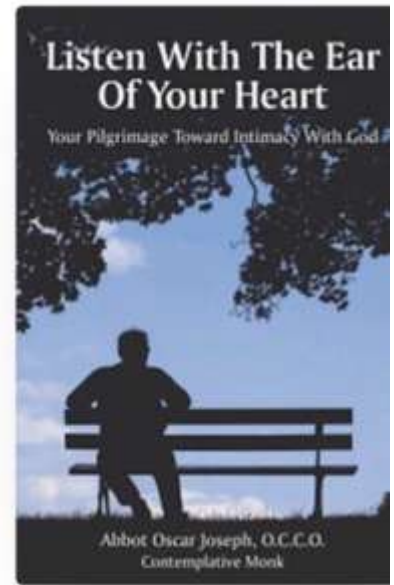
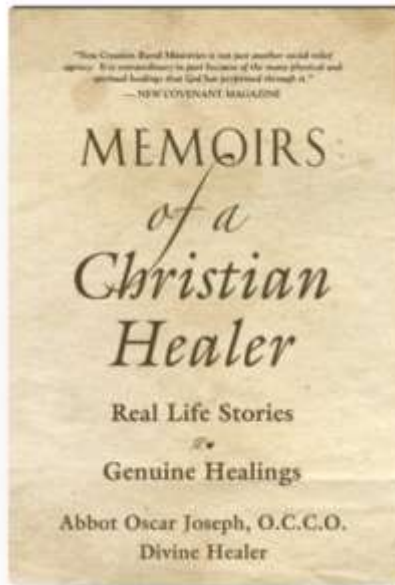
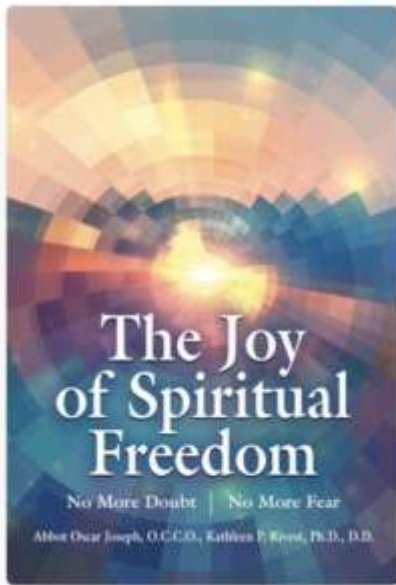


**Praying Unceasingly
Problems and Solutions
by Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO**



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Contents

1. The most important thing that you will ever do	p.4
2. The Real God is a God of love	p.4
3. Important Scriptures to remember	p.6
4. What is prayer?	p.7
5. Types of prayer	p.9
6. Lectio Divina	p.10
7. Why we should pray	p.11
8. List of Prayer books and Apps	p.13
9. What do I expect from prayer?	p.15
10. I want to see things as God sees things.	p.15
11. Dryness in prayer	p.16
12. God's love and our lack of trust	p.17
13. Biblical reasons for unanswered prayers	p.18
14. Prayer concerns	p.19
15. Spiritual direction	p.23
16. Reconciliation/Confession	p.23
17. Pray without ceasing	p.24
18. A Rule of Life	p.31
19. The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross	p.31



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THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT YOU WILL EVER DO

Welcome to some honest straight forward no muss or fuss discussion on the most important thing in your life that is responding to God's call to know Him. If you sincerely respond all the good and holy things will follow.

By ourselves we would not care about godly things. God is always the initiator we are the responders, In terms of where you are at this very moment, you reading this material, you are responding to His initiation. Congrats.

Your response not only proves that there is a caring God but you believe in God and you care.

The sincerity of your response will now be tested as I present the no muss or fuss on what needs to happen next.

Let us begin by looking at the Holy Rule of St. Benedict. This brief Rule has helped millions of people from every Christian heritage.

Prologue

Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is the advice from a father who loves you; welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice... The labor of obedience will bring you back to him from whom you had drifted through the sloth of disobedience...

First of all, every time you begin a good work, you must pray to him most earnestly to bring it to perfection.

In this small section of the Prologue of the Rule of Saint Benedict, we find two things that can be of highest importance to us. First is obedience and secondly, the importance of prayer.

In modern culture, there is a strong emphasis on MY deciding, MY choices, MY way of thinking, etc. Commentary by Philip Lawrence, OSB, Abbot of Christ in the Desert .

We have created our god, and a Jesus in our own image and likeness. This god is fearful. This god, like us, is self absorbed and punishing. He is distant, uncaring, and has left us to fumble on our own.

In my loudest voice I yell, "The god that we have created that mirrors us is a lie from hell."

I will present our true Creator and Savior whose Spirit empowers us to become more than our self absorbed limited debacle.

WARNING once you read the next few pages the sloth of disobedience will be dissolved. You will become eager to learn from the wisdom of scripture and tradition.

The real God is a God of love not fear.

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote :

Fear of God is, in this context, "filial" or chaste fear whereby we revere God and avoid separating ourselves from him—as opposed to "servile" fear, whereby we fear punishment (I/II.67.4; II/II.19.9).

Obedience is the result of love, not fear.

“If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23).

“But if you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).

The following quotes from God’s own “mouth” best describe His true nature. Should we fear this God?

OLD TESTAMENT NAMES FOR GOD

Jehovah (sometimes spelled Yahweh), a reference to God’s divine salvation (Gen. 2:4).

Jehovah-Maccaddeshem, meaning “the Lord thy sanctifier” (Exod. 31:13).

Jehovah-Rohi, meaning “the Lord my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1).

Jehovah-Rapha, meaning “the Lord our healer” (Exod. 16:26).

Jehovah-Jireh, meaning “the Lord will provide” (Gen. 22:13–14).

Jehovah-Shalom, meaning “the Lord is peace” (Judg. 6:24).^{79 79}

From The Joy of Spiritual Freedom

FACTS ABOUT GOD

God is wise (Prov. 3:19; 1 Tim. 1:17)

God is sovereign (Isa. 46:9–11).

God is holy (Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:15).

God is righteous and just (Ps. 119:137)

God is true (John 17:3; Titus 1:1–2).

God is faithful (Deut. 7:9; Ps. 89:1–2).

God is good (Ps. 107:8).

God is merciful (Ps. 103:8–17).

God is gracious (Ps. 111:4; 1 Pet. 5:10).

God is love (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8).

God is spirit (John 4:24).

FACTS ABOUT THE FATHER

He is the Father of all life (Ps. 19:1; 36:9; 148:2–5; John 5:26; Acts 7:24–).

He listened to His Son (John 11:41–42; 12:27–28; Matt. 26:52–52).

He conforms the believers to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

He redeemed the believers (Eph. 1:7).

He justified the believers (Rom. 8:33).

He indwells the believers (John 14:23).

He sealed the believers with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

He keeps the believers (John 10:29, 17:11).

He honors the believers (John 12:26).

He blesses the believers (Eph. 1:3).

He loves the believers (2 Thess. 2:16; John 14:21).

He comforts the believers (2 Cor. 1:3; Rev. 21:4; 2 Thess. 1:16).

He sanctifies the believers (Jude 1; John 17:17).

He bestows peace upon believers (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3; Eph.1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; Titus 1:4).

He is glorified when believers bear fruit (John 15:8).

He reveals truth to believers (Matt. 11:25, 16:17; Luke 10:21; Eph. 1:17).

He supplies the needs of believers (Matt. 6:32–33; Eph. 4:19).

He seeks the worship of believers (John 4:23).

He restores the believers (Ps. 23:3, 51:12; Luke 15:21–24).

I have intentionally belabored the point on the true nature of God in the hopes of changing a lifetime of erroneous programming that the reader may be fueling his doubt and fear.

There is more information this in my book *The Joy of Spiritual Freedom*.

THESE ARE IMPORTANT SCRIPTURES TO REMEMBER

“Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at My presence?” (Jer. 5:22).

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him... There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:16–18).

Paul, in describing the nature of love, simultaneously describes the nature of God. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, it is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (1 Cor. 13:4–7).

The law of God describes the way love acts. The intent is to bless man. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

God's love and us living in, with, and through Him provides true joy.

From my book The Joy of Spiritual Freedom which goes much deeper into the following:

Joy is an interior condition that transcends the immediate and brings stability to the individual.

Joy is not influenced by our success or failures.

Joy is not the absence of troubles or difficulties.

Joy helps us to focus on our true situation and to overcome adversity.

Joy is the product of having interior peace.

Joy is the fruit of a sustained Godly relationship.

Spiritual is a focus upon God's presence.

Spiritual is giving rightful importance to emotional health.

Spiritual is giving rightful importance on the material world.

Freedom is giving of ourselves over to God, a Supreme Being.

Freedom is other centered.

Freedom is the ability to overcome adversity.

Doubt is a product of self focus.

Doubt is a product of defining our reality according to our definitions.

Doubt is a product of making ourselves gods.

Fear is a consequence of the failure of our self definitions.

Fear is a consequence of our emotional and social isolation.

Fear is a consequence of our lack of realizing God's loving presence.

The world is a difficult place, filled with doubt, fear, manipulation, lack of trust and honesty. However as praying Christians we have the empowerment and opportunity to move outside of ourselves, worship God and become spiritually centered and filled with true joy.

What is prayer?

Prayer is lifting up your mind and heart to God.

Lifting your mind and heart to God is near impossible for you if you are tied to the earth with your brokenness and frailties.

Foundations even with one weak brick can weaken the entire structure and eventually will deteriorate other bricks. Intimate prayer requires a sense of unhurried interior quietness, an emptying of your busy thoughts.

You have about sixty to eighty thousand thoughts per day. About 70 percent of them are negative. You have roughly three thousand negative thoughts per hour. Governing your thoughts comes through governing your life.

Don't expect much lifting up of anything if you are overwhelmed with a busy life. If you think that you can hurry God to match your schedule, you are mistaken.

Praying in a quiet place is not praying in the bathroom. It would be helpful if you had a sacred space in your home.

Often, at intersections, I would wait for an opening in the traffic. I would sit still, pray for patience and wait my turn.

Is that prayer? Yes and no. It might just be me reminding myself of a better way to respond to a stressful situation.

Does God like these not so great "liftings" of my heart and mind? He most certainly does.

There are all kinds of prayers such as these informal spontaneous prayers.

"Help me" is a great prayer.

Will these spontaneous prayers advance your relationship with a communicating God? I certainly hope so. You are reminding yourself about your dependency upon God. If God is the initiator, then it follows that He has inspired these prayers.

You can't force a truly divine, mystical, or godly communication. Our job is to be available.

If all you do is pray in your car to and from work, as many people do, or enjoy Christian music while driving and think that satisfies an intimate relationship with your Creator, you are mistaken.

There are other kinds of prayer that do not advance our relationship with a communicating God.

A popular prayer could be called "let's make a deal." It is similar to the TV program where the contestants try to negotiate for their own interest. That is fine for a TV program, but it won't work with God. I remember in my early years, I would frequently promise God that if He gave me such and such, I would do some grand gesture in thanksgiving. Later, I learned that this was witchcraft. If you make terms with God through some manipulation or by promising God something, or by praying in Jesus' name so He would be bound to do what you asked, you are practicing witchcraft, misuse of Scripture, self-absorption and God the genie on the shelf all simultaneously.

Praying “in Jesus’ name” is saying to God that you know Jesus so well that if Jesus were speaking right now, you know that He would be petitioning for the same thing.

That is an awesome responsibility. Do you really know Jesus that well?

There are many ways that you can try to manipulate our dear Lord. One is through excessive ritual. I have seen good hearted Christians abuse rituals by putting confidence in their use as kind of magic.

For example, they could have various intentions such as a need for protection. Personally, I would simply ask God to protect me from... Please remember that the “put a hedge around me” prayer is simply a metaphor.

A local charismatic preacher tried manipulating God by reminding Him how he, the preacher, had been so magnificently grand in his success in doing God’s will that God owed him his petition.

I can’t imagine where the preacher got the idea that being obedient was a savings account that he could draw upon.

Fasting during Lent is a great idea. One of the purposes for fasting is to learn how to exercise self-control. Control over food is transferable to other lustful thoughts. The reliable source, Scripture, does encourage fasting. Fasting from food in the Testaments also eliminates an enormous amount of time spent in food preparation. Now more time is available for prayer.

Short modest food fasting or fasting from TV, especially the news, or some other activity would be appropriate. Fasting from food or other things is fine if it is done thoughtfully and with awareness of any medical limitations. As with anything, there are extremes even of seemingly good things.

Fasting is not stopping from something that you can’t do anyway.

I am concerned that you have been erroneously taught that if you want something, ask God once and then back off. Have faith, don’t ask again. That sounds like misplaced faith and a manipulation of our reliable source, Scripture.

The story of the woman who persistently petitions to the unjust judge eventually wears him out and he grants her petition. I extrapolate, keep praying and don’t give up. God cannot be manipulated or worn out, but our sincere petitions over a period of time are important to Him and to ourselves.

Praying over a period of time gives you the opportunity for clarity as to your real desires. Have you noticed when you originally asked for something, later you changed your mind? The graces that you received even praying for the wrong thing God uses so you might grow in maturity and clarity.

That is also true when a large number of people join in prayer. If you don’t have a real desire for your petition, you will stop praying or fasting for it. Now that is clarity.

Preferably, you prayed before your petitionary prayer, asking God what you should do regarding your need.

Then you wait until He answers. It could take a while before He answers. It is important to know exactly what He wants you to do.

The advantage of having an active prayer life is the certainty that you are walking in, with and through God

Prayer is mostly listening.

TYPES OF PRAYER

Prayer can come in many forms and styles, often beautifully blended.

Blessing and Adoration is the attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the King of Glory and respectful silence in the presence of the ever greater God.

Prayer of Petition is centered on the desire and search for the Kingdom to come in keeping with the teaching of Christ. There is a hierarchy in these petitions. We pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. When we share in God's saving love, we understand that every need can become the object of petition. Christ, who assumed all things in order to redeem all things, is glorified by what we ask the Father in His name. It is with this confidence that St. James and St. Paul exhort us to pray at all times.

Prayer of Intercession is a prayer of petition that leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners. He is "able for all time to save those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." The Holy Spirit "himself intercedes for us...and intercedes for the saints according to the will of God."

During the intercession prayer, he who prays looks "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others," even to the point of praying for those who do him harm.

Prayer of Thanksgiving as in the prayer of petition, every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving. The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."

Prayer of Praise is the form of prayer that recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds God for His own sake and gives Him glory, quite beyond what He does, but simply because He is. It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God in faith before seeing Him in glory.

By praise, the Spirit is joined to our spirits to bear witness that we are children of God, testifying to the only Son in whom we are adopted and by whom we glorify the Father.

Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward Him who is its source and goal: the "one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist."

I just quoted this and it needs some clarification.

The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it: "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."

What if we are in the middle of a terrible even sinful situation should we give thanks for the terrible and sinful situation? NO, NO, NO.

God does NOT give us terrible sinful things. More often than not we are reaping our sowing or Satan is doing something.

Let us read it carefully. We give thanks because God has directed us to do so and because in the midst of the terrible situation we can still find Christ Jesus.

Christ did **NOT** bring it but can give us the grace to persevere in prayer. These prayers are remembering past events, in gratitude, because through the grace of God we managed through situations and actually became closer to our Good Lord.

Gratitude keeps us alive and kicking. The lack of gratitude makes us self-absorbed and lifeless.

I tend to think that when Eve said to Adam, "Try this one," if they had stopped for a moment and had spoken words of thanks to the Lord for all He had given to them, everything would have been different.

Gratitude changes us. We get happier, more empowered, more creative, more emotionally secure and more of the good things.

Gratitude will open our souls to the unity of God, self and others.

Gratitude moves us from limitations and fear to expansion and love.

The definitions of the five types of prayer have been edited from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

From my book *Listen with the Ear of Your Heart*

LECTIO DIVINA

Prayer, the raising of your heart and mind to God, cannot be taught because it does not involve a set of skills. Divine intimacy requires putting aside all that you think you know.

Prayer requires discipline, asceticism, purification and self-control. Those qualities emerge when you earnestly do the pilgrimage as described in my book, *Listen with the Ear of Your Heart*.

Reluctance to set a structure and schedule to pray is reflective of your resistance to God. You still do not trust Him. You prefer to withhold yourself and not be led by God.

The discipline of Lectio Divina is a well-founded vehicle that enables you to seek God. Lectio Divina means reading something holy. The reading is thoughtfully done, unlike reading a newspaper. Read very slowly, letting each word, each character speak to you. You may want to study secondary readings to better know the contents of the passage. You are not attempting to be a biblical scholar. Just let the short passage speak to you.

Lectio Divina is meant to go slowly. Stay with each of the following steps until the Lord inspires you to move to the next step. You could possibly spend a week, a month or more on each step. When I first began doing Lectio Divina, the Lord gave me for eight years three simple words, "in the beginning." When I look back on those eight years, those three words were life-sustaining.

Lectio means reading. Let God choose what your reading should be. It is okay if it takes you some time to understand where He is leading you. Remember, He initiates everything.

Meditatio means meditation. While reading your short Scriptural passage, certain ideas or questions may come to mind. Write them down. These ideas may or may not have a direct connection to the reading. That is okay

since you are not in a rush. Take your time and let the Holy Spirit lead.

Oratio means prayer. After a period of meditation, the Holy Spirit will impress upon you certain significant ideas. It may take some time for you to be aware of which items are most important. That is okay. Keep meditating and asking God questions. Let God direct your prayers. For example, He might lead you to pray concerning your fear of failure. Your simple prayer might be, “Lord, help me. I am terribly frightful of failure.”

Contemptio means contemplation. This is your holy moment when you turn your prayer over to God. Be quiet. Let God do the work. Do not expect anything or have an agenda.

It is difficult to remain quiet for any length of time. When your mind wanders, bring it back. Have something to focus on like a crucifix. Your contemplation may be relatively short. Come back to it sometime later. This is a slow experience worthy of investment.

Silence requires you to put away your selfish efforts to control and receive rewards or satisfactions. Contemplation is the ultimate expression of trust. Contemplation is a grace given by God. There is nothing that you can do to make contemplation happen other than be still and be willing to be led by God. The true contemplative’s prayer is simply, “Here I am, Lord. Do with me what You will.”

Why Should We Pray

We should pray because God commands us to do so and we need to be in an intimate relationship with Him. Our relationship with our Creator gives us freedom and joy.

[Philippians 4:6](#) ESV /

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

[James 5:16](#) ESV /

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

[1 John 5:14](#) ESV

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

[Romans 12:12](#) ESV

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

[John 3:16](#) ESV /

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

[Matthew 6:9-13](#) ESV /

Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

[Mark 11:25](#) ESV /

And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

[Matthew 7:7](#) ESV /

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

[1 John 1:9](#) ESV /

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[James 5:14](#) ESV /

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

[James 1:5](#) ESV /

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Why Should We Pray, continued

In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul lists the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). These fruits emanate or proceed from the Holy Spirit and reveal what the Holy Spirit is like. These are the Holy Spirit's character traits. And because the Holy Spirit is a Person of the Most Holy Trinity, and because the three Persons are one, the fruits reveal what God is like. The grace and power of the Holy Spirit give increase to these fruits. A person who cooperates with this grace, and with growth in holiness, these fruits expand and intensify.

Love, Agape love is the highest form of love, love for both God and neighbor. It is selfless, focused on the other person, given freely and gladly without condition or the expectation of repayment, expressed in service, and willing to suffer on another's behalf.

Joy, Joy is an interior contentment that comes from being close to God and in right relationship with others. Joy also comes with speaking and upholding the truth, honesty and integrity in relationships, enduring hardships and decent conduct.

Peace. Peace is the harmony that occurs when justice prevails. It happens when resources are shared equitably, power is used for service, interdependence is fostered, information is shared openly and honestly, the dignity of each person is respected, legitimate differences are tolerated, the disadvantaged receive help, hurts are forgiven and the common good is upheld.

Patience, Patience is the virtue of suffering interruption or delay with composure and without complaint; to suffer annoyance, insult or mistreatment with self-restraint, refusing to be provoked; and to suffer burdens and difficult tasks with resolve and determination. It is also the willingness to slow down for another's benefit, to set aside one's personal plans and concerns, to go at another's pace, and to take whatever time is necessary to address their need.

Kindness, Kindness is a warm and friendly disposition toward another. A kind person is polite and well-mannered, respectful and considerate, pleasant and agreeable, cheerful and upbeat, caring and helpful, positive and complimentary.

Generosity, Generosity is a bigheartedness grounded in an abundance mentality. It is unselfish and expresses itself in sharing. It is extended to family and friends, strangers, and particularly those in need, and is offered not only as money, food and clothing, but also as time shared and assistance provided.

Faithfulness, Faithfulness is demonstrated by loyalty to friends, duties performed, promises kept, commitments fulfilled, contracts completed, vows observed and being true to one's word.

Gentleness, Gentleness is sensitivity for another person. It is concerned with another's welfare, safety and security. It is grounded in humility. The approach is careful, tender, considerate, affectionate and mild-mannered, free of all pushiness, roughness or abrasiveness.

Self-control, Self-control is self-mastery regardless of the circumstances, to be in control of one's self rather than to be controlled by temptations, events or other people, especially when under pressure or in times of crisis. It is to remain calm, cool and collected, reasonable and even-tempered; to be alert and conscious, to proceed with caution and prudence, and to avoid an impulse or kneejerk response; to be a moderating influence; and to have the strength and courage to reject evil and choose good.

<https://thecatholicspirit.com/faith/focus-on-faith/faith-fundamentals/the-fruits-of-the-holy-spirit/>

LIST OF PRAYER BOOKS AND APPS

Often people will complain that they run out of things to pray about so their prayer time is rather short and feels empty.

Prayer is lifting up your mind and heart to God. Petitionary prayers are important but do little to raising our hearts and minds to God.

There are a number of prayer books and apps that can provide wonderful prayer opportunities. Here is a list of some excellent choices.

Several options exist to facilitate the offering of the Liturgy of the Hours. Some are simplistic and some are quite expansive. The following list represents various texts that you might consider when selecting a book for daily prayer.

Simple Options for the Beginner:

The Glenstal Book of Daily Prayer https://www.amazon.com/Glenstal-Book-DailyPrayer-Benedictine/dp/0814632734/ref=sr_1_3 Published by a Benedictine abbey, this simple, accessible book of prayer will give users the rhythm of daily prayer in easy-to-digest and simple forms.

The Prayer Book called: **Hour by Hour** is a simple rendition of the Book of Common Prayer and is excellent for everyone including from non Catholic traditions. Published by Forward Movement and can be found on Amazon.

Intermediate Options:

Trinity Daily Prayer <https://thetrinitymission.org> Listen with the Ear of Your Heart.

A Book of Daily Prayer (Two Volumes) Volume I: <http://www.lulu.com/shop/robert-lyons/abook-of-daily-prayer-volume-i/hardcover/product24316127.html> **Volume II:** <http://www.lulu.com/shop/robertlyons/a-book-of-daily-prayer-volumeii/hardcover/product-24254170.html>

Office Book (Two-Volume Set) <https://www.amazon.com/Daily-Office-Book-TwoSet/dp/0898691397> This text, first published in the 1980s, provides two small pocket-sized books, one for each year of the Episcopal/Lutheran Daily Office Lectionary.

All the Saints (Four-Volume Set) <http://alpb.org/books/for-all-the-saints-a-prayerbook-for-and-by-the-church/> An outstanding, thorough, yet easily usable text, this Lutheran Breviary.

Advanced Options:

Christian Prayer and Liturgy of the Hours (Four Volume Set) Christian Prayer:
<https://www.amazon.com/Christian-Prayer-Catholic-Book-Publishing/dp/0899424066> **Liturgy of the Hours:**
https://www.amazon.com/Liturgy-Hours-Catholic-Book-Publishing/dp/0899424090/ref=sr_1_1
These are relatively complex texts which represent the official Roman Catholic version of the Hours.

The four volume Liturgy of the Hours set is the most comprehensive and is the best investment in this line for an individual seriously dedicated to the work of daily prayer.

Christian Prayer condenses the material down to one volume.

Apps

There are a number of excellent apps for your digital devices that will be of help:
If you go to “Book of Common Prayer” in your app store there are a large number of options.

Prayer book list was developed by Bishop Robert Lyons, M.Div., BCC, CPES.

Here are some free or inexpensive links for daily prayers. All are excellent. (From the Abbot)

[Universalis](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breviary-tunes/id1044719780) <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breviary-tunes/id1044719780> [Pure Faith](#)

<https://www.acatholic.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Imitation-of-Christ1.pdf>

<https://www.acatholic.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Catholic-Public-Domain-Bible.pdf>

<https://bcponline.org/>

<https://prayerist.com/prayer/>

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/laudate/id499428207&mt=8>>here.

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/laudate/id499428207&mt=8>

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breviary-tunes/id1044719780>

[Breviary](#)

What do I expect from God When I Pray? By Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

I am usually reticent to describe my personal prayer life, lest it sounds too much of me and not enough of God. Of course, if the reader knew me, they would know that for me, everything is God.

My second reservation is that this is my journey, not another's. Indeed, God leads and develops each of us somewhat uniquely, so the reader does not have to try to duplicate anyone other's prayer life. However, there are many good models available, St. Benedict's, for example.

To answer what I expect from God when I come to prayer, I first need to preamble.

I have been fortunate enough to have been raised by a stable, loving Roman Catholic family. I attended a Roman Catholic seminary and have had a valuable formal and personal education in theology, Scripture, psychology, and extensive training in various forms of prayer. God has directed me slowly and very lovingly over the fifty-plus years of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, the Rosary, Lectio Divina, and Benedictine theology.

I have been blessed to have been immersed in a sacramental life filled with the Holy Eucharist, sacramental confession, and ordination to the Priesthood and eventually to the Episcopate.

I am in a loving marriage, a stable life, and am vowed religious.

Perhaps most importantly, I know that I have been and still am a grievous sinner who is unworthy of forgiving by a gracious God and inspired by the Holy Spirit to amend my lifetime and time again.

I have learned that I live in, with, and through God. He is "Dominus Tecum," intimately close to me.

So what do I expect from God when I come to prayer? I expect nothing. My prayer time is my gift of thanksgiving to Him as I grow daily to know my dependence on Him and His eager willingness to be with me.

My prayer continues throughout the day as I participate in His life. I find that He inspires and empowers me to participate in His Kingdom more and more perfectly.

I most experience Him when I celebrate the Holy Eucharist and hold the consecrated host in my hand.

I have mystical experiences most frequently during the Mass and when I pray with others for their needs.

God has healed thousand through my prayers.

Lately, I have experienced several occasions of purging, torn apart, wailing, and being made new. I do not fully understand it, but I know that in my "old age," He is preparing me for something inspiring.

I want to see things as God sees them. by Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Long before the night office began, the man of God, Benedict, was standing at his window, where he watched and prayed while the rest were still asleep. In the dead of night, he suddenly saw a flood of light shining down from above, more brilliant than the sun, and with it, every trace of darkness cleared away. He saw the whole world gathered up before his eyes in what appeared to be a single ray of light. Absorbed as he was in God, it was now easy for him to see all that lay beneath God. In the light outside that was shining before his eyes, there was a brightness that reached into his mind and lifted his spirit heavenward, showing him the insignificance of all that lies below. (From Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great)

This is one of my favorite episodes in Benedict's life. Benedict saw as God saw. In Scripture, the word "saw" often means to know; to know means to possess and have power over. I suggest that if we could see as God sees,

we might have a greater possession of life and enjoy it more. In this article, I suggest that how we possess our suffering is how we possess our Lord.

We have some exciting juxtapositions here reminiscent of St. Paul. Should I be so brave? Medicine, psychiatry, pharmacology, even much of the church do all they can to avoid, diminish, relieve, and deny spiritual, emotional, and physical suffering.

I certainly appreciate the sciences and take my assortment of medications. I suggest that suffering has value and could be embraced to see as God sees and possess the divine.

Paul speaks about this as he describes attaching his suffering to that of the cross to complete Christ's salvific action. We can do the same by offering our suffering, joining our suffering to Christ's, and by turning the dial of our human vision to see how God sees our suffering. How do we do that?

I also ask God to help me see people who bring me suffering as He sees them. Almost immediately, I see them with compassion and empathy.

First, understand that: for God, all time is present time. What happened on Calvary some 2000 years ago is happening right now.

Right now, you and I can stand at the foot of the cross with Mary, John, and the others and suffer with Him, join our suffering with His.

In the Jewish tradition, memorials such as The Passover are not the calling to mind a historical event. Instead, they were reliving the event as though it were happening right now.

That is turning the dial. For example, the Holy Eucharist is not a recalling, as a memorial. It is the life, death, and resurrection of Christ right now.

Next, do the things necessary to turn the dial. By that, I mean have an orderly life, be at peace with God and your neighbor.. Know that where you lack, God will fill. Then we like Job, who, after chapters and chapters of whining, sees God and finally says, "in the light of you, my questions are irrelevant, I now just want to possess You."

Dryness in Prayer by Abbot Oscar Joseph, OCCO

Prayer is the work of God.

All too often, I hear people complain about dryness in prayer. They complain from an erroneous belief that prayer was intended to always be fulfilling and meaningful.

St. John of the Cross calls this spiritual gluttony.

I remember reading a letter between St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. She was encouraging him to join her on a trip to see the latest fad in miracles. He responded that there were enough miracles in his garden so he would not go.

Let me assure you that prayer is mostly an act of obedience and a joyful giving of our time and self to the Lord.

When I pray, I am giving my gift, self oblation of time, to my Creator. He is not obliged to respond in any way. When He does respond, it is mostly through enlightenment or a better understanding.

I find God the most during the Eucharist. I “saw” the bread turn into flesh. Frequently, I feel joined with the saints.

I also become one with the Lord when I pray with others. He often directs my prayers and brings healing.

Br. Brendan, OCCO, reported seeing me transcend during prayer.

So, dear ones, prayer can be very exciting at times. God will create those moments. Meanwhile, simply do the work of God.

From my book, *Listen with the Ear of Your Heart*

*My prayers are worse than dry.
My prayers are not working.
What is my problem?*

God’s Love and Our Lack of Trust

God’s names are points of reference for us to contact His love for us, Healer, Almighty, Protector, Provider, Faithful, Father, Merciful, Love, Peace, and so on.

God is always the initiator. We are always the responders.

God loves us first so we can return His love to Him.

He loves us regardless of our sinfulness, lack of faith, or trust in Him.

We live in, with, through, Him even if we are not aware of this.

We fail to respond to His love because 1. Our lives are full of distractions. 2. Everywhere we turn, we are being lied to.

Distractions: We are easily self-absorbed, full of noise. We create as many as 3000 negative thoughts per hour. Consequently, we become fearful. Fearful people do not trust.

The problem is not that we do not love God. The problem is that we do not trust God.

We reject God because we do not trust Him.

St. Benedict says that “murmuring” can destroy our communities and us.

Pop psychology gives the illusion of thought control by the lie of thinking positively. When that soon fails, we then negatively believe that we are failures. Thinking is the illusion of action.

Scripture says Solution: 1. Repent (not only stop "murmuring" but mature to the state that you no longer care to be negative). 2. Do (action) things: noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy, and charitable.

Repenting is not just an attitude it is a new and different behavior.

Our culture, Church, government, neighbors, family all lie to us.

The purpose of lies is to get us to doubt. When we doubt, we do not trust. Lies lead us not to trust God.

Religious euphemisms and purposeful manipulation of Scripture have invaded the Church.

Examples of lies: "God gives us no more than we can handle," "God tests us with difficult situations." "We have to forgive ourselves." The focus of worship is on us. We have to be entertained to feel good about ourselves.

Examples of truth: Our sins produce difficult times. We need to take responsibility for the consequences of our sinfulness. God can help us during difficult times. God's forgiveness is more than sufficient. What we worship, we become. Worship a Good Holy God, and we will become good and holy. Worship ourselves, and we become fearful and unwilling to trust.

Solution: God has always known that we would be troubled by fear and lack of trust, so He has given us His Son, Jesus the Christ. Jesus empowered the apostles to continue His mission of reconciliation.

The Holy Spirit has empowered the Church to teach faith and morals authoritatively.

We participate in God's solution to our fears and lack of trust by fully participating in His true Church, which is "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic."

We participate in the sacramental life.

Study the Holy Scriptures and the Church's teachings, believing that they can positively contribute to our lives.

Formulate and remember how our Good Lord sees you.

Conclusion: We can grow in trust. Remember that God initiates everything. We are responders.

Biblical Reasons For Unanswered Prayers

1. Not God's will.

1 John 5:14-15

Matthew 6:33

2. Wrong motives and ungodly prayers.

James 4:3

Proverbs 16:2

Proverbs 21:2

3. Unconfessed sin .

Psalms 66:18

Isaiah 59:2

4. Rebellion: Living a continuous life of sin.

Proverbs 28:

John 9:31

Proverbs 15:29

1 Peter 3:12

5. Closing your ears to the needy.

Proverbs 21:13

6. Your prayer life is non-existent and you never spend time in His Word.

John 15:7

7. The Lord could be protecting you from danger that you do not see coming.

Psalms 121:7

8. Doubting .

James 1:6

Matthew 21:22

Mark 11:24

9. God didn't answer so you can grow in humility.

James 4:10

1 Peter 5:6

15. God is making you rely and trust in Him more.

Proverbs 3:5-6

10. God didn't answer because of your pride.

Proverbs 29:23

James 4:6

11. Hypocritical prayer for attention.

Matthew 6:5

12. Giving up.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

Galatians 6:9

Luke 18:1

13. Lack of faith.

Hebrews 11:6

14. You won't forgive others.

Mark 11:25-26

Matthew 6:14

16. Our awesome Lord is in control and God has something better for you.

Ephesians 3:20

Romans 8:28

Jeremiah 29:11

17. You didn't ask.

James 4:2

18. Treating your spouse badly.

1 Peter 3:7

19. Not yet: We must wait for God's timing.

Isaiah 55:8

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

<https://biblereasons.com/reasons-for-unanswered-prayers/>

Prayer Concerns

The expressed prayer concerns below are from my Facebook. Thank you to everyone.

Before I reply to them, let me say a few words. I placed the concerns after the supportive articles. In many cases the articles have answered or given instruction that applies to the concerns. I hope that you have already found your answers in the articles. I will not be repeating the info in those articles.

Also, after 35 years of giving Christian counseling, a doctorate in Christian Counseling, and another in Scripture, I know that the expressed concern is seldom the genuine concern. There are always more profound issues. I can only respond to the words, so hang in there with me.

I also have 25 years teaching Cistercian monks and oblates how to pray and 50 years of my life where I have taken my prayers very seriously.

I suspect even with the limits of this forum I should be able to give some help. We are also limited to the purpose of this booklet. The aim is motivational. However, my books listed earlier go much deeper into praying and creating a lifestyle that will support and sustain a prayer life.

Finally, I know these concerns are often founded on great unresolved pain. I am sorry and grieve with you. Although my answers will be short and to the point know that my heart is big, and I stand with you.

A pastor asks:

Distraction in prayer is a common question .

Distraction is pervasive. I would encourage everyone not to "feel guilty" but rather take it in stride. Relax. Refocus and move on. Perhaps having a crucifix to focus on, praying or singing out loud, changing your physical position, praying when you are most rested and alert, and having prayer time set aside so you do not feel rushed would be helpful. Our lives are often driven by the tyranny of the urgent. Remember, your time is your gift to God, and while you want your gift to be perfect, God is compassionate. Simply saying, "here I am, Lord," and being quiet can be the perfect prayer. Sincerity is better than perfection.

Here are several problems I've heard from several of my patients over the last 5 years. 1. Oh, I don't want to bother God. He's busy with other people who've got it worse than me.

Are we speaking strictly about God's limitations, or are we talking about your feelings of unworthiness? If you think God has limitations, you should get back to Scripture and study. If we are discussing your personal value I suggest you sit, hold a crucifix in your hands, shut up, and look at it until your tears dry and you change your mind.

2. I'm good on my own. 3. If he's there, he doesn't care anyway. Look at all the world's problems. If he could fix it, he would. 4. He already knows my needs. He doesn't need to hear about them from me. He's going to do what he's going to do anyway.

I am sorry for your pain. These questions are born from childhood anger issues and must be addressed in counseling. You are projecting onto God the character of one or more of your childhood caregivers.

A question I hear a lot revolves around anger. They want to know if they get angry or speak angrily to God they will lose their salvation.

Sadly anger toward God is widespread. If someone can get you angry, they must be important to you. You would not lose your salvation. Anger toward God, however, you did lose an asset. Satan loved that. God is there always, but you have eliminated Him. It is not okay to be angry toward God; it is undoubtedly sinful to speak angrily to Him. You can talk about why you are angry and how He let you down; that conversation will open your heart. While God has accepted you but instead of receiving Him you were trying to be in charge and get your way, and when you did not, you behaved like a child acting out..

How to know I am praying in obedience to God and not in subjection to my fallen nature or selfish will?

Just by asking that question your heart is in the right place. Some things to consider: **Prayer is lifting up your mind and heart to God.** Is your prayer highly focused on yourself and your feelings? Are you living in grave sin? Do you usually say Me first, God last? Using a traditional prayer book and Scripture will give you direction and balance.

Expectation management. If you have faith good things are supposed to happen to you through prayer, but sometimes they don't. Why bother making all these asks if you're only going to end up placing everything in God's hands anyway, and his providence provides one way or another?

I feel your pain. Many previous articles have replied to this question. Additionally, God has never promised specific outcomes over specific prayers that is your agenda. If you have a plan of an expected outcome or feeling, then you are NOT placing anything into God's hands. Instead, you are trying to convince Him that you know and want, and He better perform.

I have a problem with prayer when I am out of sorts, that is, tired, angry, depressed, distracted by life. I have to work at it in the morning. I have tried to develop a habit of lives of Saints, and Scripture when I awake each day.

Congrats, you are a human being. Take out your prayer book and just do your best. Sincerity counts. By the way, the saints were human also and struggled with the same issues. Scripture speaks a lot about not worrying. So dear one cool it. All is well.

Does it always have to be so formal? Can't I talk to him as I go thru my day?

Walk with me. Imagine you are in your worst embarrassing moment, then your heroic moment, then doing something no one should ever know about, then you being crazy silly. God saw it all. He was there. Yes, be your usual self with Him.

I wouldn't say, "Hey, Goddy, that was cool."

Back in my running days, I had severe knee pain. I knew I should get new shoes but did not want to spend the money. I prayed for healing but it didn't last. One day I "politely," told God to heal me. God told me to go buy some new shoes.

Another time I was having trouble with negative thinking. I told God that prayer was helpful, but I thought the prayers would work better. WOW!!! God replied that He was not in-charge of my emotions and that I should go for a run. My lesson was to be responsible and do my part.

Lately, I have been giving God a lot of thanks. For example, I thanked God, despite the 93-degree heat, my daughter and I had a cool hike. Hope that helps. Just be yourself.

For me, the toughest time for prayer is when I'm sick. It worries me that when I'm in my final illness, I won't be able to pray.

Bless you, dear one. I understand. I have already set the stage with God and told Him that at my passing time, I am counting on His grace like crazy. There are many times that we have to trust. Trust is formed by consistent behavior over time. It is not an unfounded conclusion. The same with God. You will grow to trust Him when you have consistently experienced His presence in your life.

How do you stay devoted in prayer when it feels like you are just talking to the ceiling? When you do not sense God is listening or present. I often had that experience as a young adult, learning the discipline of daily prayer.

I am glad you learned to replace decisions based on feelings with the discipline to be obedient to God's expressed will to pray. Our feelings certainly have value, but they must be evaluated according to a Godly intellectual standard.

Older people, no family, spending Christmas alone, illness means not getting all the fun done, maybe no meal.

I don't know what the question is, but it sounds like the all-too-familiar performance orientation. Meaning I am valuable if I am doing something. Once someone determines that I am of some value then I can have my joy. The older I get, the less I can perform, so the less I am valued. These thoughts permeate our society. The good news is that our value was given to us by Christ when He gave His life for us and sent the Holy Spirit to be with us. WOW!!! Pretty valuable.

Cancer, death of a loved one, feeling unworthy, I was trying to please but never succeed, feeling the pressure of what the world wants you to be and it's not you.

Please see my comments above on performance orientation. Additionally, the world and those in it don't even know what they want for themselves. How can they judge who you should be? The only criterion is what God wants you to be. Scripture is clear on God's general will for us. As long as you stay locked into the above, you will not be able to hear God's specific will for you. Focus on God not yourself. He will lead you.

He don't need me. I'll pray tomorrow. I'll pray when I feel better.

Your screw-you-God attitude won't get you much. I have spoken about the "I know everything attitude" in many of the articles. God is here for you. You need to quiet down and listen, then repent.

I like to talk to Him in my head .as I go about my daily life, I sometimes wonder if this is a little too familiar? I feel Him close, I ask His advice when I paint, always ask Him to help me when I drive too.

I addressed the value of being yourself and familiar above. Additionally, let me give you a pat on the back. Nice going. Having a running conversation with God is rather exciting.

Thank you, Facebook friends, for your input. I hope that my comments were helpful.

Below are some concerns I have heard from some good-hearted, well-intended people.

I don't have enough faith.

Spending time in Scripture can teach a lot about some of these concerns. Scripture is clear; all we need is a mustard seed of faith. If you are praying, God has inspired you, and you have responded. That is good enough. Unfortunately, there is this erroneous thinking that our faith makes things happen. God makes things happen, we are His cooperative hands and feet.

I don't know how to pray.

I understand. Most churches tell you to pray but do not really teach you how. And far too many parents follow suit. Your best bet is, to begin with a prayer book that focuses on Scripture and uses the psalms a lot. My books will help. Like so many things, we have to be taught. Few things come naturally.

Jesus is my friend.

If we use today's definition of a friend a person who supports our feelings, Jesus is not your friend. Friendship in the New Testament is a far more serious matter. Most discussion is found in the section about the Last Supper, where Jesus speaks about friendship. It is common to misuse Scriptural quotes found in one specific situation and apply them to other not similar situations. Jesus only called His twelve apostles friends. You don't want a God who just supports your feelings. Jesus, my Lord, and my God is far more powerful.

I pray in Jesus' name.

To pray in the name of Jesus means that you are standing before God the Almighty and saying to Him, "Lord God, I know your Son, Jesus, so well, I know that if He were standing here with us now, He would be asking the very same thing of you that I am, and you would not turn Him down. Is that what you are doing? I bet not. These days "in Jesus' name" is an automatic, flippantly used close of prayer. Or it is used to manipulate God to comply with our wishes. That is witchcraft. I encourage everyone who wants to pray in the name of Jesus to spend a great deal of time in prayerful discernment.

How long should I pray for something?

I have heard it said, "Pray once, and by faith let God handle it." I do NOT see that in Scripture. What I see is pray, and pray, and pray. God already knows your needs. The prayer is for you to humbly recall your dependency upon God and to allow you to see how much you desire your prayer. If you really want something, you will press on to ask and ask, and ask.

Years ago, I suspected I would suffer a challenging event. I prayed for eight years that it did not happen. It happened. During those eight years, God had unknowingly prepared me. And He changed the focus of the event. I was now excited about participating in it, and parts of it fulfilled something I had wished for most of my life. Rather exciting. Hang in there, and keep praying.

Should we pray for our enemies?

It is not easy to pray for someone who wants to hurt you. However, God commands us to do so. This is how you pray. Repeatedly, whenever you think about him, pray that God will bless your enemy. Do NOT put your agenda in the prayer. Since God told us to do it and we joyfully pray, God will answer. There is no promise that the enemy will change, but you will. Yes, your anger, hurt, and desire for revenge will be transformed into peace. Hang in there. You will be surprised.

Does God hear everyone's prayers, even those who follow other religions?

God loves His creation. The same prayer criterion that applies to Christians applies to everyone. You may not like that answer, but you sure wanted God's mercy when it was given to you.

How do I pray for an hour? I run out of stuff to say.

You are not alone. Your prayer time can consist of several different activities. Everyone who is sincere about praying needs a prayer book. You can sing, be quiet and listen, do your Lectio Divina, read from the church fathers, journal, etc. As long as you are raising your mind and heart to God, you are praying.

I want to pray, but I don't have enough time.

I hear this whiny statement every day. I have counseled thousands of people and heard hundreds of excuses to legitimize spiritual sloth. I have learned that people will find a way to do what they want. If you really want to pray, then accept God's grace to do so. It may mean trying different schedules or changing your lifestyle to please your Creator. Just do it.

Spiritual Direction

Christianity is a community experience. We are intentioned to find God by participating in a faith community. Some of the gifts that are available within a community are spiritual direction and reconciliation with God. Spiritual direction is concerned with helping a person directly with his or her relationship with God. The underlying question is, “Who is God for me, and who am I for Him?”

Spiritual direction transcends any particular jurisdiction or denomination. The Director helps the person to address God directly and to listen to what God has to communicate. The focus of this kind of direction is the relationship between God and the person. The person is helped not so much to understand the relationship better but to engage in it and to enter into dialogue with God.

Spiritual direction of this kind focuses on what happens when a person listens to and responds to a self-communicating God.

We define spiritual direction as help given by a director that enables a person to pay attention to God’s personal communication, to respond and grow in intimacy with this God and to live out the consequences of the relationship both personally and in community.

The focus on this type of direction is on experience, not ideas, and specifically on religious experience. The spiritual director is most interested in what happens when a person consciously puts himself into the presence of God. Not that the director has little or no interest in the rest of a person’s life. He is interested in the whole person, but the focus of interest is the prayer experience.

Although spiritual direction is best done in the presence of the Director, it may be done by video conferencing.

Reconciliation/Confession

Those who approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation obtain pardon and absolution for the offenses committed against God and is, at the same time, reconciled to the Church which they have wounded by their sins.

Private, auricular confession is preferred over communal penitential rites. Every Christian can go to God directly for forgiveness and should do so daily. There are times, however, when the penitent yearns to hear the words of forgiveness from someone with the authority to do so. Jesus knew our needs and gave the Church via its bishops and priests the authority to absolve sin in His name. Male bishops and priests are the sole ministers of the sacrament.

The Seal of the Confession is absolute. The contents and identity of a penitent can never be made known under any circumstances. The sacrament must be readily available to anyone who reasonably asks for it. The confessor may refuse to hear a confession or give absolution if the penitent does not come to the sacrament with the intent and willingness to be reconciled and amended.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation can only be administered to one person at a time, and they and the Confessor must be present to each other. It cannot be done over the phone or video conference. The Sacrament of Reconciliation normally contains spiritual counsel by the confessor.

The sacrament may be administered in any suitable location.

Protestant churches do not offer sacramental reconciliation but do have available penitential services with assurances from Scripture that a sincerely contrite person is forgiven.

Praying without Ceasing

Let us begin at the beginning.

Forty years ago, we old folks can legitimately say, "back in the day," a thirty-year-old troubled lady, let's call her Jane, asked me to help her heal her conscience. From her point of view, the whole world rejected her. Wherever she went, people looked at her like she was weird. She had even been thrown off the city bus because the passengers feared her. She said, "All I was doing was praying."

She explained that she was compelled to earn God's pleasure and acceptance by strictly following His word in Scripture. She put all of herself into "praying without ceasing." She believed that the best prayer was praying in tongues. So day and night, awake or asleep, she prayed in tongues. The city bus riders thought she was crazy. Yes, she was praying rather loudly.

I bring up this story because many Christians do the same thing. They misread Scripture and often go to unrealistic extremes to be obedient. They then feel guilty and ashamed for failing to obey God's Word. Consequently, their "fear of the Lord" actually ruined their lives.

I remember asking her to look at prayer as an interior attitude that played out in action, not just running her mouth. If she were to live her life utilizing the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, she would be praying unceasingly. She hung on to that, and eventually, she developed a happier life and acquired some friends. See notes #4 for description of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Did I tell her rightly? Was it enough? After all, what does unceasingly really mean? Let us look into it using the following steps.

1. Whatever you do, begin with a prayer asking God to lead you.
2. Take your time. Education, discovery, and enlightenment are processes that can be fun.
3. If it is something about God, go to Scripture, our reliable source.
4. Look up the topic in Scripture.
5. Read the quote until you know it well.
6. Read the Scripture on either side of your quote.
7. Look for other similar Scriptures that essentially say the same thing.
8. Do some research. What does your Church teach about this topic?
9. What do other professionals, Church Fathers, and contemporary scholars say on this topic?
10. Pray. Things should begin to make sense.

That was Jane's problem. Like most good Christians, she doesn't bother to put much thought into their faith. Consequently, most folks have a hollow faith. Hence, God becomes a genie on the shelf you take down when you need something.

If Jane were to do those steps, she would automatically be utilizing the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, such as patience, endurance, love, and seeking peace. She would be praying unceasingly, asking God to provide sufficient grace.

Let us go on that pleasant, exciting journey to discover what "unceasing" means. Did I correctly advise Jane?

1. Whatever you do, begin with a prayer asking God to lead you.

Below is my favorite prayer, but *Help* is also a great prayer. I use it often.

I pray, Lord, that everything I do may be prompted by your inspiration so that every prayer and work may begin from you and be brought to completion by you. St. Benedict.

This prayer also calls me to check my motives. For example, if I am researching to prove that my pastor is "stupid" or how to manipulate my husband/wife into doing my will that certainly would not be a charitable act.

2. Take your time and experience education, discovery, and enlightenment as a process that can be fun.

Even though you are focusing on one topic area, you will begin to see other topics surrounding it and nuances that are sometimes exciting and frustrating. Stay on topic and go back later to research the other revelations.

3. If It is something about God, go to Scripture, our reliable source.

Every genuinely Christian Church uses the Bible as its foundation. If you do not believe the Bible is God-inspired, it will be useless as a reliable source.

The other day I had a comforting vision regarding the Holy Scriptures. Metaphorically, the Scriptures were road, inspired by God and written by the early Church to be a John the Baptist making way for Christ in our lives. The contemporary Church maintains that the road, not adding or taking away, maintains and brings others to it.

4. Look up the topic in Scripture.

Our topic is "praying unceasingly." It will be simple to find many quotes on prayer. Remember that Scripture was not written like an encyclopedia or a question-answer book.

You might not find an exact topical reference; for example, you won't find the word, masturbation or artificial insemination. You will find a lot of information on sexual purity, the purpose of marriage, thought control, etc. Those are your answers.

Most Bibles have a topic section at the back of the text. But let's be honest, go to Google. Most online sources are reliable, but NOT everyone, so be careful.

5. Read the quote until you know it well.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 to "pray without ceasing."

Research every word. Later, we will discuss what prayer is. Let us focus now on "without ceasing." You could go to a dictionary. Better yet, go to several other translations of the Bible. Some translations are better than others, but that is not the issue for now. Now we are trying to capture what "unceasing" means.

I like to see what the Greek, Latin, and Hebrew translations have to say. Finding out the roots of words can be rather exciting.

The Greek and Latin translate similarly: unceasingly, without remission, constantly pray, and pray without intermission.

The Hebrew-Aramaic offers an exciting addition: "offer a humble praise to God without ceasing."

What just happened? We now have a definition of what kind of prayer. Exciting. See my notes #1 for more details.

6. Read the Scripture on either side of your quote.

Definitions and understanding of what "unceasing" means are starting to be formed. Next, we look at the entire passage before and after our quote. I quote the whole passage in my notes; see #2 The passage gives specific directions on what to do during troubling or difficult times. One of those things is to pray "unceasingly," giving praise and thanks to God.

So unceasingly, with thanks, is one more of the many directions. That makes sense.

7. Look for other similar Scriptures that essentially say the same thing.

Often this is a mistake that a lot of people make. Remember, the Bible is a love letter from your Creator. He is consistent with His message. There are stories about people in trouble throwing down a fleece and hanging themselves. Those are individual stories about ego, arrogance, and human frailty, NOT teaching how to behave under stress. How do I know this? I know because it is not consistent throughout Holy Scripture.

I prefer referencing the New Testament because the story of God forming His people has advanced, and the message is more apparent. You will consistently find many quotes on the importance of praying. See page entitled Reasons to Pray for more details.

8. Do some research. What does your Church teach about this topic?

By this time, you might feel pretty secure in your understanding of “unceasingly.” The good news is that we are limited people. The good news means we are not responsible to know everything and there are others who do know more than us. The bad news is that we often think that we know everything. Take the extra effort with an open mind. You will be pleased.

What does your Church teach on “unceasingly”? Most folks do not know what their Church teaches. I recently asked a group of long-standing faithful Methodists what their co-founder, John Wesley taught about losing their salvation. They all joyfully said that you could not lose your salvation. They were in shock when I told them that was not what John Wesley taught. I don't think they have recovered. Take the time and learn what your Church teaches.

9. What do other professionals, Church Fathers, and contemporary scholars say on this topic?

Study the church founders and scholars from your and other Christian traditions. Refrain from wasting your time on Eastern religions or the New Age movement.

One of my favorite places for reliable information is: NEW ADVENT: Home “Pray without ceasing” has 225 references from the church fathers.

A contemporary scholar writes:

Paul's command in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to “pray without ceasing,” can be confusing. Obviously, it cannot mean we are to be in a head-bowed, eyes-closed posture all day long. Paul is not referring to non-stop talking, but rather an attitude of God-consciousness and God-surrender that we carry with us all the time. Every waking moment is to be lived in an awareness that God is with us and that He is actively involved and engaged in our thoughts and actions.

When our thoughts turn to worry, fear, discouragement, and anger, we are to consciously and quickly turn every thought into prayer and every prayer into thanksgiving. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul commands us to stop being anxious and instead, “in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6). He taught the believers at Colossae to devote themselves “to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2). Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers to see prayer as a weapon to use in fighting spiritual battles (Ephesians 6:18). As we go through the day, prayer should be our first response to every fearful situation, every anxious thought, and every undesired task that God commands. A lack of prayer will cause us to depend on ourselves instead of depending on God's grace. Unceasing prayer is, in essence, continual dependence upon and communion with the Father.

What does it mean to pray without ceasing? | GotQuestions.org

This scholar differentiates the act of prayer from being in a state of prayer.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 teaches that we should be in constant communion with God. Keep the lines of communication open even during our non-prayer times. Keep God in our thoughts. Acknowledge Him in ALL our ways. Keep the WIFI connected.

How to pray without ceasing - Bible Issues

Another scholar writes:

For it is your heart's desire that is your prayer; and if your desire continues uninterrupted, your prayer continues also. For not without a meaning did the Apostle say, Pray without ceasing.(1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Are we to be without ceasing bending the knee, prostrating the body, or lifting up our hands, that he says, Pray without ceasing? Or if it is in this sense that we say that we pray, this, I believe, we cannot do without ceasing.

There is another inward kind of prayer without ceasing, which is the desire of the heart. Whatever else you are doing, if you do but long for that Sabbath, you do not cease to pray. If you would never cease to pray, never cease to long after it. The continuance of your longing is the continuance of your prayer.

How to Pray Without Ceasing Through the Desire of the Heart (catholic-link.org)

St. Thomas Aquinas wrote:

*The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are: **wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of God.** The standard interpretation has been the one that St. Thomas Aquinas worked out in the thirteenth century in his Summa Theologiae:*

***Wisdom** is both the knowledge of and judgment about “divine things” and the ability to judge and direct human affairs according to divine truth (I/I.1.6; I/II.69.3; II/II.8.6; II/II.45.1–5).*

***Understanding** is penetrating insight into the very heart of things, especially those higher truths that are necessary for our eternal salvation—in effect, the ability to “see” God (I/I.12.5; I/II.69.2; II/II.8.1–3).*

***Counsel** allows a man to be directed by God in matters necessary for his salvation (II/II.52.1).*

***Fortitude** denotes a firmness of mind in doing good and in avoiding evil, particularly when it is difficult or dangerous to do so, and the confidence to overcome all obstacles, even deadly ones, by virtue of the assurance of everlasting life (I/II.61.3; II/II.123.2; II/II.139.1).*

***Knowledge** is the ability to judge correctly about matters of faith and right action, so as to never wander from the straight path of justice (II/II.9.3).*

***Piety** is, principally, revering God with filial affection, paying worship and duty to God, paying due duty to all men on account of their relationship to God, and honoring the saints and not contradicting Scripture. The Latin word “pietas” denotes the reverence that we give to our father and to our country; since God is the Father of all, the worship of God is also called piety (I/II.68.4; II/II.121.1).*

***Fear of God** is, in this context, “filial” or chaste fear whereby we revere God and avoid separating ourselves from him—as opposed to “servile” fear, whereby we fear punishment (I/II.67.4; II/II.19.9).*

These are heroic character traits that Jesus Christ alone possesses in their plenitude but that he freely shares with the members of his mystical body (i.e., his Church).

These traits are infused into every Christian as a permanent endowment at his baptism, nurtured by the practice of the seven virtues, and sealed in the sacrament of confirmation. They are also known as the sanctifying gifts of

the Spirit, because they serve the purpose of rendering their recipients docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in their lives, helping them to grow in holiness and making them fit for heaven.

These gifts, according to Aquinas, are “habits,” “instincts,” or “dispositions” provided by God as supernatural helps to man in the process of his “perfection.” **They enable man to transcend the limitations of human reason and human nature and participate in the very life of God, as Christ promised (John 14:23).** Aquinas insisted that they are necessary for man’s salvation, which he cannot achieve on his own. They serve to “perfect” the four cardinal or moral virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) and the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). The virtue of charity is the key that unlocks the potential power of the seven gifts, which can (and will) lie dormant in the soul after baptism unless so acted upon.”

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit | Catholic Answer

Another scholar writes:

How Do the Fruits of the Holy Spirit Differ From the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

If the gifts of the Holy Spirit are like virtues, the fruits of the Holy Spirit are the actions that those virtues produce. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we bear fruit in the form of moral action. In other words, the fruits of the Holy Spirit are works that we can perform only with the aid of the Holy Spirit. The presence of these fruits is an indication that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian believer.

Where Are the Fruits of the Holy Spirit Found in the Bible?

Saint Paul, in the Letter to the Galatians (5:22), lists the fruits of the Holy Spirit. There are two different versions of the text. A shorter version, commonly used in both Catholic and Protestant Bibles today, lists nine fruits of the Holy Spirit; the longer version, which Saint Jerome used in his Latin translation of the Bible known as the Vulgate, includes three more. The Vulgate is the official text of the Bible that the Catholic Church uses; for that reason, the Catholic Church has always referred to the 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The 12 Fruits of the Holy Spirit

The 12 fruits are charity (or love), joy, peace, patience, benignity (or kindness), goodness, longanimity (or long-suffering), mildness (or gentleness), faith, modesty, continency (or self-control), and chastity. (Longanimity, modesty, and chastity are the three fruits found only in the longer version of the text.)

Charity (or Love)

Charity is the love of God and of neighbor, without any thought of receiving something in return. It is not a "warm and fuzzy" feeling, however; charity is expressed in concrete action toward God and our fellow man.

Joy

Joy isn't emotional, in the sense that we commonly think of joy; rather, it is the state of being undisturbed by the negative things in life.

Peace

Peace is a tranquility in our soul that comes from relying on God. Rather than getting caught up in anxiety for the future, Christians, through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, trust God to provide for them.

Patience

Patience is the ability to bear the imperfections of other people, through knowledge of our own imperfections and our need for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Benignity (or Kindness)

Kindness is the willingness to give to others above and beyond what we owe them.

Goodness

Goodness is the avoidance of evil and the embrace of what's right, even at the expense of one's earthly fame and fortune.

Longanimity (or Long-Suffering)

Longanimity is patience under provocation. While patience is properly directed at other's faults, to be long-suffering is to endure quietly the attacks of others.

Mildness (or Gentleness)

To be mild in behavior is to be forgiving rather than angry, gracious rather than vengeful. The gentle person is meek; like Christ Himself, Who said that "I am gentle and humble of heart" (Matthew 11:29) he does not insist on having his own way but yields to others for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Faith

Faith, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, means living our life in accordance with God's will at all times.

Modesty

Being modest means humbling yourself, acknowledging that any of your successes, achievements, talents, or merits are not truly your own but gifts from God.

Continence

Continence is self-control or temperance. It does not mean denying oneself what one needs or even necessarily what one wants (so long as what one wants is something good); rather, it is the exercise of moderation in all things.

Chastity

Chastity is the submission of physical desire to right reason, subjugating it to one's spiritual nature. Chastity means indulging our physical desires only within the appropriate contexts—for instance, engaging in sexual activity only within marriage."

What Are the 12 Fruits of the Holy Spirit? (learnreligions.com)

10. Pray. Things should begin to make sense.

God always initiates and He empowers us to respond. Our task is to cooperate with the grace given to us. If we cannot pray as God would have us it is because we have chosen to reject Him and His grace.

I can hear the, "yes buts, no one taught us how to pray." While that maybe true it is also true that you did NOT take it upon yourself to learn. "Wait, my biological father never loved me. So I do not know how to love" That may be true but what have you done to become a loving person? Stop being a victim. God the Father has been pursuing you the moment you were created in your mother's womb. God wants you. He loves you. He pursues you. Stop and say, "Here I am Lord." Than use His grace to do what is necessary to grow spiritually. **THERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CREATOR.**

Next be quiet and listen.

After all this research and prayer each step of the way seeking guidance perhaps the best prayer is silence." Listen with the ear of your heart." I like to put my writings aside for a day or two and let it "perk."

To summarize:

I prayed for God's Help throughout my research. I looked at the text, carefully defined the words of the topic, found it to be consistent with all of Scripture, researched what my Church and the Church Fathers and scholars teach, and can now conclude:

Praying unceasingly is not an act of prayer but a state of prayer in which I yearn for and seek to realize His Holy Presence in all of my life. As I live in, with, and through my Lord, I simultaneously live the Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

What a wonderful and inspiring conclusion.

My advice forty years ago to Jane was right on. Thank you, Lord.

Notes

#1, Greek

ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε **Strong's Concordance**

adialeiptós: incessantly

Original Word: ἀδιαλείπτως

Part of Speech: Adverb

Transliteration: adialeiptós

Phonetic Spelling: (ad-ee-al-ipe'-toce)

Definition: incessantly

Usage: unceasingly, without remission.
constantly pray

Latin:

Sine intermissione orate.

Pray without intermission.

Hebrew-Aramaic

I Thessalonians 5:17: "Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus toward you."

The word for pray here is proseuchomai in the Greek. It is used 87 times in the New Testament for prayer and yet we don't get too much insight into what this prayer is. There are many types of prayer to be found in the Hebrew and Aramaic. There is Harim which is to extol, you have berek which means to bless, gil which is often rendered as rejoice, hagah which is to meditate, histahawah which means to adore or to lay prostrate, 'anah which is to sigh or express deep feelings and of course there is Halah which is to praise. There is one other word palal in the Hebrew which is often translated as prayer but means to offer supplication to God or a humble praise to God. The Septuagint uses the Greek word proseuchomai for palal.

#2, 1Thes.17

*Brethren, we would ask you to pay deference to those who work among you, those who have charge of you in the Lord, and give you directions; make it a rule of charity to hold them in special esteem, in honour of the duty they perform, and maintain unity with them.[1] And, brethren, let us make this appeal to you; warn the vagabonds, encourage the faint-hearted, support the waverers, be patient towards all. See to it that nobody repays injury with injury; you must aim always at what is best, for one another and for all around you.[2] Joy be with you always. **Never cease praying.** Give thanks upon all occasions; this is what God expects of you all in Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the utterances of the Spirit, do not hold prophecy in low esteem; and yet you must scrutinize it all carefully, retaining only what is good, and rejecting all that has a look of evil about it.[3] So may the God of peace sanctify you wholly, keep spirit and soul and body unimpaired, to greet the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ without reproach. The God who called you is true to his promise; he will not fail you. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with the kiss of saints. I adjure you in the Lord's name to see that this letter is read out to all our holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, Amen. The Knox Bible*

A RULE OF LIFE

If you do not have a Rule of Life, life will rule you. Sometimes it seems that life rules your work, family, God, prayer and church. St. Benedict wrote his Holy Rule “so that, you may return to Him from whom you had departed by the sloth of disobedience... Come my children listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Run while you have the light of life, lest the darkness of death overtake you... And so we are going to establish a school for the service of the Lord.”

I have always believed that original sin was essentially motivated by pride but energized by sloth. Both pride and sloth are certainly entertaining us today. If you have heard and responded to the Word of God and said, “Here I am, Lord,” and seek to be on the mountain with the Lord of all Life, the Holy Rule of St. Benedict teaches, as a school, how to be with Him and simultaneously live in the world.

The Holy Rule is for everyone who wants to listen with the ear of your heart. It can be applied to every walk of life. It is down-to-earth, realistic, and compassionate.

The Rule of St. Benedict has influenced the Church throughout the centuries. What is most impressive about the Holy Rule of St. Benedict is the fact that it has been with us for 1,500 years and is still relevant and contemporary.

The Rule transcends factions, divisions, denominations, rites, politics and administrative red tape. One can find monastics, religious and lay people living the Rule of St. Benedict alike in all Christian faith expressions.

The Rule of St. Benedict is ecumenical. It covers all the practical aspects of life and is valued as a guide to a simple life lived fully in homes, businesses, churches, as well as monasteries. It leads those living under the Rule toward a holy life and to encounter God face-to-face and to create a personal experience with God.

The Rule of St. Benedict is a guide and the kind of life that Christians want to celebrate. They want a simple life, lived well. The last place that a Christian seeks is the whirlwind of earthbound stress, confusion, fear and fragility. Following a Rule of Life provides direction on healthy choices rather than making decisions forced upon us by fearful stress. The Rule of St. Benedict is a time honored way of life that provides guidance on life’s challenges.

The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance

The Cistercian Order of the Holy Cross, Common Observance, is an independent dispersed religious order within the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

We describe ourselves as living under a Common Observance because our Order allows for much flexibility in exercising the Cistercian charism. We also try to be open to the authentic movement of the Holy Spirit in our time and place.

Some unique aspects of the Order of the Holy Cross are:

- First order monks are single or married. Our members live in their homes and continue their usual family, work and church responsibilities .
- They may perform works of charity, pastoral ministry and mission work. Priests and deacons of or in the Order may be single or married. We have a realistic formation program for those men who wish to be ordained.
- Men and women from both the Historic and Protestant churches may participate as third order oblates.

Our typical members are single or married working men and women who are active in their church and community and desire to advance in their intimate relationship with God. Several of our members are advanced in age and have a physical disability.

In brief

We serve men and women, clerical or lay, married or single by:

- Helping them grow in perfection through the use of the Rule of St. Benedict, our Constitution, the Manual, and community life.
- Consecrating to a first-order religious life those who desire such a commitment.
- Validating and assisting those already living the religious life but not living in a formal community.
- Helping those who desire a lesser involvement in a monastic life through our third-order oblate program.
- Supporting men with a call to priesthood through ordination, incardination or encouraging those who wish to stay in their existing jurisdictions.
- Encouraging our membership in a contemplative life as well as in works of charity, pastoral ministry and mission work.

Please read our website CistercianMonks.org. If you have any questions or would like to apply, feel free to write me personally:

The Rt. Rev. Oscar Joseph, OCCO

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