

“Sought Through Prayer And Meditation To Improve Our Conscious Contact With God...” – How’s Your Seeking Going?

11th Step - Lesson 1

There aren’t many instructions about how to pray in the Bible. It says to pray “in Jesus’ name” (for instance, John 15:16—“The Father will give you whatever you ask in my name”), meaning that you believe and acknowledge that you have the right to pray because of Jesus, your Savior. In the Lord’s Prayer Jesus gave some instructions about what kinds of things to pray about. Beyond that, the Bible doesn’t say a whole lot about what words or methods to use.

When we pray we’re coming to the God who accepts us just as we are, for the sake of our Savior Jesus. It isn’t our words or our attitude that make our prayers work; it’s the promise of God.

So we’re free to seek the ways that work best for us to conversate with God. For example:

- Does quiet reflection and meditation work best for me? (Psalm 63:6—“On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night”)
- Or does emotional confrontation with God work best for me? (Genesis 32:22-32—Jacob wrestling with God)
- Does it work best for me to express humble submission to God’s will? (Luke 22:42—“Not my will, but yours be done”)
- Or do I need to let God know I’m not happy with what he’s doing? (Jeremiah 20—“O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived ; you overpowered me and prevailed”)
- Does it work best for me to settle myself down when I pray? (Psalm 131:2—“I have stilled and quieted my soul”)
- Or do I need to express my doubts and anger and fear? (Psalm 13:1—“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?”)

What else is helping you as you seek conscious contact with God?

Praying Honestly

11th Step - Lesson 2

11th Step: "11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

In a lot of evangelism tracts you'll find "the sinner's prayer" at the end, usually saying something like, "Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner who deserves damnation. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. Please come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior." In Lutheran liturgy there's a similar prayer that says, "...I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." But what if those prayers don't describe where you're honestly coming from? What if you aren't "truly sorry for my sins?" What if a person is uneasy about inviting Jesus into his heart? What if I'm not really and sincerely "trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ?" Does a person then have to work hard on repenting and getting a better attitude and a stronger faith before coming to God for help?

How's this for an alternate "sinners prayer?" "God, I probably should be sorry for my sins, but I'm really not. To be truthful, I like getting high. I like sexual activity you've forbidden. I'm not sorry I had my abortion. You tell me to forgive people who have hurt me, but I'd kill them if I could. And to top it all off, I'm not even sure you exist; for all I really know, I might be just talking into the air right now. Now do you want me?"

Recovery calls for honesty, openness and willingness. That's not going to happen if fear of rejection gets in the way. **Look at 1 Timothy 1:15.** What does that say to someone who's afraid God won't accept him if he's honest about how he really feels?

Look at Psalm 13.

- What feelings do you think David was having?
- How do you see him showing that he trusted God's love and acceptance here?

Look at Psalm 88.

- What feelings do you think the writer was having?
- How do you see him showing that he trusted God's love and acceptance here?

Look at Psalm 109.

- What feelings do you think David was having?
- How do you see him showing that he trusted God's love and acceptance here?

Staying On My Side Of The Street

11th Step - Lesson 3

Step 11: “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscience contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.” –I don’t have to know God’s will for anybody but me! Do any of your problems come from trying to take over other people’s problems and lives?

John 21:18-22 -- Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me."

Matthew 7:1-5 -- "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

John 6:28-29 – Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

- What are some things that happen to you when you get wrapped up in other people’s business and neglect your own?
- What are some ways that this affects your prayer and meditation?
- Jesus told the people who were asking about God’s will for their lives that the bottom line is “to believe in the one he has sent,” in other words, to believe in Jesus. How does that help you to stay on “your side of the street”?
- How is your life changing as you learn to pray “only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out”?

Our Relationship With God Is Worth The Struggle

11th step - Lesson 4

Luke 12:31—"But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

Genesis 32:28—"Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Isaiah 62:6-7—"You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth."

Psalms 13:1—"How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?"

"Denny said, 'I wish to be introduced to the person that does not in some way or other, spiritually struggle.' I agree. What can I say? Jesus is my very best friend. I talk about him like I talk about my family and friends. He's always with me - no matter what's happening in my life; He loves me. AND, I struggle. I don't think there is a Christian alive who does not struggle in life with their relationship with God. I would call someone who claimed that to be either in denial or a liar. Seriously! Good relationships are about trust. There's not a person living who has ever trusted Jesus Christ with their 'whole heart, soul and mind' at all times and in all situations. I firmly believe whenever I DO trust God in a bad situation it's because HE put that trust in my heart. In and of myself I do not possess that kind of love and trust and energy!" – from the E-Metro forum

Step 11: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out.

Our drugs and our dependencies gave us a fairly uncomplicated relationship: You took your drug, you got your buzz. Very predictable.

But those things turned on us, and we went to God for help. And he's giving it to us. But a relationship with God is way more complex than a relationship with a drug. And it can be very unpredictable.

In some ways, our relationship with God is actually very simple:

Luke 12:32—"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

- God promises to love you and forgive you
- Jesus completely took care of our failures when he lived a perfect life in our place and died on the cross in our place
- What else is simple about your relationship with God?

In other ways, our relationship with God can be complex and puzzling and frustrating. How have you experienced this?

Have you ever tried to reduce your relationship with God to something as simple as your relationship with your drug was?

What happens when you go ahead and struggle in your relationship with God?