

Thoughts on Prayer & Listening to God



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1. God tells us to pray about everything. Both the big and small issues of life.

Philippians 4: 6&7 (NIV)

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 5:7

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

2. We can pray to God because of who He is. He is our all-powerful, all-knowing, loving Father.

Daniel 9:18b

“We do not make request of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.”

3. We can hear God through His word. Many times God will give us the answers to our prayers when we are reading and studying the Bible. The answers may come directly from scripture or it may be that He just puts His wisdom in our hearts. Sometimes I've found that He clarifies my motives, desires, & even my prayer requests in the process of studying His word. This is also the way we learn God's will and He always answers prayers that are according to His will.

1 John 5:14-15

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.”

4. Prayer is a conversation with our Father. God doesn't just respond to our words, but to our whole life. He seems to honor a seeking heart, humility, trust & faith. (This definitely doesn't mean that we have to be perfect because none of us are.) I've actually always been so amazed at how patient & merciful God is with His children. I love this next verse. This is what an angel says to the O.T. prophet, Daniel.

Daniel 10:12

“Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. And I have come in response to them.”

Psalms 25:9

“He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.”

Hebrews 11:6

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

5. We need to slow down and quiet ourselves before the Lord so that the noise and busyness of life doesn't drown out God's voice. This can be done in many ways.
 - Take a walk by yourself in a quiet place. During the walk, I will pray and then quiet myself and ask God to speak to me. Don't let yourself get discouraged when you don't "hear" Him speaking to your Spirit. Sometimes I feel like He is guiding me during that time and other times I don't.
 - Meditate on a scripture. It can be helpful to just focus on a particular verse and still your mind that way.
 - Worship God. Listen to praise music and just worship God. Thank Him for the help He is going to give you. God loves the praises of His people and this helps us to take our eyes off of our problems and put them on the One who can solve them.
6. Expect that God will answer your prayers. He is probably going to surprise you in how He answers them. Sometimes I'm unsure of how God's leading and I ask Him to protect me from making the wrong decision. Many times I'll look back at a situation and see God's hand in my decisions even though I didn't feel His presence at the time. The Psalmist encourages us to wait with expectation.

Psalm 5:3

“In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.”

7. Study the topic of listening to God. I would recommend the study: **Prayer & Listening** by Jan Johnson. This is a six-part study published by IVP. It is part of the Spiritual Disciplines Bible Studies series. It can be purchased at Provident. Here is a helpful excerpt from this study.

“According to Douglas Steere, to listen from the heart requires

- *vulnerability*: God wants to hear my feelings, motives and thoughts
- *expectancy*: God will meet my needs
- *acceptance*: I can accept whatever happens in this quiet time.
- *constancy*: I can rely on God not to get fed up with me.”

8. Rejoice because God is your Creator. He knows you intimately, and He will be faithful to give you ears to hear Him when you ask & seek.