with God that have led countless people—from monks to CEOs to stay-at-home moms—to an increasing love and greater union with him.

Many theologians, pastors, and Christian speakers and authors refer to these as disciplines or habits, but those terms can carry negative connotations for some people and create an artificial barrier between themselves and God, which is why they are called *practices* here.

The aim of spiritual practices is not perfection. You'll never "arrive" or cease to learn and grow in them. Nor are they meant to be a list of rules to follow. Jesus offers us life abundant (John 10:10), not legalism or drudgery.

To begin interacting with the practices in this study, choose a few you are familiar with (like prayer and Bible reading) and adopt new ones as you learn about them and are drawn to them. You'll discover that spiritual practices are like spaghetti—intertwining with each other and touching each other without a clear delineation of where one ends and the other begins. Prayer often leads to worship and reading Scripture. Solitude and silence often lead to prayer. So does worship. All of them work together to deepen our communion and companionship with Jesus, our deepest hope and greatest love.



PRAYER

Conversation with God



Prayer

At the heart of every meaningful relationship is communication—a beautiful exchange made up of both speaking and listening. One person shares, the other receives, and through this rhythm, something profound begins to take shape. We come to understand one another, express ideas, work through misunderstandings, dream out loud, share our joys and fears, and grow in connection. Bit by bit, through countless conversations, trust is built, roots grow deeper, and the relationship flourishes.

But when we struggle to share what is really on our hearts—or when we stop communicating altogether—relationships begin to drift. Maybe you’ve noticed this with a friend who once felt close, but with time and silence, that bond faded. Or perhaps the connection dimmed because honesty and vulnerability felt too hard to offer. When we can’t show up as our true selves, it’s easy to feel unseen, unheard, and unknown. Real, lasting connection only happens through open, honest, and heartfelt communication.

The same is true in our relationship with God. A vibrant, growing relationship with him is nurtured through ongoing conversation. In this session, we’ll focus on one side of that conversation—our opportunity to speak with God. We call it *prayer*.



Read It

Key Bible Passage

Luke 11:1–13

Optional Reading

Matthew 6:5–13, where Jesus talks about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount

John 17:1–26, which is Jesus’s longest recorded prayer

Romans 8:26–27, which is about the Holy Spirit’s intercession in prayer

Prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.

ST. TERESA OF AVILA, *THE BOOK OF HER LIFE*



Explore It

Why Should We Pray?

In speaking of the importance of prayer, Henri Nouwen once wrote, “A spiritual life without prayer is like the gospel without Christ.”¹ In other words, our spiritual life is empty and void of meaning and depth without praying, because we were created for relationship with God marked by conversations with him.

We see this truth play out throughout the biblical story, as a whole host of characters over the centuries seek to know and be known by God through prayer. We see this most prominently in the life of Jesus. His life was marked by prayer. He often withdrew from the crowd and the disciples to go pray (Mark 1:35, 45; Luke 5:15–16; 6:12). He was in constant conversation with his heavenly Father and modeled a life of prayer—an intimacy with God that believers today can experience, too. The amazing truth is that God wants the same depth of intimacy with us as he had with Jesus (John 17:21).

For Jesus, praying was not perfunctory, rote, or empty—even though as a faithful Jew, he had learned and recited the prayers that had characterized Judaism for centuries before his birth. He did not pray for his own agenda, pleasure, or selfish ends, but rather to connect with the Father and align himself with the Father’s will. That the Gospels emphasize how much Jesus prayed demonstrates the critical place this spiritual practice plays in knowing God and living closely with him.

The Foundation of Prayer: The Father's Love

In Luke 11:2–4, Jesus provides a model by which the disciples (and all believers) can pattern their conversations with God. This prayer (The Lord's Prayer) begins by addressing God as *Father*, Jesus's favorite way to address God.

Because he is our caring Father ...

... we can rely on him to provide what we need, guide us through the valleys of trials and temptations, and offer his wisdom, protection, and care as citizens in his kingdom.

Because he is our good Father ...

... we can ask, seek, and knock with persistence and brazenness, not because God will give us everything we ask, but because the very act of going to the Father reminds us that he is the source from which all good gifts come (James 1:17).

Because he is our wise Father ...

... we can trust that he will answer in keeping with his will and his goodness for our good and his glory. We may not understand the situation, and that's okay. It is enough to know he is sovereign and gracious.

Because he is our loving Father ...

... we can surrender our expectations of what God can (or will) do and receive what he gives with open hands and loving trust because we know the Father's heart for us.

God will either give us what we ask for in prayer or give us what we would have asked for if we knew everything He knows.

TIMOTHY KELLER, *PRAYER: EXPERIENCING AWE AND INTIMACY WITH GOD*

Can You Give a Brother Some Food?

In Luke 11:5–8, Jesus challenges the disciples to be as persistent in prayer as a man waking his friend in the middle of the night to get what he needs.

Hospitality was considered a cultural and spiritual obligation in first-century Jewish life. Travel (for most people) was undertaken only out of necessity, not a means of vacation or pleasure, and it involved either riding an animal or walking. Because inns were scarce (and not like hotels today!), travelers depended on the hospitality of friends, relatives, and strangers.

According to custom, every guest would be greeted, welcomed, and fed, regardless

of the time of day or night (travel times were unpredictable). If there were no provisions for the guest, the host was expected to acquire the necessary food and drink from neighbors.



Most people did not have an elaborate home. Houses were constructed with one or two rooms, often with one room on a slightly higher level than the other. On the upper portion, the families slept together in the same room on mats laid on the floor (only the wealthy could afford beds). During the day, the door to the home remained open, allowing friends, family, and neighbors to come inside. At night, the door was closed. A closed door was equal to a “Do Not Disturb” sign. The family’s animals (chickens, lambs, etc.) were brought in to sleep on the lower level, with the family sleeping on the higher level. Thus, if one family member got up to greet someone at the door, the entire family (or families) *and* their livestock would be awakened.² This sheds light on why the neighbor in Jesus’s story was so hesitant to help his friend.

Stuck in Stale Prayer? Try These Practices.

As a spiritual practice, *how* we pray can be as unique as the prayers in the Bible and the people who uttered them. We are not confined to formula, form, or format. We are not even limited to talking aloud. We can express our thoughts, needs, emotions, and desires in any number of ways.

Entire books and websites are filled with creative ways to pray. Choose the ones that work for you—and let go of the ones that don't. Likely, you will experience seasons of life in which one method of prayer is more helpful than others, and those approaches will probably change over time. God wants to meet you in prayer, so be open to any ways that help facilitate your ongoing conversation with him.

Here are just a few of the many approaches you can use to jumpstart a stalled prayer life.



Praying Scripture



Breath Prayer



Prayer Journaling

1. Praying Scripture

One way to talk to God—especially when you don't know what to pray—is to quote or adapt Scripture. You can take a Bible verse (or several) and personalize it for yourself or someone you're praying for.

Some examples:

What's the situation?

My friend [name] who knows God's hope, love, and strength is going through a tough time.

What are some Bible verses that relate to the situation?

Ephesians 1:18-19 "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

What's my prayer?

I pray that the eyes of [name of your friend]'s heart may be enlightened, so [name] may know the hope to which you have called [him or her], the riches of your glorious grace and love for [him or her], and your incomparably great power to strengthen and sustain [him or her] in the midst of [the trial or difficult time].

What's the situation?

I have strayed from God and want to confess my sin to God.

What are some Bible verses that relate to the situation?

Psalms 51:1-2, 10 "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

What's my prayer?

God, I know that I have sinned against you. Have mercy on me. According to your unfailing love and your great compassion, cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a pure heart and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

What's the situation?

I want to pray for my church.

What are some Bible verses that relate to the situation?

Colossians 3:12-14 "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

What's my prayer?

Lord Jesus, I pray for my church, that we would be compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, and patient with each other. May we offer each other the same grace and forgiveness that you have given us. Above all, let us love each other as you have loved us.

Now you try it:

What's the situation?

What are some Bible verses that relate to the situation?

What's my prayer?

2. Breath Prayer

One of the oldest practices in Christianity is breath prayer. First practiced by Christian monks and ascetics in the fourth and fifth centuries, these short prayers are designed to be spoken in a single breath, which follows your body's natural rhythm.

A well-known example is called the *Jesus Prayer*: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." Some other common breath prayers include: "Come, Holy Spirit," "Gentle Shepherd, carry me," and "Great Physician, heal your child." To practice it:

1. Pick a name for God (Jesus, *Abba*, Shepherd, Emmanuel, etc.).
2. Think of a short phrase that expresses your heart's desire, such as "I choose to trust," "have mercy," "show me," or "give me peace." You could also pray portions of Scripture, such as "Be still and know that I am God" or "Into Your hands I commit my spirit."
3. Pray silently God's name and the first half of a phrase as you inhale; as you exhale, pray the rest of your phrase. Continue this process for a few moments. When your mind wanders (and it will), gently refocus your attention on your prayer, matching it to the rhythm of your breath.
4. Continue this process for five minutes. As you become comfortable with the practice, you may be drawn to lengthier times.

Your breath prayer: " _____, _____."

(name for God) (short phrase)

3. Prayer Journaling

Many people have adopted the practice of journaling as they reflect on their time alone with God, jotting down insights they learn or ways God speaks to them. Prayer journaling is similar but not the same. In prayer journaling, you write your prayer *as you are saying or thinking it*, much like you would write a letter to a trusted friend.

To begin, write “Dear God,” or another favorite term you’ve adopted for God (*Abba*, Lord, Father). Then, write what you are feeling in your heart or what is on your mind. You can write about the ordinary things of your day; God loves to hear about those things. Or you can write about something that is troubling you, such as a painful conversation with a spouse or a difficult situation at work. God wants to hear about those things, too. Don’t censor or edit anything you write. Just let the words flow. Be completely honest with God—he knows your heart anyway.

Once you’ve finished writing your prayer, skip a line and write “Dear [your name].” Sit in silence for a few moments and wait for God to speak to you. Jot down what you hear him saying. You may hear “I love you” or “trust me,” or you may begin writing and discover he wants to say much more. If you wonder if what you wrote is from God, test it against Scripture and against the character of God as revealed in Jesus. Does it align with God’s Word? Does it sound like Jesus?

Again, don’t censor or edit yourself. You may be surprised by what God has to say.

Prayer is not asking for what you think you want, but asking to be changed in ways you can’t imagine.

KATHLEEN NORRIS, *AMAZING GRACE: A VOCABULARY OF FAITH*

Dear _____,
(name for God)

Dear _____,
(your name)



Live It

Praying is simply talking to God as a person speaks with a friend. Whether we express gratitude over a meal, plead by a loved one's bedside, or cry out in grief, we are developing intimacy as we openly share what is on our hearts.

God is not interested in the words themselves but rather the honesty, transparency, and authenticity with which we offer them. He wants us to come to him in prayer because it facilitates and builds a relationship of love and trust with him.

Life Application Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus used plural pronouns—*us, we, our* instead of *I, me*—in his model prayer (Luke 11:2–4)?
2. What might it be like for you to audaciously ask for God's help like the neighbor in Jesus's story?
3. How do you reconcile Luke 11:9–10, where Jesus tells his disciples that those who ask will receive, with the fact that God does not always give us exactly what we ask for?

Notes