

3 Enduring Lessons From Paul for When Your Prayer Life Goes Dry

Often when I find myself without words to pray for a friend, I'll turn to one of the apostle Paul's prayers.

Paul didn't just say, "I'll pray for you." He wrote out beautiful prayers and told the young believers exactly how he was praying for them. Passionate prayers open most of his letters to the early churches:

"So that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance among the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph. 1:17-19).

Here are three examples from Paul's prayers we can apply to our own prayer life.

1. Give thanks first and always.

"I do not cease giving thanks for you, mentioning you in my prayers" (Eph. 1:16).

"I thank my God, always mentioning you in my prayers," (Philem. 4).

No matter what purpose Paul had in writing to a church—whether to teach, encourage or admonish them—he let them know how thankful he was for them and how he expressed his thanks to God in prayer.

It can be easy to focus on all the things that aren't going well and jump right into prayer, asking God, "Please, just fix it." Starting with thanksgiving takes our eyes off our problems, putting them back on God and the good work He is doing. It can be easy to miss how He is providing for us when we're hurt and struggling. Thanksgiving opens our eyes to His goodness in the midst of our struggles.

Try it: Offer thanks now for someone in your life and how you've seen God work in their lives or seen their faith grow, whether past or present.

2. Pray continually.

"We give thanks to God always for you all, mentioning you in our prayers" (1 Thess. 1:2).

"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you" (Col. 1:9a).

Paul reiterated how he prayed always, or continually, for the churches. I used to wonder how we could pray continually and yet live our daily lives.

As a young adult, I was struggling with a particular friendship and letting my thoughts run when I realized internal conversation, happening in my head as I walked down the hallway, could actually be prayer. That day, I began to turn those internal conversations with myself into internal conversations with God. I often drive without the radio on so I can enjoy the silence and direct my thoughts to God, or pray for my family members while I fold laundry or do the dishes.

Try it: Throughout the day, in small moments of quiet, while driving or heading to a meeting or switching laundry or prepping dinner, direct your internal thoughts to God.

3. Focus on Jesus.

"So that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of

glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17).

"In every prayer of mine for you all, I have always made requests with joy, due to your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil. 1:4-5).

Paul's prayers focused on Christ and the power of the Father working through Jesus and the Spirit. His prayers expressed a desire for people to know Christ better and to see God's power working out the will of the Father through the believers' lives. He didn't focus on whether or not people had success or trouble-free lives. Instead, his prayers focused on a desire that they know Christ more fully and live worthy of Him in all situations, especially times of trial.

Try it: Spend a few minutes focusing on Jesus, His death, resurrection, and the power of the Holy Spirit who reminds you of Jesus' words and work in your life.

Have you seen God transform your prayer life as you practiced thanksgiving, praying throughout the day and focusing on Jesus?

Prayer isn't something we do just to check it off our spiritual list. Rather, it's the opportunity to have an intimate conversation with the God who loves us. Bring your questions, your struggles and your everyday life to God. Experience the peace that comes from laying your burdens at His feet.

Don't worry about the right words to say. And if you don't know where to begin, try some of Paul's words.

Amelia Rhodes lives in Michigan with her husband and two children. As a recovering perfectionist who has been freed, by God's grace, from the grip of perpetual anxiety, Amelia encourages women to discover who they are in Christ and to deepen their relationships with each other. Her latest book is

Pray A to Z: A Practical Guide to Pray for Your Community.
Learn more about Amelia and her writing at .