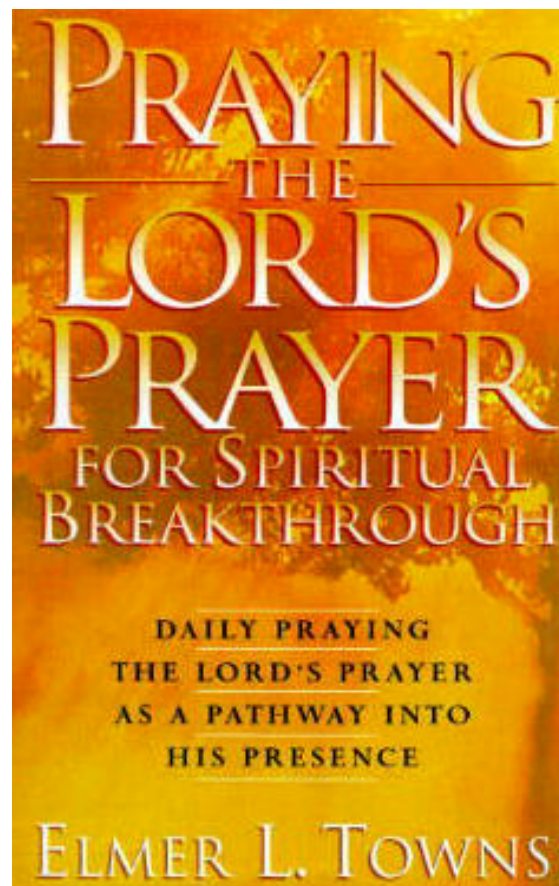




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# Praying The Lord's Prayer

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## CHAPTER ONE

### CAN YOU PRAY FOR ONE MINUTE

I stuffed myself into a tiny black closet. The walls and door squeezed in upon me but I didn't care. I knelt and faced the north corner. I was preparing for an unknown experience that was not dangerous, but I didn't know what to expect, nor did I know what to do.

I was a 17-year-old college freshmen, but being stuffed into a closet was not college hazing. I was not joining a fraternity, nor had anyone forced me into the closet.

The hardwood floor pained my knees. My bony knees were not used to one hour of kneeling. I was not being punished by the administration or a teacher. I had chosen to enter the closet of my free will and planned to kneel there for an hour . . . maybe two hours or more.

As a freshmen in college, I enrolled in an introductory course dealing with spirituality. The teacher had promised we would experience God before mid-terms. Because I was interested in spirituality, I wholeheartedly completed all the reading assignments. The one assignment I most looked forward to was praying for one hour. We were told to spend one hour alone with God in prayer. The instructor explained that we had to pray "one hour" because Jesus asked His disciples,

"Could you not watch with me one hour?"

Some of the students grumbled and I've often wondered if they might have fudged on the time. But not me. Because I wanted to be spiritual, I meticulously prepared to pray one hour. I set aside a Tuesday afternoon, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. because the dormitory was usually quiet at this time. My roommate usually was on the sports field, so he was usually not in the room.

I had been assigned to room 427 in Legters Hall. Each room had tall ceilings and a fireplace. It had been built before the days of modern plumbing, but a glistening white sink hung on the wall in each entryway for casual washing. All plumbing and electrical wires were stretched visibly down the hall and along the walls. I called the dorm an elegant lady with a wrinkled face.

The building was beautiful when she was constructed, but she had been born 120 years earlier. I gave you a complete description of my dorm so you would realize it had only one tiny closet, one very small closet for me and my roommate. I squeezed into that closet because I read the words of Jesus,

"When ye enter into your closet to pray . . . "

Since I wanted to be spiritual, I took the command literally. Taking my coats and trousers off the hangers, I laid them on my bed. I didn't remove my roommate's clothes, although I did remove his shoes and my shoes . . . and all the dirty socks. It's hard to put your mind on Christ when your nose is filled with foot odor.

The closet was only as deep as a coat hanger. I planned to kneel facing the north corner on my end of the closet, my feet would extend under my roommates clothes. That's another reason why I had to remove his shoes.

I planned to shut myself in the closet for one hour because Jesus said,

"When ye enter the closet, shut the door . . . "

I got the closet prepared 15 minutes early. My prayer requests were written in a notebook, so I rehearsed my list because I knew I couldn't see in the dark. Obviously, a beautiful old lady with a wrinkled face wouldn't have a light in each closet. I placed the most important

prayer request first on my list. If I had time, I planned to cover the less important requests in my second hour.

I had read stories of all-night prayer meetings. When I prayed before going to bed at night, it wasn't long. I had heard about monks who prayed several hours each day. I knew I couldn't do that. I wondered how long I could pray.

The college had printed a large print cardboard "BUSY" sign for each room. When we hung out a "BUSY" sign it meant we were studying, praying or sleeping. No one was suppose to violate a "BUSY" sign.

At 1:59 p.m. I hung out the "BUSY" sign. The closet was too small to turn around, so I backed into the closet, faced north, knelt down and closed the door. It was impossible to stand and close the door.

The closet was inky black. The heavy oak door fit snugly. Because I was facing the north end of the closet, I couldn't see the traces of light under the door.

The silence gripped me. I was more alone than I had ever been. I had entered the world of silence, the sounds of normal afternoon dormitory life couldn't penetrate the thick masonry walls. The clothes in the closet absorbed any noise that happened to leak in around the edges of the door.

I was more alone with God than I had ever been in my life. I closed my eyes to pray, but that wasn't necessary. The black closet was the same if my eyes were open or shut. I wondered if God was in the blackness. I wondered if God would meet me there. I almost wanted to say,

"Hello God . . . are you there?"

But I had been raised in a Presbyterian Sunday School. I knew to be reverent when I entered the church sanctuary. I had heard many prayers in that little Presbyterian church. So I began,

"Dear Father . . . "

I prayed in that closet, just the way I had done in all my other prayers. I jumped right into the list of things I wanted from God or the things that I wanted God to do for me. If I had known the formula of the Lord's Prayer, I would have worshipped God. But I was young, and people with a childish spirit run to their father and ask, "What'd ya' bring me?" Children are always asking for something.

Little did I know then that when you only ask for things, you cut short your prayer time. One can only beg for things so long.

After praying for a long time my knees began to hurt. I rocked from one knee to the other. Since I was skinny, my knees were bony. The ache in my kneecap was my first distraction to prayer. I wished I had put a small rug or towel on the floor. I even wished for some dirty socks to kneel on to ease the pain.

Returning to my prayer list, I forgot about my pain. I prayed intently through more requests. I felt I was talking to God. I felt He was listening to me.

As I got toward the end of my prayer list, I wondered about the time. I checked my watch but couldn't see the hands. That was before the days of luminous watches. Even though my eyes were dilated, I couldn't see anything. Questioning the time was my second distraction.

Since my mind was fresh, I decided to pray all the way through my list of requests again . . . no matter how long it took. If I had to, I'd stay much longer than one hour.

When I finished praying through my list a second time, I continued talking to God about

things in general. Then my mind wandered to sports . . . to classes . . . to girls. I began to think about softball and found myself wanting to be on the athletic field. I came to myself, shook my head and realized I was not praying. Thinking about softball was my third distraction.

I decided to pray through my list a third time. This time I prayed through the list much faster. I didn't want to miss the evening meal.

When I didn't have anything else to pray about, I decided to end my prayer. I had spent the large part of the afternoon in the closet. Since the closet was small, I had to open the door and back out.

I blinked . . . rubbed my eyes . . . then massaged my aching knees. Walking over to the bedside table, I picked up my small travel clock that I had received as a high school graduation gift. I couldn't believe my eyes. I put it to my ear to see if the clock was still ticking. It was.

I had only prayed 17 minutes.

This was a blow to my young male ego. I knew I could run faster or farther than anyone in college. All I had to do was to make up my mind and force myself to do it. I felt I could do anything I set my mind to do. I had set my mind to pray one hour, but had only prayed 17 minutes. I was deflated at my failure.

Let's talk about you. Where are you in your walk with God? Maybe you never think at all about prayer. Begin praying the Lord's Prayer, it only takes a minute. Maybe you dream of praying all day, or you dream of spending one hour with God. But you just don't have the time. You just never get around to praying one hour. Don't try to do too much. Begin with the Lord's Prayer. You're doing what Jesus commanded. You can start with a one-minute prayer.

My professor in the class on spirituality had given me an assignment to pray for one hour. The only place in the Bible that tells us how long to pray comes from the question Jesus asked, "Could you not watch with me one hour?"

Notice, Jesus didn't command people to pray one hour, but He talked about "watching one hour." Maybe there is a difference between "watching one hour" and "praying to God one hour?"

A few people can pray for one hour, but this book is not written to help you with long prayers. I've written this book to help you talk to God. You can pray the Lord's Prayer in one minute and if prayed properly, that one minute can change your life.

Praying the Lord's Prayer is not about how long we pray. As a point of focus, just before Jesus told His disciples to pray the words of the Lord's Prayer, he said,

"When ye pray, use not vain repetitions . . . for they (the heathen) think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." - Matthew 6:7

In this command, Jesus warns against two things. First, he doesn't want us to just repeat the words of any prayer over and over. Second, He doesn't want us to think the Father hears us because we talk to Him in long speeches. The effective prayer is not measured by how loud you pray, or how long you pray, or ever if you say the words of the Lord's Prayer over and over (repetitions). Your prayer will be effective if you are sincere (your approach) and if you ask for the right things (what you say).

But even when you don't pray the Lord's Prayer, and you don't rightly approach God; your prayers may get what you need. Jesus tells us, "Your Father knoweth what things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matt. 6:8).

There is another reason why I only prayed 17 minutes when I thought I had prayed for one or two hours. It had to do with what I was saying in prayer. I had gone to God with a grocery list of needs, I ran through the list quickly. Prayers can become mechanical when you just pray

for a list of people and things. But on the other hand, if I had begun with worship, I possibly could never run out of things to say. There is so much about God to praise, that you could just keep going and going, like the "Energizer Bunny."

## HOW TO BEGIN PRAISING GOD

- Try thanking God for all He's done in your life.
- Try worshipping God for all He's created.
- Try praising God for all He did in the Bible.
- Try magnifying God for all you have in Christ.

Learning to talk to God with the Lord's Prayer will help in all your praying. The Lord's Prayer will teach you to begin worshipping God as you talk to Him. Babies run to a parent because they need something. As they grow into adulthood, they learn to talk to their parents, to understand them and how love is reciprocal. As we mature spiritually, we learn to communicate with our Heavenly Father and listen to Him.

Some days I get hung up on the first petition, and spend most of my prayer-time with "Hallowed be Thy name." I wrote the book *My Father's Names* (Regal Books, Ventura, CA, 1-800-235-3415) that lists over 120 names of God. One day I prayed through the Appendix that listed every name of God. I thanked God for every name and what it meant to me. It took me over one hour to just "worship and hallow all His many names."

Some people try to pray for one hour, or for a long time. Their mind goes blank. When they don't know what to say, their mind wanders to their job, television, or something they are worrying about. The blank mind with nothing to think causes the body to go to sleep. That's why so many people start praying and fall asleep.

God knows our weaknesses and one of the reasons why He gave us the Lord's Prayer was to help us pray . . . to keep us from going to sleep . . . to keep our minds focused on praying . . . to give us success in our prayers.

It only takes one minute to touch God, and be touched by Him. The monk in the monastery can spend one hour praying each day, or much longer. But most Americans can't. Even though most Americans get paid for 40 hours of work, statistics tell us it will take approximately 54 hours of time out of our schedule to spend 40 hours in work. That's considering commuting to and from the job, lunch time, work and phone calls from home, plus other job related necessities. This means we have less time than ever before. We're all busy.

## TIME IS THE CURRENCY OF TODAY'S WORLD

You can pray the Lord's Prayer as you drive the expressway or as you sit in an elevated train. Since you can pray the Lord's Prayer in one minute, why don't you make it the first thing you do when you sit down at your desk each day?

You may dream about praying one hour as I tried to do as a freshmen. You may dream about the benefits of talking to God for a longer time, but by continually waiting to pray one hour, you have put off praying at all. Begin with what you can do.

It is very probable,  
That the dream of the impossible,  
Becomes a barrier of the actual,  
That keeps you from doing what is possible.

### THREE LEVELS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

There are three levels to praying the Lord's Prayer. First, the lip level, which means you let your petitions flow over your lips, whether softly spoken or prayed out loud. The lip level, focuses your mind and body. The second is the mind level, when you pray the Lord's Prayer inwardly. When your mind belongs to you, pray the Lord's Prayer between sales or when you are not doing a task that requires thought. Third, the heart level is the cry of passion or deep love. Heart prayer is usually done privately, because the face reflects the heart. You shouldn't cry, laugh or smile in an inappropriate place, your business associates won't understand.

You must pray the Lord's Prayer at all three levels. When you meet alone with God, or in your church with others, pray aloud. At other times, pray it inwardly. God who knows your thoughts, will hear your request. For those special occasions when only you and God are present, pray passionately with your heart.

Make a decision now to begin praying the Lord's Prayer tomorrow morning when the alarm rings. Then as you commute to work, or even during work, pray the Lord's Prayer at least once, perhaps more than once. Begin spending a few minutes with God today. Begin with the Lord's Prayer. If you have the privacy of your bedroom or a private family room, open your Bible to Matthew 6:9-13. Then following the words that Jesus gave to us, pray the Lord's Prayer, slowly . . . reverently . . . and meaningfully. Don't give a speech to God. Don't just read words from a book, tell God what each of the seven petitions means to you and what you want Him to do for you.

Develop a pattern for prayer. Don't automatically reach for the radio in the car. Pray the Lord's Prayer each day when you head for work. Maybe there's a particular place where you need strength. That could be the place to start.

An office manager once told me everything at her job was wonderful. She said she did a good job and was satisfied with her production and she felt comfortable managing those under her; except, she hated it when she was called into the plant manager's office. He was perpetually grouchy. He always saw the problems and complained. He never saw the growing efficiency charts.

"Pray the Lord's Prayer on the way to his office," I told her. I suggested she pray that God's name be hallowed in their plant, that God's kingdom come, and that God's will be done.

"It changed me," she said.

Praying the Lord's Prayer took away her fear and gave her new boldness. Instead of being defensive with her plant manager, she became positive.

"Let me help you get a better perspective," she told her plant manager.

"I got faith from the Lord's Prayer," she said. "It gave me courage to aggressively suggest new ways for him to look at things."

"Now I always say the Lord's Prayer walking from my desk to his office," was her testimony.

We need to look for places to pray the Lord's Prayer where we have daily problems. But

more than the tension spots. We need to look for times like waiting for the bus, waiting at the copier or other down times when our thoughts belong to us.

### The Secret of Your Future Lies In Your Daily Routine.

Determine to pray the Lord's Prayer each day at approximately the same time and place. Get in the habit of talking to God about your life.

#### SEVEN THINGS YOU GET

If you pray the Lord's Prayer daily, you will get seven things that will change your life and re-direct your future.

First, you will magnify God each day, which means you are praying "Hallowed be Thy name." As you worship God each day, you grow as a Christian because you are learning about Him . . . you are becoming comfortable around Him . . . you learn what He expects of you.

Also, God rewards you with His presence. "Anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards them that earnestly seek Him" (Heb. 11:6, NIV). Your reward for daily praying the Lord's Prayer is more than money. God rewards you with Himself . . . His assurance . . . and His guidance.

When I was a kid, I'd greet my father at the door with the typical child's question, "What'd ya' bring me?" He would always reply,

"Myself."

I didn't fully appreciate my father's response, until I meet kids from single parent homes who don't have a father who comes home every night.

Second, you will live by better principles when you pray the Lord's Prayer. When you pray, "Thy Kingdom come," you are asking for God to bring His Kingdom principles and Kingdom agenda into your life. You will have a better life when you live by God's rules . . . when you love them . . . obey them . . . you will prosper from them. You will grow to be like God when you honestly pray. "Thy kingdom come in my life on earth as Your kingdom reigns in heaven."

Third, God will guide you for that day. When you pray, "Thy will be done," you are asking God to guide you into His plan and purpose for your life.

The fourth result of praying the Lord's Prayer each day is getting more answers from God. The pro golfer Lee Trevino held up a golf ball in a commercial and boasted,

"This ball will take strokes off your game."

"Wow!" I thought. "I've gotta get some."

Then Lee Trevino laughed with a playful smile and said, "This golf ball will take strokes off your golf game, but you've gotta hit it 300 times a day."

The secret was not the ball.

The secret was practice . . . practice . . . practice. But not just hitting the ball. You had to hit it correctly and continually until you learn how to hit it correctly and continually.

The Lord's Prayer is like a golf ball. Just praying it one time won't get you answers, or to use golf vernacular. It won't take strokes off the game of life.

You have to pray correctly . . . with all your heart . . . according to the will of God . . . according to God's formula. When you do that, you'll get answers. But to pray it one time is not enough. You have to pray correctly and continually, to get answers.

Fifth, you feel clean when you pray the Lord's Prayer. When you ask God, "Forgive us our debts . . ." you must not only get forgiveness, but you can know immediately that you are forgiven. You can feel forgiven.

If I paid off your credit card bill, your debt would be forgiven on the computer. You wouldn't owe anything, but if I didn't tell you about it, you would still "feel" in debt. When you think your debt is too high you don't charge anything on your card. Your feelings about debt keep you in bondage to the debt you think you owe. You need two things to be free. First you need to be out of debt and second, you need to feel financially free. When you properly pray the Lord's Prayer, you can be free of sin and feel it.

Everyone wants to rise above their circumstances and be victorious over problems. The sixth thing the Lord's Prayer gives you, is victory. When you pray, "Lead us not into temptation . . ." you ask God to keep you from situations that would destroy you.

The last petition gives you protection. When you pray, "Deliver us from the Evil One," you are asking God to put a protective shield around your life.

## PRAYER CHECKLIST HOW ARE YOU DOING?

Can you pray one minute? (List when or where you will pray.)

Lousy

Average

Great

1. When you first get up
2. Prayer time
3. On way to work
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

## JOURNALING

Some who are serious about talking to God, keep a journal. It's something like kids keeping a diary at camp, a record of their experiences, both good and bad, plus their impressions. Each chapter will make suggestions about what experiences and impressions you should write.

This chapter discusses the length of prayer and the place of prayer. Let the following questions guide your entries:

1. How effective are your short prayers? If you can't get into the spirit of prayer in one minute say so. Write your impressions of what prayer does to you.
2. Where is it most effective to pray? Least effective?
3. What is happening to you because you pray the Lord's Prayer several times each day?

THREE STEP BIBLE STUDY  
WHERE TO PRAY & HOW LONG TO PRAY

The following three step Bible study is designed to help you study the Bible. Step one, read the question, trying to answer it. Step two, read the Bible verse that's printed in the box. Try to determine how the Word of God answers your question. Step three, write the answer in the space provided.

1. What is a good time of day for you to begin praying and why then?

"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water." - Psalm 63:1 NKJV

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2. What other times of day can I pray the Lord's Prayer? What time is best for you?

"Evening and morning, and at noon I will pray; and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." - Psalm 55:17

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3. What are the benefits of a fixed time for prayer? Notice how Daniel had regular times for prayer. What would this do for you? (Read Daniel 6:1-24)

"When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did beforetime." - Daniel 6:10

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4. What can be your response in times of danger or discouragement?

"And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailor to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.  
- Acts 16:23-25

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5. How should you respond in prayer to opportunity?

"The King said to me, for what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said to the king . . ." - Nehemiah 2:4,5

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6. When can you stop praying?

"Pray without ceasing." - I Thessalonians 5:17

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7. What things should be on your prayer list?

"But in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God." - Philippians 4:6

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8. For whom should you pray? Why?

"I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority."  
- I Timothy 2:1,2

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