

Introduction to 40 days of Prayer.

There are 650 prayers listed in the Bible. The Bible records Jesus praying 25 different times during his earthly ministry. In the Bible, Paul mentions prayer (prayers, prayer reports, prayer requests, exhortations to pray), 41 times. Although prayer can (and should) be done from any bodily position, the Bible lists five specific postures: Sitting (2 Sam 7:18), standing (Mark 11:25), kneeling (Chronicles 6:13; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60, 9:40, 20:36, 21:5; Ephesians 3:14), with one's face to the ground (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:35), and with hands lifted up (1 Timothy 2:8).

The Bible lists at least nine main types of prayer: prayer of faith (James 5:15), prayer of agreement (also known as corporate prayer) (Acts 2:42), prayer of request (Philippians 4:6), prayer of thanksgiving (Psalm 95:2-3), prayer of worship (Acts 13:2-3), prayer of dedication (Matthew 26:39), prayer of intercession (1 Timothy 2:1), and praying in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). Prayer is important as it connects us with God.

Why forty days? Forty is God's number for life change. For reasons unknown to us, the length of 40 – whether 40 days or 40 years – has been significant throughout biblical history. The great flood lasted 40 days. Moses was on the mountain with God for 40 days before he brought down the Ten Commandments. The establishment of the Kingdom of Israel was founded on its first three kings – Saul, David and Solomon – and each ruled for exactly 40 years. The prophet Elijah fasted for 40 days. Jesus fasted and prayed in the wilderness for 40 days. Jesus walked the earth for 40 days following His resurrection before returning to heaven.

In the Bible, every new chapter of God's work was marked, at the onset, by some period of time related to 40. The cleansing of evil from the world through the flood. The journey of the people of Israel out of bondage and into the Promised Land. The entire prophetic era. The beginning of the public ministry of Jesus and the birth of the Church

Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. He healed people with prayers. He also cast demons out with prayer. He prayed often with cries and tears and sometimes all night. **Hebrews 5:7: ⁷ During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.**

The Holy Spirit came upon him and anointed him as he was praying. **Luke 3: 21-22. ²¹ When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And**

as he was praying, heaven was opened²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” Also, he was transfigured or changed as he prayed. **Luke 9:29.²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.**

When he faced his greatest crisis, he did so with prayer. He prayed for his disciples and the church on the night before he died (John 17:1-26). Then petitioning God in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Finally, he died praying. Jesus paid the price so God could be our Father.

After the Lord’s death the disciples prepared for the future by being constantly in **prayer Acts 1:14:¹⁴ They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.** All the church gatherings included prayer. **Acts 2:42:⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.** We are taught in **1 Thessalonians 5:17: Pray without ceasing.** Prayer is so great that wherever you look in the Bible, it is there.

Edmund P Clowney wrote, “The Bible does not present an art of prayer, it presents the God of prayer”.

This is taken from the book, *After I Believe: Everyday Practices for a Vibrant Faith* by pastor James Emery White. He suggests a rhythm that may help in prayer. He acknowledges that it won't work for everyone. Some like a less structured, free flow of thoughts and impressions and feelings. When he prays, he says that these four areas help to anchor his prayer.

It is built off the acrostic A-C-T-S and helps him to remember how to pray. I have some printed today if you want to take one.

A is for adoration. This is a time to express your feelings towards God. Tell him that you love him. Might feel a little awkward to start but that’s OK. Just give God the Honor that he is due.

C is for confession. This is a time for you to confess your sins. Be honest but not in a “things to do list” kind of way. Be led by the spirit.

T is for thanksgiving. Spend some time thanking God for what he has done in your life. James 1:17 says, **¹⁷ Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**

Finally, **S is for supply**. tell God what is really on your mind. Ask for his help. Matthew 7:7, ⁷“**Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.**” ⁸**For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.**

Father's Day

In case you weren't here on Mother's Day, let me fill you in on some of the background. The book of Samuel begins in the days when judges still ruled Israel, possibly during the closing years of Samson's life. The Bible doesn't give us a long introduction; rather the opening verses simply say, “There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah... He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none” (1 Samuel 1:1-2 NIV).

On Mother's Day we focused on Hannah's problems, her prayer, and her promise to dedicate her child to the Lord and raise him in God's house. Today, I want to focus on her husband Elkanah. Elkanah's story, though not as detailed as Hannah's, highlights two powerful lessons that fathers of every generation can benefit from. The first lesson is that godly fathers must love their wives!

GODLY FATHERS LOVE THEIR WIVES

Dads, it goes without saying that your kids need and deserve your love. But, if you're married, your wife comes first. This is tough for some people to hear, but just about every relationship expert agrees. Now there are times when a child's immediate needs might come first momentarily, but ultimately the marriage bond has to be paramount. Your marriage comes first. Then your kids. When it's the other way around, bad things happen. When kids are the centre of your universe, they grow up thinking they are the centre of the universe. But kids who grow up watching their dad model and express true love for their mom, will learn the right way to love and be loved.

The Bible instructs, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25 NCV). That's what Elkanah did. He loved Hannah very much and he showed it. Of course, there are numerous ways to show your wife that you love her, but in my opinion, we can chisel it down to two—works and words.

That's how Elkanah showed his love. At dinner time, the Bible says, "But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her" (1 Samuel 1:5 NIV). It was such a small, but significant act. Elkanah loved his wife and tried to show it in simple acts of service. Dads, you can do the same for your wife. Make the bed in the morning. Do the dishes. Don't leave your underwear on the bathroom floor. Take her on a date or buy her flowers every once in a while. Show your love through your works.

Elkanah also showed love through his words. During the meal, Elkanah asks, "Why aren't you eating? Why be downhearted just because you have no children? You have me—isn't that better than having ten sons?" (1 Samuel 1:8 NLT). Can't you just see the dopey smile on his face when he says this? He saw his wife was hurting and he used words to encourage her and show his love. That's what we ought to do too. Husbands, let's be like Elkanah and love our wives with our words and works.

GODLY FATHERS HONOUR GOD

The Bible says, "Each year Elkanah would travel to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord of Heaven's Armies at the Tabernacle" (1 Samuel 1:3 NLT). Each year, there were three special religious festivals held at the Tabernacle. Even though they had to travel 20 km on foot, through the blistering desert, Elkanah never missed one. And after spending the whole weekend worshipping in God's house, the Bible adds, "The entire family got up early the next morning and went to worship the Lord once more. Then they returned home to Ramah" (1 Samuel 1:19 NLT). Elkanah had to get in one more worship service before they headed home. One more sacrifice. One more prayer. If worship was so important to Elkanah, don't you know he was worshipping at home, too? He and Hannah were people of prayer and praise.

That's what every child needs in their father. I read about a young boy who showed up late for Sunday School. His teacher asked why he was running behind and the boy replied, "I was supposed to be going fishing, but my dad told me I needed to go to church instead." The teacher was very impressed and asked the boy if his dad had explained to him why it was more important to go to church than to go fishing. The boy hung his head and replied, "Yeah. Dad said he didn't have enough bait for both of us." Unfortunately, that sounds like some fathers.

I am conscious that Father's Day is not the same for all of us. Many have suffered from the absence of their father or abuse from their father. Many others whose relationship with their fathers was not great. Some had great relationships with their father but because they have died, Father's Day brings mixed emotions.

If you grew up without a father or not much of one, then Father's Day may just be another fatherless day to you. But if that's the case, I want to encourage you to find a Father in God. When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray he gave us what we call the Lord's prayer. Matthew 6: 9-13. The very first part of the prayer says this, "Our father in heaven".

Our God is father for all of us. Jesus wants us to know from the very beginning of the prayer that God is our father. I know that is not the same as a father who is made of flesh and bones. But maybe today if you are hurting on this Father's Day, God wants you to know that he is here for you. Not only that but he is always here for you.

To be a child of God means that we gain access. Access to his fatherly love and to experience the calm and strength in one's life that results from knowing we are loved and cared for. We have the most intimate and unbreakable relationship possible with the God of the universe. **John 1: 12-13. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.**