



## WHEN YOU'RE JUST NOT AN EXPERT ON PRAYER

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Very few people would claim to be experts on prayer; even the most-seasoned saints of the Lord struggle at times with this spiritual discipline. Part of our struggle with prayer is that we overthink it. We feel we need to use just the right words, and that our emotions and motives need to match our well-thought out language before we come before the Lord. The truth is, He doesn't care if we use big words. He just wants to hear from us.

When I need encouragement in the area of prayer, I turn to scripture. Recently I read through Job and was surprised how raw and honest he was with the Lord: "He (God) tears me down on every side so that I am ruined. He uproots my hope like a tree." Job 19:10. This is not exactly what I would call expert praying. But, chapters 38-42 record the Lord responding to Job in one of the most beautiful, terrifying encounters in Scripture. Job didn't spend time crafting some poetic, lyrical prayer: he poured out his broken heart.

If you're a new Christian, or if you've been walking with the Lord for decades and find yourself in a dry season, hopefully the following tips will be an encouragement when you don't know how to pray:

1. Just say something, anything at all, to the Lord even if it doesn't seem like He's listening. Relationships are maintained through communication. Even angry or disappointed communication is better than silence. The Lord can handle our doubts, our anger, and our frustration.
2. Let Scripture pray for you. Psalms is a great place to start; it contains the entire spectrum of human emotion. The apostle Paul's letters in the New Testament are filled with prayers for the people in the churches he planted. If you don't know what to say, pray Scripture. Psalm 103 is a beautiful place to start. Ephesians 3:14-21 is a great passage if you're struggling.
3. Ask a couple of people you look up to what their prayer strategy is. Learning how others do things can be inspirational and may help give you a fresh approach to your prayer life.
4. Read a book on prayer. Richard Foster's "Celebration of Discipline" or Paul Miller's "A Praying Life" are both wonderful resources.

Remember that it's ok to sit silently in the presence of God. He welcomes us into His presence, even if we don't necessarily have anything to say. Praying is as much listening as it is talking, and what the Almighty has to say to us is probably more important than anything we could come up with, anyway.

No one is an expert on prayer; the mysteriousness of God prevents it. If there were a way to measure success, prayer would become a mere transaction, just a business venture between us and God. Instead, we are forced to ponder God's cosmic mysteries, to wonder at his unexplainable, incomprehensible vastness. We're meant to experience Him, not turn Him into a formula to be solved. Be encouraged: feeling like a novice when it comes to prayer makes us more dependent upon the God who wants to hear from us.

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