

Michelle: Welcome to A Word Fitly Spoken, a podcast about Jesus, His Word, and our joy in following Him. I'm Michelle Lesley.

Amy: And I'm Amy Spreeman. Welcome to part 2 of our miniseries on prayer! But before we get started, a big thank you to MissyLeigh73, who left us a 5 star review and this encouraging comment on Apple Podcasts:

"I discovered your ministry about a year ago and it has helped me so much. I enjoy listening to this podcast as I work. Thank you for encouraging me to be more discerning in who I listen to and to study the Bible for myself and let the word be sufficient to teach without someone else's book guiding me to what they think is true."

Thank you, MissyLeigh!

Michelle: Yes, thank you! We've said it before, and I'll say it again- the highest compliment we could possibly get is that we have pointed you to Christ and His written Word. That's the whole point of this podcast.

We also want to thank RM who just became a regular donor on Patreon! Thank you so much, RM, and all of our faithful patrons over at Patreon. We are so humbled by, and grateful for, your monthly financial support.

Amy: We sure are! And if you'd like to support us through PayPal or on Patreon like RM, that will help us cover the cost of producing podcasts and all the hosting and website fees that come with it. just head on over to our website, AWFS.Life and click the support tab.

And while you're there, subscribe to AWFS on one of the many podcast platforms listed on our home page, and leave us a 5 star review and an encouraging comment on the platform you pick, just like MissyLeigh did. Ratings, reviews, and comments aren't for our egos - not even a little. help boost our visibility so we can point even more listeners to Christ and His Word, and that is important to us.

Michelle: As Amy said, tonight is part 2 of our miniseries on prayer. If you missed part 1, we've got it linked up in the show notes for you, and we encourage you to go back and listen to it first.

Tonight, we're going to cover a few more aspects of prayer: praying Scripture, some practical and logistical tips to help your personal prayer time run more smoothly, and, finally, leading others in prayer.

You know, Amy, sometimes, when I've been praying daily for a long time about certain situations – a loved one's salvation, a stagnant circumstance that just won't resolve itself, a need that God hasn't yet provided – I feel like my daily time of prayer is stuck in a rut. Like I'm praying all the exact same things every day.

That doesn't bother God, of course, and we are to be persistent and fervent with our requests, but every now and then I need a break from petitioning to focus on another aspect of prayer. And one of the ways I like to do that is to pray Scripture back to God. And of course, there are a few Scriptures I like to pray every day as part of my regular prayer time.

Amy: There are several ways to pray Scripture back to God:

You could sit down with your Bible and pray through a Psalm, simply meditating on the words and speaking them back to God. That's how I started learning how to pray.

As you're studying your Bible every day, you might look for a verse or two from that day's passage to pray back to God as part of your study time.

There might be particular verses or passages you'd like to pray every day during your regular prayer time. Let's go over some of them:

Michelle: *Ephesians 5:10- and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.*

Lord, help me today to discern what is pleasing to You, and do it.

Psalm 141:3- Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!

Father, help me to keep my mouth shut when it needs to be shut, and to speak up when I need to speak up.

Psalm 19:14- Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Let everything I think, say, and do bring honor and glory to You.

Amy: *James 1:22- But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

Please show me how to obey your Word, Lord, not just hear it.

John 17:17- Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

Father, would you please answer Jesus' prayer to sanctify me in the truth of Your Word.

Psalm 51:10-12- Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Please cleanse me and forgive me for my sin, and give me a fresh start with a clean heart and a right spirit. Thank You that because of the blood of Christ and the seal of the Holy Spirit, You will never cast me out or take Your Spirit from me. Thank You for giving me back the joy of unhindered fellowship with You.

Michelle: Here are some great passages about wisdom. These first two might be good to pray together:

James 1:5- If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. and

Proverbs 4:7- The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

Father, thank You that You generously give wisdom to those who ask. Please give me wisdom and help me to pursue wisdom and understanding.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. Proverbs 3:5-7

Lord, help me to trust You with all my heart – over and above what I can see with my eyes and understand with my mind. Let everything I think, say, and do bring glory and honor to You. Smooth my path before me. Let me not trust in my own wisdom and understanding, but grow in me a godly fear of You that turns me away from evil.

Psalms 90:12- So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Father, remind me that my life is a vapor. Help me to honor You with my time and steward my time well. Help me to get everything done today that You want me to get done.

Amy: And here are three great passages from Psalm 139. You might even want to pray that entire psalm.

Psalm 139:1- O Lord, you have searched me and known me!

--Thank You that You know me inside and out. That I can come to You in prayer, and I don't have to explain everything, and make sure You understand correctly, because You already know. That You know everything about me and You still choose to love me.

Psalm 139:14- I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

--Thank You for creating me. I stand in awe at the magnificence of Your creation in the human body: You can read every strand of DNA in my body. You not only *understand* how all of the biological processes in my body work, You *created* each of those processes. You keep my heart beating, my cells reproducing, and my lungs filled with air.

Psalm 139:23-24- Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

--Examine my heart, God, and whatever is in me that is displeasing to You, get rid of it.

Michelle: *Romans 5:8- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Father, thank You for sending Your Son to die for me while I was still Your enemy. Thank You, Jesus for being willing to die for me, a sinner. Thank You for turning me from Your enemy into Your friend.

Isaiah 55:8-9- For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Father, thank You that You are smarter than I am, that You know the best way to handle every situation, and that You are powerful enough to work everything out for Your glory and my good. Thank You for the comfort and rest it brings me to know that You have everything under control.

Psalms 37:4- Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Lord, help me to truly delight myself in You- so much so that You are putting Your desires into my heart. I want to want what You want.

Amy: This verse is from the story of Hagar, Sarah's maid and the mother of Ishmael, when Sarah mistreated her and she fled from Sarah: *Genesis 16:13- So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."*

God, thank You that You see me – that You haven't forgotten or forsaken me. Thank You that You are a God who sees and rewards our good works done in secret.

Thank You that because You are a God of seeing, there are no unsolved crimes or unpunished evil with You. Nothing escapes Your notice, and no one gets away with anything. Thank You that when earthly justice systems fail, You bring ultimate justice. Thank You that You will one day vindicate Your servants.

Michelle: *Revelation 21:1, 3b-4- Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more...."Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

Lord God, thank You that the sin, pain, and separation of this life is temporary. Thank You that one day You will make everything right. Thank You that, through Christ, You have made a way for me to live with You forever.

Amy: As you're choosing Scriptures to pray back to God, it's a good idea to study those passages in context and make sure you're understanding and handling His Word correctly as you pray.

Claiming biblical promises that don't apply to you, for example, will only set you up for frustration and disappointment. And you certainly don't need that standing in the way of your prayer time or hindering your fellowship with the Lord.

If your prayer life needs a breath of fresh air, we encourage you to try praying God's own words back to Him. There's no better way to be sure your prayer is pleasing to Him and that you're praying within His will.

Michelle: Now let's take a look at some practical and logistical tips to help keep you focused and your personal prayer time running smoothly.

And the first thing we have to deal with is defeating the flesh when it comes time to pray, because if your flesh has its way, you won't be praying at all and you won't need any of the rest of these tips we're going to discuss.

One of the major hurdles for me when it comes to my regular daily prayer time is my ugly, sinful flesh crossing her arms, firmly planting her feet on the ground and going, ***I DON'T WANT TO!*** Listeners, do you ever experience that? Amy?

Want to know the fast and easy secret to getting over that hurdle?

There isn't one. There is no magic bullet that will banish that balkiness and keep it from ever coming back. There's no secret formula, no book you can read, no Bible study you can attend.

So how do you defeat that relentless reluctance of "I don't *feel* like praying,"? You pray. You don't *feel* like going to work or homeschooling or cooking supper every day, either, do you? And yet, you do those things anyway.

Prayer is a discipline and an act of obedience, and sometimes it's going to feel like that.

And you do it anyway. God doesn't ask us to feel any certain way about obeying Him, He just says, "Do it." So we do.

But the good news is that when you pray, you can ask God to take that feeling of reluctance away and replace it with joy, and I've found that He does- if I just keep on praying.

It's kind of like - have you ever been invited to a party and you really didn't want to go, but you went anyway, and you ended up having a great time once you got there? It's a little like that.

Amy: And if Satan can't get us to give in to the temptation not to pray at all, he'll try to derail us with distractions once we get started. Your mind wanders, the phone rings, your Amazon order is delivered. What are some good ways to prevent or handle distractions?

1. Get as far away as possible from physical distractions. Get into a quiet room away from other people. Sometimes that might mean you have to leave the house and walk the neighborhood, or sit in the car while you pray. Turn off the music, the phone, the computer, and anything else that might make noise. Sometimes a white noise machine can be helpful as well.
2. Keep a piece of paper and a pen or the notes app on your phone handy. Before you pray, take a few moments to take a mental inventory of the rest of your day. Jot down any reminders to yourself, "to do" lists, or errands.

Then, set that list aside, both mentally and literally, but within arm's reach. Later, when you're praying, if something absolutely crucial comes to mind, just take a second and write yourself a very brief note about it and get back to prayer. It can be helpful to ask God to help you to remember or accomplish whatever it was you just had to write down.

3. Ask God to help you focus: "Lord, thank you for drawing me to this time of prayer. Please keep my heart, mind, and will focused completely on You and prevent me from being distracted. If I do get distracted, please help me realize it right away and give me the discipline to re-focus on you. Direct this prayer time and bring to my mind all the things You want me to pray about."

Michelle: And let's talk about prayer lists. They can be super helpful or super overwhelming, depending on how you handle them.

First of all, don't become paralyzed by the number of prayer requests you think you have to keep up with. At my church, we have a church-wide prayer list that's subdivided into several different categories. Most of our Sunday School classes have their own prayer lists for the members of that class. And then we have life groups and discipleship groups where we're sharing prayer requests.

So, for me, that's already three different prayer lists. And on top of that, you have friends and relatives asking you to pray for certain things. And none of those are bad things. But prayer should be governed by God, not ruled by the anxiety of failing to complete a list.

Submitting your prayer time to God's governance might mean that you organize all of your prayer lists in certain ways in order to get a better handle on them. For example: church list on Mondays, Sunday School list on Tuesdays, and so on. Or maybe categories: pray for the lost on Mondays, the sick on Tuesdays, etc.

Or it might mean that, instead of going by a list, you ask the Lord to bring to mind the people and situations you need to pray for, and trust Him to do that.

Another thing I find helpful is that when someone asks me to pray for her, I stop what I'm doing and pray right then so I don't forget. And, of course, pray throughout the day whenever someone or something is on your heart. You can also set reminders on your phone to remind you to pray for someone on a specific day and time of a job interview, doctor's appointment, or whatever.

Amy: I think there are two important words to remember here: practice and petition.

Practice. Keep at it. Prayer is like anything else— the more you practice it, the easier it generally becomes. Practice preparing for prayer. Practice asking for God's help to focus. Practice redirecting your thoughts when they go astray. The more often you do it, the less often you'll find your prayer time getting off track.

And if you're struggling with any of these things - not wanting to pray, distractions, knowing what

to pray for, anything - petition God about that, and ask Him to help you. It's OK to ask God to show you how to talk to Him. Proverbs 15:8 says "...the prayer of the upright is His delight."

Well, Michelle, we've talked a lot about our own personal prayer lives, but what about leading others in prayer - whether it's praying with our children or leading a ladies' prayer meeting?

Michelle: Yeah, let's talk about this in terms of leading adult women, because, while children might be more distractible than adults, they **are** under your authority, and if you say it's time to pray, it's time to pray.

When you say to adults, "It's time to pray," they will find every excuse in the world not to even show up. So let's talk about leading adults, and you can keep an ear out for some things you can try in a simpler way with your kids.

If you're going to start a ladies' prayer group, or even if the prayer time in your Sunday School or Bible study class needs some help, the first thing I'd recommend is discipling them in what prayer is and how to do it.

Instead of immediately diving into praying when you start the group, consider taking some time to study prayer together first. What does the Bible say about prayer? What are some biblical ways of praying?

Maybe you'd like to play these two podcast episodes for your class, stopping along the way to try praying according to the Lord's Prayer, like we talked about in part 1. Or try praying through a psalm together, or praying some of the other Scriptures we went through, or discussing ways to avoid distractions or organize prayer lists.

I've also written a Bible study on prayer that you might want to take your group through called Sweet Hour of Prayer: Learning to Pray from the People of Scripture. You could even simplify it as you go and take your children through it. We'll put a link to that study in the show notes for you.

Amy: Another thing that can help when you're leading a group in prayer is structure and guidance.

You might want to dispense with sharing prayer requests verbally before the prayer time, as it's traditionally done, and add some structure to that aspect of the prayer meeting. There are several different ways you can do this:

(Amy adds example from church)

You, the leader, decide the prayer focus for each week. For example, this week might focus on praying for the lost. Next week you pray for all the missionaries your church supports. The next week, an upcoming church event, and so on.

Write down specific things to pray for – nearly verbatim, if you have to – on an index card or piece of paper and hand one to each lady as she comes in. For example, if you're praying for

missionaries, give the name of the missionary and a few needs he has.

Another way to add structure and focus to your prayer meeting is homework assignments. At the end of each meeting, tell the ladies what the prayer focus will be for the next week, give each one a card with a different aspect of that topic, ask her to be praying about it during the week and to come prepared to pray aloud about it at the next meeting. For example, if you're going to be praying about your church's Vacation Bible School next week, the cards might say things like "leaders," "teachers," "students," "gospel presentation," "safety," etc.

Michelle: Another great technique is what I call "Conversation prayer." Not that we talk to God and God talks back to us, but that we, corporately, talk to God. Some people call it "popcorn prayer," I think.

This works really well with children and people who are inexperienced with corporate prayer. Basically, what you're doing is replacing prayer request time with praying for the request as it's mentioned. You open with a brief prayer. After that, the floor is open for anyone to pray about anything they would ordinarily have mentioned as a prayer request.

The only catch is, they have to keep it to three sentences, max. You'll want to stress this rule and remind them of it often. This keeps the prayer time from being dominated by long-winded people, and it introduces an idea others can build on in prayer which encourages more people to participate. Additionally, it takes the pressure off of those who are nervous about praying out loud.

For example, one person might pray, "Lord, please comfort and strengthen Sally in the death of her husband," which might prompt the next person to pray, "Please provide for her material needs now that she's without George's income," and the next: "Please show us ways we can minister to Sally." There are going to be long silences at first. That's OK. Wait it out. When it's time to wrap up, you lead the closing prayer.

Amy: A variation on what Michelle just described is Guided Conversation Prayer. It works the same way as conversation prayer, but it's more structured. You, the leader, choose a few areas of prayer focus and let the ladies know what they are before the prayer time begins.

Then, you open in prayer, introducing the first topic. The floor is now open for anyone to pray up to three sentences on that topic (and, of course, people can pray more than once if they want to, but only three sentences at a time). When it's time to move on, announce the next topic or pray a brief prayer introducing it.

And finally, small group prayer is another option. If you have enough people, break them into groups of 2-4, and assign each group a topic to pray about. When the groups start getting quiet, hand them another topic to pray about.

Be sure you're giving them plenty of time to pray, though. Sometimes, prayer group leaders use this method, and they hop from one topic to the next so fast that the first person in the group

doesn't even finish praying before the topic is changed. For a 30 minute meeting and groups of 2-4 people, about 2-3 topics for each group is probably sufficient.

Michelle: And just a couple more things to consider for the cohesiveness, unity, and growth of your prayer group.

First, you probably realize that your prayer group must be informed and guided by rightly handled Scripture - the study of the Word. But did you realize that fellowship is *also* a key aspect of a prayer group?

Think about it - sure it's OK from time to time to pray with brothers and sisters you don't know very well. But week in and week out - how can we bear one another's burdens in prayer if we don't know what those burdens are because we don't really know each other?

If you think lack of fellowship might be hindering your ladies' prayer group, why don't you try making the last meeting of each month a low key fellowship - a "three weeks on, one week off" kind of thing - where they have the unprogrammed space to just sit and talk (and snack - gotta have snacks!).

Fellowship is vital to the life of the church, and, believe me, as they get to know each other better and bear one another's burdens, they will bring more things to the table to pray about during the three weeks of prayer meetings.

And lastly, but most importantly, **you** pray. Pray for patience and confidence as you lead. Pray for each of the ladies in your group. Pray that God will grow them in maturity in prayer. Pray that He will help everyone stay focused.

Pray that those who are timid will be emboldened and that God will rein in those who have a tendency to dominate. Prayer is an area of spiritual growth, and only God can produce that growth. Ask Him to.

Amy: When it comes right down to it, prayer isn't about us maneuvering and manipulating God to get Him to do what we want Him to do. Prayer is about **us** getting on the same page with **God's** agenda. It's about **us** submitting to **His** will. It's about **us** trusting **Him** regardless of the outcome.

We hope, in this brief series on prayer, that we've given you some tools to help you do just that.

And until next time, pray without ceasing, and walk worthy.