

A Morning Prayer

What if we could pray a prayer each morning that would open our hearts to not only be with God, but to hear from God what he wants from us for that day? We can!



INTRODUCTION

Pastor Paul described how many of us, unlike Jesus, suffer from “hurry sickness.” This hurried lifestyle can separate us from God and our spirituality. Pastor Paul gave us some great prayers as well as some ways we can slow down in order to feel closer to God.

STARTER QUESTION

1. What are some areas in which you think you need to slow down and simplify your life? How can you make more time for God throughout your day? What would your morning prayer look like if you wrote one?

INTO THE WORD

2. Pastor Paul made the statement that God’s ways are not always the least painful ways. How might you comfort someone who is experiencing great hardship in their life and is losing faith in God? Read Psalm 139:7-12 and Isaiah 54:7-10 for guidance.
3. Pastor Paul mentioned John Wesley, an English cleric, theologian and evangelist, who lived in the late 1700’s. Wesley wanted to depend on God for everything. Parts of his Covenant Prayer include the lines, “I am no longer my own, but yours,” and “I freely and fully surrender all things to your glory and service.” What obstacles can prevent people from surrendering to God? Can you find Bible passages that reinforce the importance of slowing down so that we may make surrendering to God our top priority? The example that Pastor Paul shared with us today can be found in John 11, which describes how Jesus responded when He was informed about the illness of His friend, Lazarus.

APPLICATION

4. Have you thought about the concept of “daily hurry” as it relates to your relationship with Jesus? Can you name a few of the examples that Pastor Paul mentioned that illustrate how we are sometimes “hurried” and how these situations might affect our walk with God? How might walking at the “pace of Jesus’ love and kindness” help you to respond to the Lord and to others with affectionate obedience in 2021? Why is this important?
5. Consider some of the desires in your heart and whether God put them there (Psalm 37:4). How might you align these desires with God’s voice, His truth and His love?

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, as we begin this new year and take inventory of our lives, please help us to put our spiritual health first and fill us with a desire to be obedient to You. Father, we pray that you will create in us a

clean heart and renew a right spirit within us. Thank You for all Your blessings and help us to walk with You, at Your pace, every day. In Jesus' precious name, amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

In reference to question 2: I would empathize with my friend and acknowledge that even the most faithful Christians encounter hard times and can easily waver in their hope and trust in God. I would assure him/her that this wavering is nothing to be ashamed of. Then, I would read Psalm 139:7-12 together and explain that God's ways are not always the least painful ways. The verses are telling us that we cannot escape God's presence; He is always there to lead us and comfort us. Isaiah 54:7-10 acknowledges that during difficult times, it may seem that God is angry with us or has deserted us. However, we cannot escape God's love for us.

In reference to question 3: Obstacles that prevent one from surrendering to God can include fear, ridicule from others, lack of faith, and the demands of a busy lifestyle. James 4:7 reads, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." Luke 9:23 reads, "And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

In reference to question 4: The picture of Jesus' yoke being easy (Matthew 11:28-30) brings to mind walking together at the same pace. When we are in step with Jesus, we are resting in His presence, joy, and wisdom (Psalm 16:11). The Lord can help us have an awareness of His love and truth when we slow down, create margin in our day, simplify our focus on what is true treasure (Matthew 6:21), redefine what having a "good life" means, and trust God for direction. It is by God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to affectionately obey His Word and voice.

In reference to question 5: Being receptive to seeking Godly desires in our hearts can help us to grow in our faith and share the Gospel with others (Ephesians 2:10). A few of the ways we can apply this to our lives include being in God's Word, praying, seeking Godly counsel, serving others, and fellowship with other believers. As we seek Jesus' presence, the Holy Spirit grants us the ability to be more present with others. When we truly see and seek to bless those around us, we grow in the Lord and glorify His name!