

HOW TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE THROUGH CONSTANT COMMUNION WITH GOD



The Art of Living In The Presence of God

"We cannot for one moment separate ourselves from Christ with safety. We may have His presence to attend us at every step but only by observing the conditions, which He Himself has laid down." -E. G. White, SL, p. 93

Dr. Patrick Vincent
"Church Growth Plus Ministries"
Home: (813) 994-2800 - Cell: (813) 505-6444
www.ChurchGrowthPlusMinistries.org
pastorv33@verizon.net

The whole gospel, to the whole world, by the whole church

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It is extremely important to establish the habit of a daily devotional quiet time with God, but God desires more than just an appointment on your schedule. In order to maintain intimacy with God throughout your day, it is necessary for Him to be included in every activity, every conversation, every problem, and every thought. You can carry on a continuous, open-ended conversation with Him throughout your day, talking to Him about whatever you are thinking or feeling or doing at every moment of your day.

In 1Thessalonians 5:17 Paul issues the command: "*Pray without ceasing*". Praying without ceasing means conversing with God while working, dining, shopping, exercising and performing your usual everyday tasks. To be successful at sustaining intimacy with God while praying without ceasing, it is an essential that you develop a *pattern of prayer* as well as a model for the *practice of prayer* all the while becoming knowledgeable concerning the *problem of unanswered prayer*.

THE PATTERN OF PRAYER

Patterns of prayer can be useful in maintaining constant communion with God. They include acrostics like FACTS (Faith, Adoration, Confession Thanksgiving, and Supplication), PRAY (Praise, Repentance, Asking, and Yielding) or PRAISE (Praise, Repentance, Ask, Intercede and Enjoying His presence). There are some common elements in all of these patterns but the most commonly used is ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication).

Adoration: It is essential to begin your prayer with adoration for it sets the tone by reminding you of whom you are addressing, whose presence you have entered and whose attention you have gained. As you list His attributes and lift up His character and His personality you reinforce your understanding of who He is. Moreover, adoration is a worthwhile place to begin because God is worthy of adoration. A God who is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent and yet loves you, and watches over you and gives good gifts to you is an awesome God. This acknowledgement of who He is and His worthiness of your adoration will help you get in that heartfelt praying zone that makes your prayer time amazing.

One-way of engaging in adoration is to choose a Psalm of praise and read it or say it back to God. Another way is to sing a song of praise from the hymnal or by a contemporary gospel artist. Yet another way is to praise God through the alphabet (see appendix 1). This is an exercise to increase your praise and to keep you on track while praising God according to His attributes. When you focus your attention on the one who can meet your needs it takes your mind off of your circumstances, as you look to God in dedicated praise for His sufficiency.

Confession: When you begin praying by affirming God's presence through adoration, such adoration will naturally lead to confession. This pattern was established by Isaiah who had a glorious experience of adoration (Isaiah 6:1). His adoration was then followed by a sincere prayer of confession (Isaiah 6: 5). When through adoration you see God in all of His holiness at the same time you see yourself in all of your sinfulness. Your sins create a barrier in the relationship between you and God (Isaiah 59:2). This barrier will have to

come down before you can enjoy a deep, loving, ongoing fellowship and relationship with Him.

Confession allows you to clear away those things in the relationship between you and God that are displeasing to Him (I John 1:9). As the Holy Spirit reveals those areas in your life take time to confess those sins. Most people do their sinning retail but like to do their confession wholesale. They throw all of their sins in a pile and ask God to take care of the whole dirty heap. But for your confession to be real you must name and nail each sin specifically and repent. This involves a change in your attitude and an active move on your part to no longer indulge in that sin. Sometimes confession involves restitution or making things right with someone you have wronged. As you confess your sins and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing all barriers are removed in your fellowship and communication with Him.

Thanksgiving: This part of your prayer requires you to make a distinction between adoration and thanksgiving. Adoration is the glory you give to God for *what He is* in himself, whereas thanksgiving is the glory you give to God *for what He has done* for you. In thanksgiving your thoughts center around yourself – *how grateful you are*. Whereas in adoration your soul is concerned about the majesty and glory of God – *how great He is*. Adoration is to praise Him for His character, whereas thanksgiving is thanking Him for His goodness. Adoration is praising God for being an eternal Being, whereas thanksgiving is thanking God for what He is doing for you right now.

Each day God is blessing you! Every moment you can recall the marvelous things that God has done for you and the wonderful gifts that He has given to you. As you commune with God throughout the day in prayer you need to be constantly thanking God for His blessings: answered prayers, spiritual blessings, physical blessings, material blessings and relational blessings. In 1Thessalonians 5:18 Paul urged, "In everything give thanks." You can always look around you and find something for which to give thanks. I think of the lady who, when her pastor asked how she was feeling replied, "I have a terrible headache, but thank the Lord, I still have a head to ache." To practice the presence of God you must live daily in a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving.

Supplication: Supplications are requests that you make of God. Once you have worshipped God, confessed your sins and given thanks, it is okay for you to take your shopping list of requests to Him. In fact, James 4:2 says, "You have not because you ask not." God gives you many things without you ever asking. If you only had those things today that you asked God for you would be a material and spiritual pauper. But God respects your freedom and He will not force himself upon you. He has ordained that He will give certain things to you (like the Holy Spirit, Luke 11: 13) only through the medium of prayer. Supplication is God's ordained means by which you receive most of your blessings.

A crucial question for every believer is – how will I handle life? The Christian's motto ought to be "Life is precious, handle it with prayer." You should find it helpful to divide the problems, people and pressures of life into seven categories for supplication. Each category is assigned a day of the week for special emphasis as follows:

<i>Sunday:</i>	Physical needs	life, health, food, clothing
<i>Monday:</i>	Relational needs.....	family, friends, neighbors
<i>Tuesday:</i>	Material needs	housing, automobile, and assets
<i>Wednesday:</i>	Personal needs.....	finances, career, wisdom
<i>Thursday:</i>	Ecclesiastical needs.....	church, members, ministries
<i>Friday:</i>	Special needs.....	others, sick, bereaved, needy
<i>Saturday:</i>	Spiritual needs.....	growth, victory, Holy Spirit

Your first inclination ought always to be to pray. Remember supplication is praying for your self while intercession is praying for others. Nothing is too big for God to handle or too small for God to be interested in. He stands ready to bestow His richest blessings upon you when you open your life to Him and tell Him through prayer.

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

When you make prayer a habit you are constantly tuned in to God’s presence. Many people want God’s presence in their lives but don’t want to form the habits that are necessary. Everyone is a creature of habit and when you think about habits you usually think about the bad ones that you need to break. However, being constantly tuned to God’s presence is all about good habits that need to be established. The single most important factor in the life of every great servant of God is constant communion with God through the practice of an established habit of prayer. How then, does one make constant communion with God an established habit? As you consider the formation of your own habits it may be well for you to take into account *biblical* and *practical* examples of some of the great servants of God

Biblical Examples

The Prophet Daniel: You might follow the practice of the prophet Daniel. He was taken into captivity by the king of Babylon when he conquered Jerusalem. God blessed his exemplary life and humble spirit and he rose to preeminence and favor. According to the Scriptures the secret to his success was that he prayed three times a day. Daniel 6:10 says, “*he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed.*” His prayer life was not just an emergency measure but an established habit and practice of daily communion with God. Three times a day he met and kept regular appointments with God. If your constant communion with God is zero this is an excellent place to start. If your body says to you, “three times a day you shall go with me to eat.” Why not say to your body, “three times a day you shall go with me to pray.” Get in the habit of punching spiritual time clocks with God each day.

The Psalmist David: You may follow the practice of the Psalmist David. He had a habit of praying seven times a day. He said, “*seven times a day do I praise thee*” (Psalm 119:164). This is an excellent habit, which you will do well to emulate. You may find it helpful to mark your days into seven segments so that you might be constantly coming to God in the midst of your busy activities. You may pray the first thing on rising in the morning and the last thing before retiring at night. That would be twice. Then you could have a little prayer session just before or after every meal. That would be five times. Then you could pray at midmorning and midafternoon. A prayer break instead of a coffee break or a snack break might give you a spiritual pick up throughout the day. That would be a total of seven times each day. This would help you to live in moment-by-moment fellowship with God.

Practical Examples

Arthur Rank: You might follow the practice of Arthur Rank. He was a great Christian millionaire and business leader who had an elevator straight up to his office that he didn't use. He preferred to take the stairs and he called them his "prayer stairs." In the morning as he walked up the stairs he prayed, asking God to guide him in every step that he took that day. As he took each step separately and deliberately, he prayed. When he finally arrived at the top, he was on a spiritual high. In the morning he walked up asking. Then in the evening he walked down thanking God for the help He had given him that day. Those stairs became the most important thing in Arthur Rank's life and were the key to his success as a businessman and a great leader. Having some "prayer stairs" could give you the good physical and spiritual exercise that you need to keep living in constant fellowship and communion with God.

John Williamson: You might follow the practice of John Williamson. He was a renown, Scottish preacher of the late nineteenth century. When he first opened his eyes in the morning he would pray that God would open the eyes of his understanding. When walked into the bathroom to wash his face and bathe his skin he would pray that God would wash him clean in the blood of the lamb. When he began to comb his hair he thanked God that the hairs of his head were all numbered. When he sat down to the breakfast table he would pray that God would feed him with the sincere milk of His Word. All day on the job he would pray that God would grant him strength equal to his tasks. During his lunch break he would pray that God would feed him with the bread of life. When he came home in the evening and began to clean the house he would pray that God would create in him a clean heart and renew the right spirit within him. The secret to his success as one of the most celebrated preachers of the nineteenth century can be attributed to the fact that day by day he lived in constant moment-by-moment communion with God.

Personal Examples

In addition to these biblical and practical examples seek to acquire as many additional personal examples as you can from persons that you know who have long established habits of prayer in their lives. As you reflect upon all of these examples your goal is to establish your own personal model based upon habits that best suit you. For example, let certain things be prayer reminders to you as you drive your car. Pray every time you miss a green light and are forced to wait at an intersection. When you drive by a hospital it could remind you to pray for the sick, a funeral home to pray for the bereaved, a school to pray for the children, the flag to pray for the government, a church to pray for the work of God and missionaries and the list goes on and on. These reminders could keep you constantly in tune with God throughout the day in moment-by-moment communion with Him.

Martin Luther said, "Prayer is a powerful thing for God has linked Himself there to." Alfred Lord Tennyson said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you can do no more than pray until you have prayed. If daily constant communion with God through prayer is not the habit of your life begin *now*. This will lead you to a new discovery of the blessings and the benefits of experiencing God's presence.

THE PROBLEM OF UNANSWERED PRAYER

When you maintain constant communion with God through prayer you can rest assured that God will always hear your prayer (Psalm 4:3) and that He has promised to answer your prayer (Matthew 7:7, 8). Accordingly, Paul declares “He is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20). But if God is able to answer all of your prayers why doesn’t He do so? Why doesn’t He always answer you immediately, or in the manner that you would like? Why at times does it appear to you that God ignores you when you pray to Him?

Many years ago, an aged island pastor shared with me this comprehensive perspective on why prayer doesn’t always work. The outline is as follows: If the request is not right God says, “No.” If the timing is not right, God says “Slow.” If you are not right God says, “Grow.” If the request is right, the timing is right, and you are right God says, “Go.”

“NO”

If the request is not right God says, “NO.” Some prayer requests however well intentioned are simply inappropriate. Even those closest to Jesus, James and John were not immune from making such requests (Luke 9:51-56). Jesus and His disciples were denied passage through a Samaritan village. This denial so infuriated James and John that they asked Jesus to destroy the whole village with fire from heaven. Jesus’ answer was “no” and rebuked them for making such a request. If the disciples could be capable of making wrong requests so can you.

Sometimes prayers are inappropriate because they come from the wrong motive (John 20:20-23); they are against God’s word or His will (1 John 3:22; 1 John 5:14); they are too selfish and materialistic (James 4:3) or they are requested in the wrong manner (John 14: 13, 14). Sometimes you ask for the wrong thing and God loves you too much to give you something that will hurt you. At other times, He says “no” that in His greater purposes He might give you something that is even better than you requested. Most Christians have lived long enough to thank God that all of their prayers were not answered.

Before bringing a request to the Lord, it’s a good idea to ask: If God granted this request would it bring glory to Him? Would it advance His kingdom? Would it help people? Would it help me grow spiritually? One sign that you are growing spiritually is that you are getting fewer and fewer “no” answers because you are learning what not to ask for. The older children get the less often parents have to say no to them because they learn what not to ask for. It is a good practice to ask God to help you see your requests through His eyes so that you can adjust your prayers and align them with His divine will and purpose for your life.

“SLOW”

If the timing is not right God says “SLOW.” Many Christians, in an instant society, pray like impatient little children who want God to meet every need, grant every request and move every mountain right now, if not sooner. But God does not always answer immediately. This does not mean that He is not going to answer. Isaiah 30:18 says: “therefore will the Lord *wait* that He might be gracious unto you.” With God, timing is more important than time. God’s timetable is not the same as yours. Sometimes you must wait on God’s timing so that at the right time He might be more gracious unto you.

Sometimes God delays so that your faith can be tested and you can develop character qualities such as trust, endurance, patience and submission—qualities that come only when you wait patiently on Him and trust in His timing. God’s delays are not necessarily denials. He knows not only what is best for you, but when it is best for you. You must be careful not to act like you know better than God about when a prayer request should be granted. He always has good reasons for His ‘not yet’s’ and will grant your request when it is best for you.

“GROW”

If you are not right God says, “GROW.” Some times the reason you are not getting the answer you want is that your prayers are being blocked. Not by God, but by you. Before you open your mouth to pray you should ask yourself this question: Is my life right before God? In answering this question it is important to check out at least three possible hindrances: *unconfessed sin, unbelief and unreconciled relationships.*

- **Unconfessed sin:** (*Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:2*). Even a little sin in your life will contaminate your prayers. So if you are tolerating any kind of sin in your life, don’t waste your breath praying unless it’s a prayer of confession. Receive God’s forgiveness then He will listen when you pour out your heart to him.
- **Unbelief:** (*Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 17:20*). Unbelief is an inability to know and trust God to be who He says He is and to do what He says He can do. When you trust in your own understanding you just see impossible circumstances like the powerless disciples who could not heal the lunatic boy because of their unbelief. However, when you trust in God and believe His Word you can have the assurance that “nothing is too difficult for Him.”
- **Unreconciled Relationships:** (*Matthew 5:23, 24; 6:12; 1 Peter 3:7*). There is no point in trying to pray if you are engaged in ongoing, unresolved conflicts with a family member, friend, neighbor or co-worker. Your prayers reach no higher than the ceiling. If you refuse to make wrongs right with those you have wronged or forgive others who have wronged you God will not answer your prayer.

When prayers go unanswered most people want to know what’s wrong with God. It is much easier to blame God than it is to look in the mirror and check yourself. It is unlikely that all of your prayers are inappropriate and that your timing is always off. So each time you pray you must do a thorough work of self-examination to make sure that your soul is completely right with God. This is not to say that you can earn God’s favor to answer your prayers, it will always be Jesus’ blood that makes you worthy. But you do need to do your part if God is going to work in your life.

“GO”

When the request is right, when the timing is right and when the person is right. God says, GO. Answered prayer is not a miracle, it is obedience to God’s word believing that all of the promises of God in Christ are “yes” (2 Corinthians 1:20). No one truly understands how much God really wants to meet your needs and grant your request if you will only free Him to do so by meeting the conditions set forth in His Word. He will then say “go” and open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing so that there will not be room enough to receive it.

Too often when God answers prayer with a “go” He is taken for granted as if He didn’t have anything to do with it. It is important to pray specifically so that you will

recognize the specific answer and be quick to give Him glory. Thanking God for answering your prayers is good for you; for it establishes a healthy attitude of gratitude and will inspire you to praise Him even more as you celebrate His super abundant goodness in your life.

BE PERSISTENT UNTIL YOU ARE CONSISTENT

Be persistent until you are consistent and your constant communion with God will become the hub of your life. Think of your life as a wheel. A wheel has three parts: a rim, spokes, and hub. It is the same with your life. The rim represents the circle of your influence. The spokes represent the various interests of your life such as work, school, recreation, family and friends. Constant communion with God is the daily hub of your life. As a wheel without a hub would collapse or wobble out of control so your life without constant communion with God is more likely to collapse under the pressure of daily living. Without it you lack what the psychiatrist calls “an integrated life.” Jesus says “I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

The key to abundant living is to be persistent until you are consistent.

FIVE-FINGER PRAYER

- *Thumb*- Pray for those closest to you.
- *Pointing finger*- Pray for those who guide you: pastors, teachers, doctors, counselors, and mentors.
- *Middle finger (tallest one)*- Pray for those who lead you: conference leaders, government, civic and business leaders, police and firefighters.
- *Ring finger (weakest one)*- Pray for those who are weak, the lost, the poor, sick, disabled, infants, homeless, the powerless, the persecuted.
- *Pinkie (the smallest, the least)*- Pray for yourself.