7 Ways to Pray

I'd love to be the kind of believer who oozes spirituality, but the real me is a scattered, messy, stumbling Christ-follower. My life is filled with to-do's, deadlines, meals on the go, and Skype. Is there any reason to think I could ever be good at prayer? Of course! And if that's something you've ever wondered, you can too. The reality is, most of us are way too busy to ignore the mystical, practical, whimsical, illogical gift of prayer. The only real way you will ever see continuous, intimate, radical prayer is to make prayer a breath, a time, a space, and a celebration. (I'll explain—hopefully.) Prayer should be a dance throughout your day. It's a constant conversation between two people—you and God. He seeks to hear from you. He wants to know your struggles, your joys, your sorrows. Newsflash: It's not a secret; God is accessible to you at any moment and in any place. You can stop and pray like you stop to say hello to the guy you see every day in the flannel shirt chewing on a coffee stirrer in the hallway. The only difference is that the guy in the flannel shirt is not invisible, and he didn't create the universe. You can learn to pray like you breathe. In with the epiphanies—the God-winks you see in your day—and out with cries for mercy and deep groans of desperation. Here are a few ideas on how to bring prayer to the forefront of your daily walk with God.

Simple One Breath Prayers

I pray the prayers of the ancient church. The oldest is my favorite: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy." Say it three times, and it'll begin to roll out off your tongue. It's a general prayer that says, "I'm at the mercy of the One who now reigns as my Big Brother and Almighty God. And I beg for His mercy throughout the day." Exams, parents, fears, future plans, broken relationships. It's a key prayer and it reminds

me that this Savior of mine wants me to acknowledge that He is there every step of the way, and He enters my life with power when I invite Him. Other one breath prayers include:

- Yes, God.
- Help, Lord.
- Show me, Jesus.
- Be my Father right now.
- Speak, God.

But for some reason I'm stuck on the ancient one: "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy."

The Prayer Bench

I am extremely ADD, an un-medicated collage of daydreaming and distractions, so it helps me to have a place to fall into prayer. Something that involves my knees. For me this is a prayer bench. It tells my body that I'm not answering the text, not surfing the Web, and not talking to anyone or focusing on anything else when I kneel at the bench. It's a God moment that sometimes lasts 117 seconds and other times lasts until my knee caps go numb. A prayer bench is just a tool—a place to go to say things to God. There's nothing powerful about the bench itself, but it reminds me that I'm a beggar who knows where to go for the good stuff of life.

Praying the Bible

When I don't know how to pray, I head for the Psalms. I read them aloud like a fortune cookie, only the stuff I read has real insight rather than random, surfacy gobledy-goop. It really, really works. It does. Try Psalm 28:1-2 as a starting place:

> *Don't turn a deaf ear when I call you, GOD. If all I get from you is deafening silence, I'd be better off in the Black Hole. I'm letting you know what I need, calling out for help*

and lifting my arms toward your inner sanctum. Psalm 28:1-2, The Message

Journaling

Sometimes I have to see proof that God is at work. And one way I do that is by keeping a prayer journal. I write prayers and worship thoughts. I share my struggles as if I'm speaking to God through my pen. This fermentation process allows me to review where I've been and where He has led me too. You can journal to God in hard copy or on an online anonymous blog. It's easy to create this through Tumblr, Blogger, or TypePad.

Tweet your Prayers

Some of my prayers are like e-mails. Short. Under, say … 140 characters. For those prayers, I twitter. Twittering my prayers is fun because other people see what you are praying for and they begin to pray too! I don't have a huge Twitter following; just about 175 people. But I've heard from many who've been prompted to pray for the same stuff I'm praying for that day.

Road Trip

Once a year I make a little pilgrimage to the wilderness. I leave with a toothbrush and a Bible. I try to go where no one will find me. I turn off the cell and just have a day of silence. Do you know how completely rare that is? Just silence? I have time to wrestle through my sorrow, anger, fear, and confusion. God usually shows up after two hours or so and I get about as close to a supernatural experience as I'll have in the year. Try it once and it will change your life. A whole day disconnected from your life? Sure, it's strangely Victorian. But it's interesting … every time I've done this, the earth continued to spin just fine without me.

Who knew? But if you decide to throw caution to the wind, be sure to remember the basic laws of safety—from weather, forest dwellers, and of course the boogey man.

Two or Three

And then I have my accountability guy. Actually I have two—I'm a tough case. I meet weekly with two guys, and we are allowed to ask anything and say anything. Sometimes the honesty is scary. But it's like a little mini-church, and we spend a good bit of our time in prayer for one another. It's an epic part of my weekly routine. I'm not a spiritual giant, but I've grown closer to God because I've made it a habit to take time to figure out ways I can connect to Him. I hope you'll try one or two or three or …