



St. Joseph's
Episcopal Church

How to Pray Effectively: A Biblical Way to Pray for Results

Week 9 | Developing Good Prayer Habits

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Prayer Before Bible Study

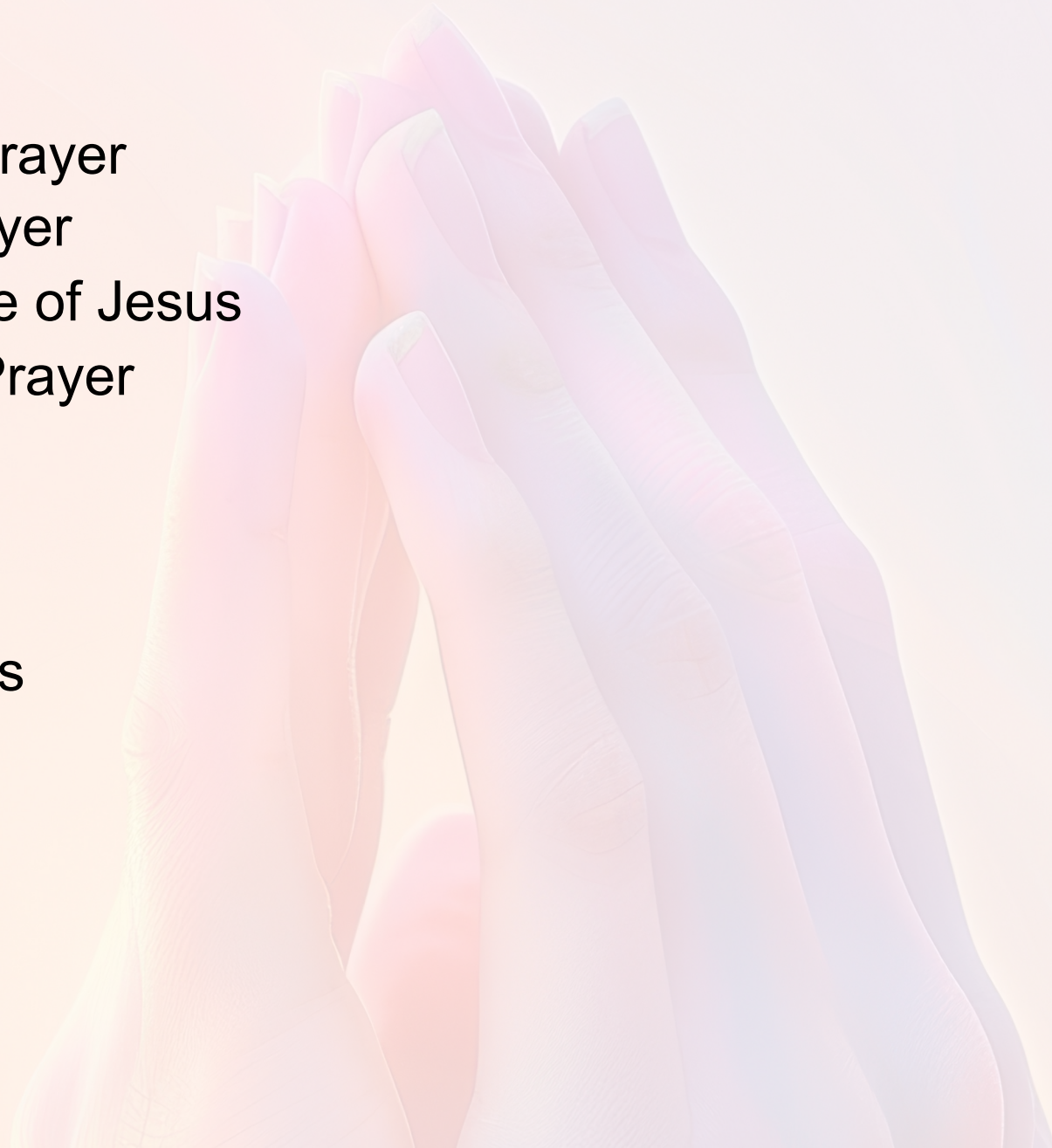
Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which You have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

— Collect for Proper 28:
Book of Common Prayer, p. 236)



Recap

1. Keys for Effective Prayer
2. Components of Prayer
3. Praying in the Name of Jesus
4. Using Scripture in Prayer
5. Prayer and Faith
6. Praying in the Spirit
7. Prayer and Fasting
8. Intercessory Prayers



Word of Thanks

Before we proceed to the new topic “Intercessory Prayers” may I pause to give thanks to some of you who sent a donation to this teaching ministry. Your donation will go to the Clergy Discretionary Fund, helping missionaries, causes, and people in need.



This course is free but if you are moved to support my teaching ministry at St. Joseph’s, you may donate by scanning this **QR Code**, sending payment **via Zelle to treasurer@stjosephqv.org**, or visiting our website at **www.stjosephqv.org/donate**

Habit

noun

1. *: a settled tendency or usual manner of behavior*
2. *: an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary*
3. *: a behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition that shows itself in regularity or increased facility of performance*

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Habits

People are said to be “*creatures of habits.*” We develop countless habits as we navigate the world, whether we are aware of them or not. Habits tend to become deeply ingrained in our brains and so sometimes they become more difficult to break. They can be harmful or beneficial depending upon what kind of habit we develop. Smokers for instance, would instinctively reach out for a cigarette after waking up. The devout on the other hand, would immediately thank God after waking up. We believe that smoking is harmful to your health but prayer is beneficial to your health, both body and soul.



Habits

According to a May 2020 article in the Association for Psychological Science, cultivating a regular habit of prayer can result in:

- decrease in anxiety and stress
- having a more positive mood
- calming the nervous system
- a sense of emotional support and a sense of connection
- reacting less to negative emotions
- feeling less angry

So let us develop this healthy habit of prayer.





Private place and plenty of time are the life of
prayer.

— E.M. Bounds



Good Habits

Good Prayer Habits

1. Set aside a specific daily time with the least distractions

Find a time or times of the day where you can devote your full attention to God. That may be when you wake up, or sitting with a cup of coffee, it may be on your way to work or during your lunchtime, it could be as you prepare to go to bed.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

— Mark 1:35



Good Prayer Habits

2. Schedule time to meet with God

A prayer can be one word or last one minute. However, in establishing a habit of prayer, we must make enough time to greet our Creator with adoration and praise, confess our sins, give thanks for our past and present, and to pray for ourselves and those who surround us.

but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.

— Isaiah 40:31



Good Prayer Habits

3. Select a suitable space

Do you have a prayer room or a family altar? Creating a dedicated space for prayer will help you focus on God. This space should be quiet, comfortable, and clear of clutter. It can be large or small, you can even use a walk in closet. You may add religious items that resonate and put you in the correct frame of mind.

But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

— Matthew 6:6



Good Prayer Habits

4. Adopt a balanced pattern or template for prayer

In this course, we discussed ACTS; the practice of using Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Use this as a template for your prayer practice, or use the Book of Common Prayer to following Morning, Noonday, or Evening Prayer. You may also incorporate the Lord's Prayer into your practice.

“Pray, then, in this way: Our Father in heaven, may your name be revered as holy. May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. — Matthew 6:9-13



Good Prayer Habits

5. Use a Prayer List or Prayer Map to enrich your Intercessions

As we learned last week, intercessory prayer is integral to effective prayer. Create a list of people and/or situations that you keep will keep in prayer; this list should be updated regularly depending on the circumstances surrounding each person/item on your list.

First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone. — 1 Timothy 2:1



Good Prayer Habits

6. Keep a prayer journal or notebook

Dedicate a blank notebook for your practice of prayer. In it, record dates and times for each prayer session, your everchanging Intercession List, thanksgivings for answered prayers, favorite prayers, or other items pertaining to your practice.

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. — Jeremiah 30:2




Good Prayer Habits

7. Plan or join an annual prayer retreat

Schedule time to spend in study, prayer, reflection, and communion with God and others. You may learn different methods of prayer and meditation that you can apply to your own practice. Consider also joining a religious pilgrimage, for instance a trip to the Holy Land, Ignatian Spiritual Retreat, or to a Taize community if you can afford to do so.





Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it.

— Corrie ten Boom



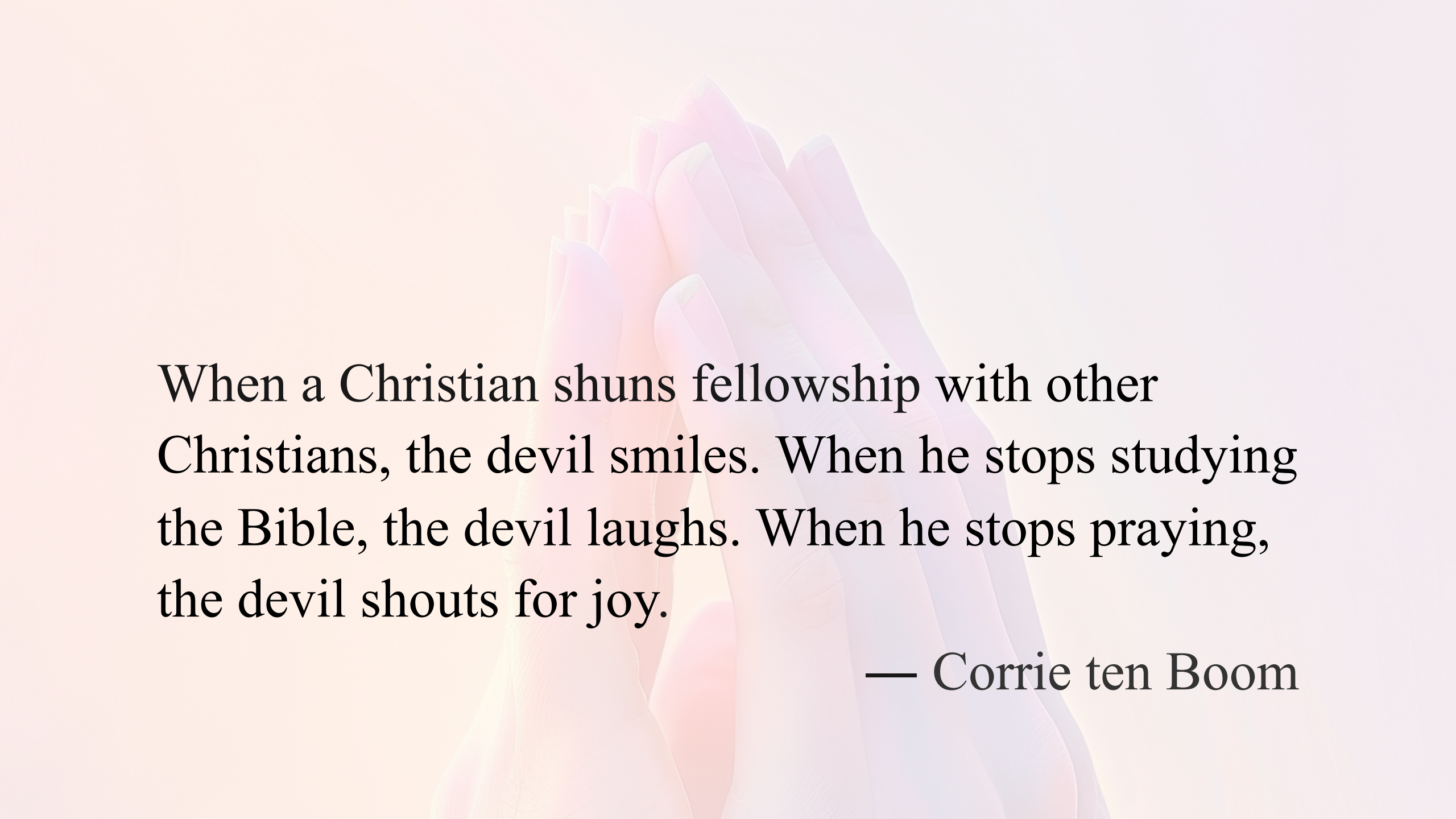
Discipline



Create Discipline

One of the most important tools in developing a prayer habit is discipline. You must dedicate yourself to pray daily at your dedicated time/times to ensure that you stick with this practice long term. To do so, follow these guidelines:

1. Recognize the importance of prayer in your life
2. Maintain the commitment to God
3. Honor the impromptu impulse to pray as the Spirit leads in addition to number 4
4. Pray regularly according to schedule
5. Find a prayer partner or prayer group
6. Attend church prayer meetings regularly
7. Attend Sunday Service regularly



When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy.

— Corrie ten Boom



Pitfalls

Avoid Pitfalls

There are pitfalls in establishing any healthy habit.

1. Do not allow your mood or feelings to dictate your prayer time
Pray whether you are happy or sad, in the mood or not. If it is your time to pray, go to your space and pray.
2. Do not substitute an activity for prayer
Your prayer time is your prayer time. Do not schedule other activities, even religious activities at that time. You must stick to the plan you developed and it will become involuntary, like muscle memory.



Avoid Pitfalls

3. Do not be bound by legalism

You may pray whenever the Spirit moves you, but you must also pray at the time and place that you have scheduled it, barring emergencies. Do not prevent yourself from praying at any other time.

Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath.

— Mark 2:27





God is a Resource

Draw on God's Resources

1. Concentrate on God's love, wisdom, power, and authority, instead of social, political, or other turmoil in the world.

I have said this to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world, you face persecution, but take courage: I have conquered the world!

— John 16:33



Draw on God's Resources

2. Pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

— John 14:15-17

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words.

— Romans 8:26



Draw on God's Resources

3. Use spiritual weapons in prayer

Indeed, we live as humans but do not wage war according to human standards, for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

— 2 Corinthians 10:3-5



Draw on God's Resources

3. Use spiritual weapons in prayer

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power; put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, for our struggle is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on the evil day and, having prevailed against everything, to stand firm. Stand, therefore, and belt your waist with truth and put on the breastplate of righteousness and lace up your sandals in preparation for the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

— Ephesians 6:10-18



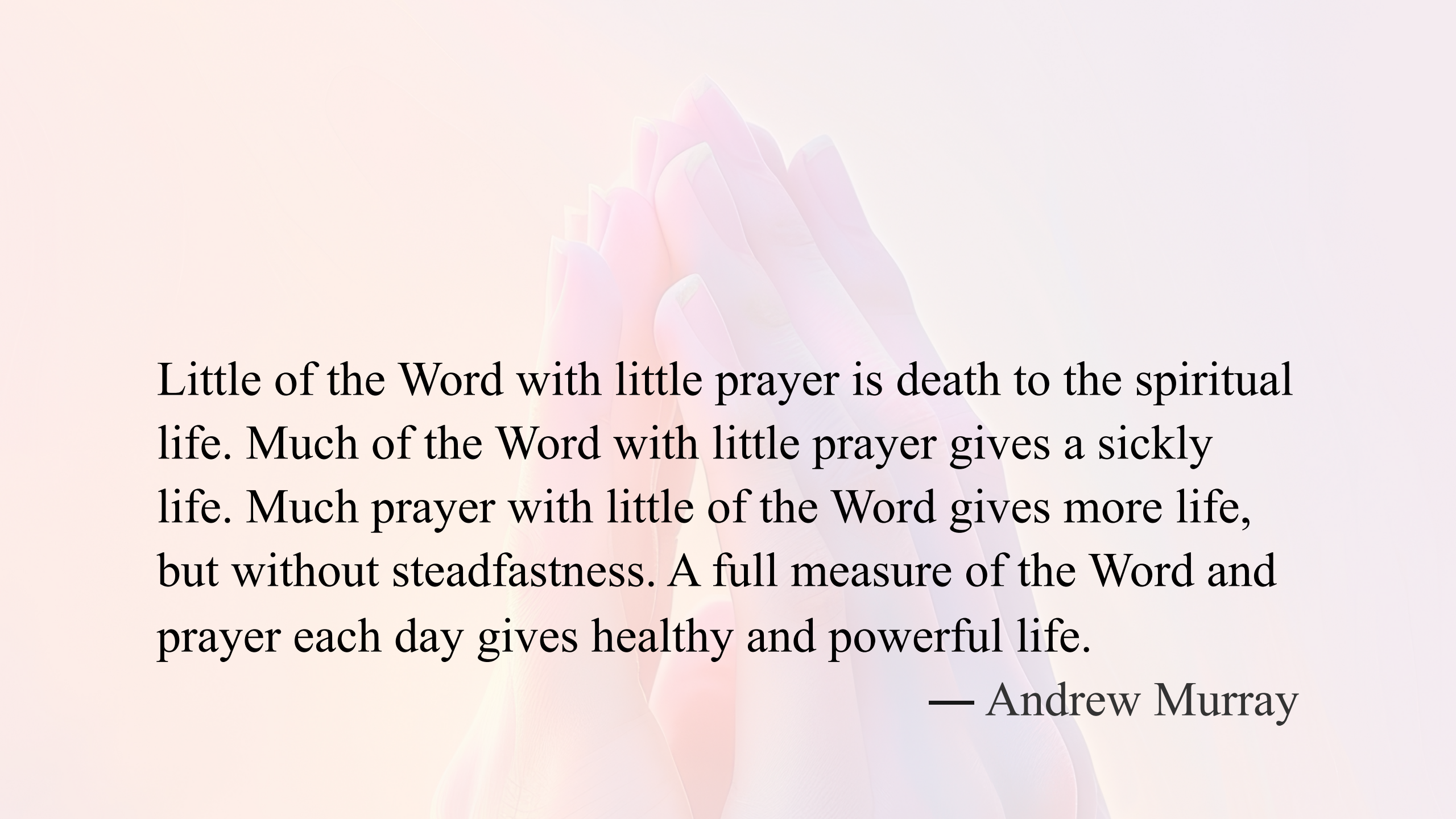
Draw on God's Resources

3. Use spiritual weapons in prayer

But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.

— Revelation 12:11





Little of the Word with little prayer is death to the spiritual life. Much of the Word with little prayer gives a sickly life. Much prayer with little of the Word gives more life, but without steadfastness. A full measure of the Word and prayer each day gives healthy and powerful life.

— Andrew Murray



Learn from the Bible

Learn Good Prayer Habits from the Bible

1. Daniel prayed three times daily

Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room open toward Jerusalem, and to get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously.

— Daniel 6:10



Learn Good Prayer Habits from the Bible

2. Nehemiah prayed consistently in all situations

The words of Nehemiah son of Hacaliah. In the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, one of my brothers, Hanani, came with certain men from Judah, and I asked them about the Jews who escaped, those who had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. They replied, “The remnant there in the province who escaped captivity are in great trouble and shame; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been destroyed by fire.”

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night.

— Nehemiah 1:1-6



Learn Good Prayer Habits from the Bible

2. Nehemiah prayed consistently in all situations

In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was served him, I carried the wine and gave it to the king. Now, I had never been sad in his presence before. So the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This can only be sadness of the heart.” Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my ancestors’ graves, lies waste and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” Then the king said to me, “What do you request?” So I prayed to the God of heaven. Then I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor with you, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my ancestors’ graves, so that I may rebuild it.” — Nehemiah 2:1-5



Learn Good Prayer Habits from the Bible

2. Nehemiah prayed consistently in all situations

Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he mocked the Jews. He said in the presence of his associates and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it by themselves? Will they offer sacrifice? Will they finish it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish—burned ones at that?” Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “That stone wall they are building—any fox going up on it would break it down!” Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their taunt back on their own heads, and give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. Do not cover their guilt, and do not let their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have raged against the builders. So we rebuilt the wall, and all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and the gaps were beginning to be closed, they were very angry and all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. So we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. — Nehemiah 4:1-9





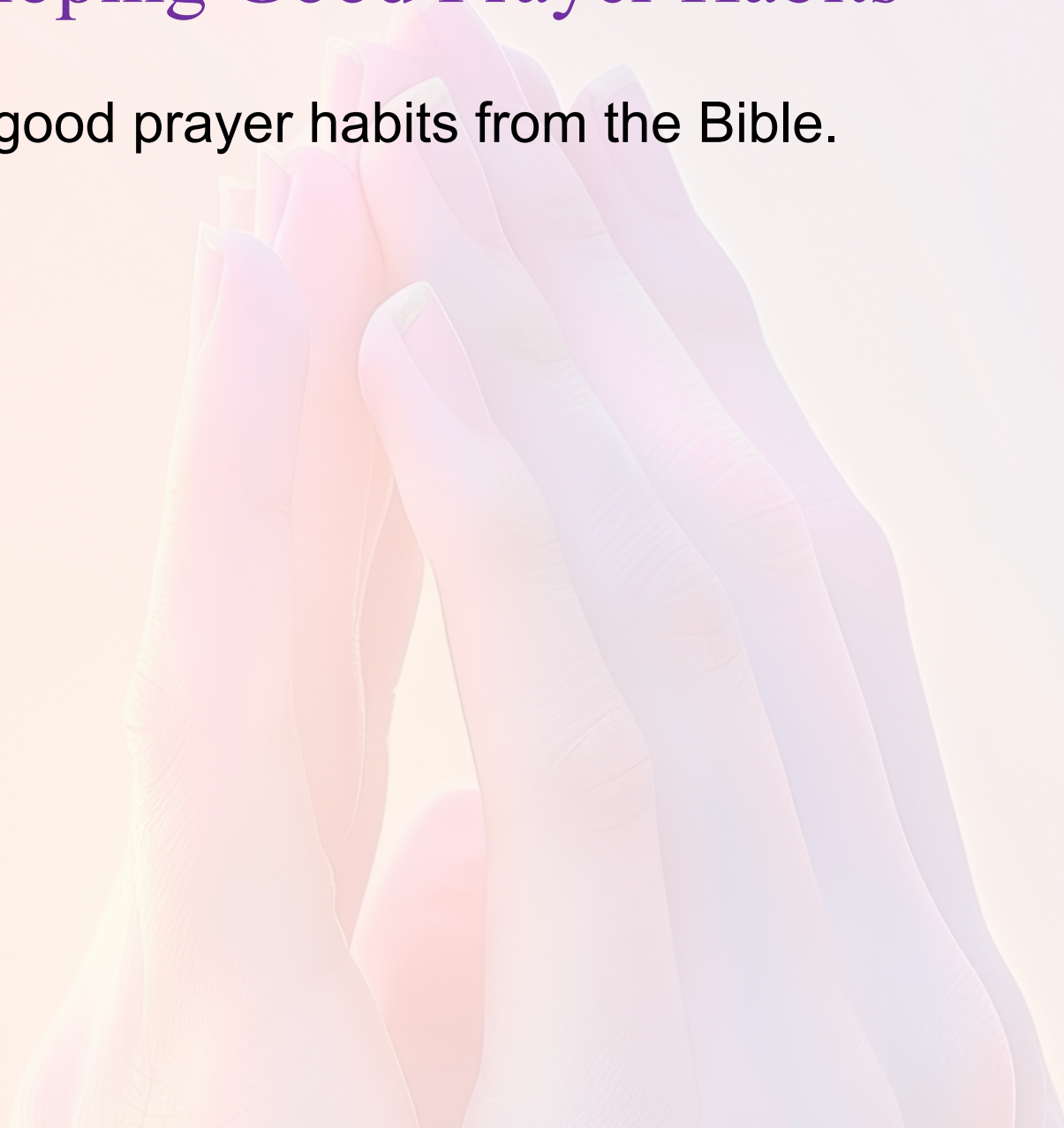
Summary

Summary | Developing Good Prayer Habits

1. We can form good prayer habits by: setting aside a specific daily time with the least amount of distractions to dedicate to prayer; spend time to really meet with God; create a dedicated space to pray; adopt a balanced template for your prayers; make an intercession list of people and situations for which you pray; start a prayer diary or journal; plan or join a retreat or pilgrimage annually.
2. Maintain discipline to create your prayer habit: recognize the importance of daily prayer; commit to the practice; honor the impulse to pray; pray regularly; find a prayer partner or join a prayer group; attend church prayer meetings regularly; attend Sunday service regularly.
3. Do not allow your mood or feelings to dictate your prayer life; do not substitute other activities for prayer; do not be bound by legalism.
4. Draw on God's resources: concentrate on God's love, wisdom, and power; pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit; use spiritual weapons in prayer.

Summary | Developing Good Prayer Habits

5. Learn examples of good prayer habits from the Bible.





Discussion Questions

1. List reasons that you think some Christians do not pray or cannot develop good prayer habits. How can we help to solve this situation?
2. Do you feel the urgent need to make intercessions in these times? Why? For whom?