

What This Hollywood Professional Learned About Engaging With God in Prayer

I have been on the advisory board for the Hollywood Prayer Network (HPN) for many years, and our focus is to encourage people across the country to pray for those who work in media and entertainment. Over the years, many Christians have protested and condemned what is produced from Hollywood, but there are many believers who choose to serve and pray rather than criticize or protest.

We prefer to consider Hollywood a mission field.

One of the efforts of HPN is to teach Christians how to think about prayer and pray the way Jesus instructed us to pray. We think we know how to pray, but here are some things to ponder and to revisit about prayer.

What Does It Mean to Pray?

Tefillah is the word for prayer in Hebrew, which means “to judge oneself.” Today, we might say “to think” or “to ponder.” We are to serve God with our whole heart or sincere, heartfelt desire. We are commanded to completely give our full attention and devotion to God when we pray. Yet how easy it is to be distracted! Often, we pray while getting dressed, driving a car or walking into a grocery store. Setting aside a focused prayer time is rare for most people.

What Are You Praying For?

In today’s media-distracted culture, we can get easily bogged down in the mire of daily life. Our attention is diverted by endless responsibilities, demands and to-do lists. We lose sight of the promised land God said is still coming—that

heavenly home of peace, contentment and eternal joy. It is as much a dream to us today as it was to the children of Israel. They had been trapped in Egyptian slavery for hundreds of years and had given themselves over to a culture that had enslaved them.

The “Pharaoh” today that keeps us enslaved is busyness and distractions, so there is no time for engagement with God. Dealing with God’s directions might mean we’d need to repent (change directions) and possibly do something that would mean personal sacrifice. So, we insert our earbuds and turn up the noise.

We’re tempted to say, just as Scarlett O’Hara said in the iconic movie *Gone with the Wind*, “I’ll think about that tomorrow,” but tomorrow comes with amazing regularity. We haven’t built a shelter. God said, in Psalm 91:1 (NIV), “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.”

Do Your Prayers Allow the Shelter of God to Surround You?

It’s time we engage with the master carpenter. If we are to prepare for what is to come, it is time to mindfully set aside the time to learn how to find peace and protection on those stormy days and come out secure. Casual, quickie prayer time won’t cut it. Like the children’s story of the three little pigs who built houses to protect themselves from the big bad wolf, the only one left standing in the end is the house built from bricks—the strong rock of God. God repeatedly tells us in Scripture that He wants to give us the desires of our heart but won’t if we detach from Him. He loves us too much. The only way He can let us know His perfect plan for us is if we know Him by spending time with Him.

Are You Afraid to Face Your Prayer Time?

Are you willing to hear what God wants for your life and not what you want? Remember, our days on earth are limited, so how

will you choose to spend them? As you prioritize your time to include God more regularly, remember how easy it is to choose selfish desires. Do you gravitate to the ones that make life easy and uncomplicated or choices that mean less suffering and sacrifice? Are your eyes on God's prize or what the world promises?

In Hollywood, I have seen the devastation of choosing unwisely, and I have also seen that when sacrificial choices are made to follow a God-directed path, a richness of life emerges in unique and stunning ways. As we learn to choose God's will, we can trust that He is listening and preparing a way through. Our job is to be consistent in spending time with Him. He can only guide us when we are engaged and listening to *His* voice. Joshua addressed the children of Israel as they entered into their promised land and said this: "Choose today whom you will serve, if it should be the gods your fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites' land where you are now living. Yet as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15, MEV).

How will you pray differently today? {eoa}

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