

Prayer: The Road to Spiritual Growth

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:17

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Your prayer life has a significant impact on your spiritual growth. Prayer submits your will to the Lord's, it aligns your desires with His purposes, and it cements His truth in your heart. In the end, it's much more than simply bringing your requests and concerns before the Lord.

Over the last several weeks here on the GTY blog, we've been weighing the biblical and practical merits of some popular methods of stimulating your spiritual growth, commonly referred to as spiritual formation. In particular, we looked at how to get the most from your study of God's Word by comparing some modern patterns of spiritual formation to time-tested principles of Bible study and interpretation.

But if you've heard or read anything from proponents of spiritual formation, you know that prayer figures heavily in their methodology. In fact, it was several questions about a specific method of prayer—*contemplative* prayer—that prompted this blog series in the first place.

Contemplative prayer isn't really *prayer* at all—at least in an active sense. It's essentially a form of passive meditation. Usually it involves repeating a few words from a verse of Scripture, a spiritual phrase, or a name for God, all the while anticipating some special guidance, insight, or a word from the Lord.

The model for contemplative prayer isn't found in Scripture. It's a hybrid of rituals adopted from the Catholic church and Eastern mysticism. And most critical, it lacks a mechanism to differentiate between the voice of the Lord and your own emotions and imagination.

Make no mistake—God has spoken, once and for all, through His Word. You don't need to sequester yourself in solitude or practice some mystical incantation to receive His truth and grow spiritually. You simply need to submit yourself to His will as revealed in Scripture.

Any pattern for prayer that uses your emotions or imagination as a receptor for God's revelation is an invitation for theological error and spiritual confusion to take root in your life.

Instead of trying to manufacture some momentary, mystical experience with God, believers must cling to the unchangeable truth of His Word. Rather than searching for subjective personal insight, we need to reinforce our knowledge of Scripture and our dependence on the Lord through a consistent, biblical prayer life.

Tomorrow we'll look at a key figure in Scripture—a true prayer warrior, whose faithful prayer life should be a model for our own.

For now, we want to hear from you. What prayer methods have you used in the past? Have you

been encouraged to try contemplative prayer? What were the results?

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