

A black and white photograph of a young child, likely a girl, sitting in a church. She is wearing a white dress with lace and has her hands clasped in prayer. She is surrounded by other people, some of whom are also in prayerful poses. The image is dimly lit, creating a solemn and reverent atmosphere.

PRAYER

Seeking God in daily rhythms.

By Alison Lublink & Angela Karadsheh



Part 1: Glorifying God

Read: Exodus 15:11, John 4:24

Ponder:

Prayer is an integral part of religions. It is the opportunity to commune with our Creator in a deeper and more profound way. In different Christian denominations and traditions, prayer takes on a different look.

No matter what part of Christianity we align ourselves with, we all agree that speaking to God is important. It's often said that you can't grow a relationship if you don't communicate with one another; and this goes for our relationship with God. If we don't speak to him, how can we expect to grow closer to him?

Throughout this devotional guide we will be looking at prayers from the Orthodox Church, the ancient church from the very beginning of Christianity. Each prayer will be shared after the "Ponder" section of the devotional, and we hope that

these ancient prayers will speak to you in new and exciting ways as you seek to deepen your relationship with God.

There are many parts to prayer. One crucial characteristic is the praise and worship of God. Since he is the Creator of all things, it is critical that we recognize this element of his character in our prayers. This aspect of glorifying God was present in the lives of Jawar's family despite their arduous circumstances. You see, at 14 months old, Jawar had difficulty urinating due to a bladder stone, as well as hematuria (the presence of blood in a person's urine). He cried constantly due to the pain.

Jawar's mom says "After we sold our cattle, and after we tried different health centers and hospitals, we were told to go to the capital [of Kenya], because the case [was] beyond the capacity of the hospital. With our financial constraint I just lost all my hope at that time. Our family members [and] community were not willing to help us or even to mingle with us since we became Christian. We faced a lot of stigma and discrimination from them and we couldn't get the help we needed when we needed it most."

After being referred to *BethanyKids*, Jawar was able to have successful treatment for his condition. He is now in good health. His mom expresses, "Everything was more than our expectation[s]. The hospital, the staff, the medical care, the food and everything is [of the] best quality. I am so thankful for this. Glory to God. He gave us this child and now he gave us a way out for our problem with our child. He helped me through you, the donors, [at] the time I said there is no one beside me, He prepared you for me."

We give glory to God for Jawar and his family; and for you, the supporters of *BethanyKids*.

Pray: Glory to You, Christ our God, our hope, Glory to You! Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, present in all places and filling all things, Treasury of Goodness and Giver of life: come and abide in us. Cleanse us from every stain of sin and save our souls, O Gracious Lord. Holy God. Holy Mighty. Holy Immortal. Have mercy on us.

Discuss:

1. How do you usually pray? Why?
2. What does it mean to you to glorify God?
3. Do you find it easy to regularly glorify God? Why or why not?
4. What is one thing you can glorify God for right now in this very moment?

Do: Start your day each day this week with this prayer. Then aim to glorify God in the way you respond to every situation. If you are feeling like it's too hard to glorify God because the situation feels hard, try repeating the last part of the prayer.



Part 2: Confession of Sin

Read: Nehemiah 1:6-7, 1 John 1:9

Ponder: Each person has many struggles in their lives. Many of these difficulties are external and outside of our control. But each person also has internal struggles that they must face on a daily basis. We are all humans with free will - the right to choose what we do, good or bad. Every one of us makes choices that are wrong, hurtful, or displeasing to God. These choices are called sin, which creates a distance between ourselves and our loving Creator.

No one outside of Jesus Christ has ever lived a perfect life. This means we are all called to repentance, to turning away from our sins. To do this, we must recognize what our sins are and confess those to God. It is imperative that we do not shy away from the hard, deep sins lodged into our hearts. The Orthodox Church refers to these sins as "the passions" - the temptations of our hearts that are constantly waging war within us. If we refuse to accept responsibility for the harm they have caused, both to ourselves and to those around us, our repentance is incomplete.

Truth must lie at the heart of confession. We must be honest and complete in our view of ourselves, as God sees the totality of our hearts already. When we confess our sins, we allow space for God to work in our hearts to overcome any sin we may have.

Damy is a 14 year old from Madagascar who had a serious injury after a fall from a tree. A severe break in his arm meant that he was in need of surgery to fix the bone. His mother was not in favor of the surgery, for financial reasons as well as fear of having metal put into her son. Because of *BethanyKids*, the financial aspect of the surgery would be taken care of. This was not enough to change the mother's heart.

After consulting with Damy's grandmother who gave permission, the surgery went ahead as planned. During the doctor's rounds later that day, he found Damy's mother by his bedside, full of joy at the success of his surgery. The mother was able to recognize that the surgery was necessary and she was very grateful for the work of *BethanyKids* in helping her son in his healing. She seemed aware that her hardness of heart had not been a fruitful reaction to the surgery for Damy, and the hospital staff member encouraged her to thank God and repent to him. She agreed and she added, "Please convey to the [*BethanyKids* donors] kind heart[s] our thankfulness. We will never be able to pay you back but may God who created the Universe pay you thousand and thousand times. May you live longer."

Let us remember that to confess our sins is to make ourselves right with God and with our neighbors. God is full of forgiveness and mercy, waiting with outstretched arms to offer it to us in abundance.

Pray: O Lord our God, good and merciful, I acknowledge all my sins which I have committed every day of my life, in thought, word, and deed; in body and soul alike. I am heartily sorry that I have ever offended You, and I sincerely repent; with tears I humbly pray You, O Lord: of Your mercy forgive

me all my past transgressions and absolve me from them. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your Grace, to amend my way of life and to sin no more; that I may walk in the way of the righteous and offer praise and glory to the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Discuss:

1. What sins in your life do you need to confess?
2. How can you daily remember to ask for forgiveness for the sins you commit?
3. Does being honest and vulnerable about your sins make you uncomfortable? Why or why not?
4. In what ways can you work on strengthening your relationship with God to help you control your on-going passions?

Do: Take a few minutes each day to recognize the ways you have fallen short and ask God to forgive you and help you to grow in holiness.



Part 3: Affirmation of God's Word

Read: Psalm 90:1-2, 1 Corinthians 1:17

Ponder:

Sometimes when we refer to "God's Word" we mean the Bible. The written scriptures are so crucial to our faith. But in all actuality, "God's Word" was Jesus. God sent his son as the physical manifestation of God here on earth; the human form of his Word. In John 1:1 it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So we trust and affirm that God's Word for us is far more than just writing in scrolls, but the actual person of Jesus Christ who walked this earth.

The basic definition of "affirmation" is that of a declaration of something or someone. As Christians we are affirmed by the words of the scripture and the life of Jesus. We must also affirm Jesus as our Lord and Saviour through our words and actions. One of the ways we can do this is to build each other up with words of love and kindness. These two actions work in tandem with one another: affirming Jesus and affirming one another.

Abigail came to *BethanyKids* at the age of 9 needing to have her leg amputated. Needless to say, she was discouraged and spent most of her time crying. The *BethanyKids* Chaplain

at Kijabe, Mercy, met with Abigail and spent time praying with her and her aunt. During the prayer, Abigail stopped crying. Mercy shared with her the love that Jesus has for all children. This intrigued Abigail and made her excited. Mercy asked her, "Do you want to come to Jesus who will love you always even without your leg? Who will never leave you nor laugh at you?" How could Abigail say no?

Before Abigail left the hospital, Mercy gave her a Bible that she read many times a day. By the time they were leaving the hospital Jesus had transformed Abigail's life. She has called Mercy a number of times to tell her that she is reading her bible and that she is waiting to be fitted with a metal leg so that she can start running. She comes from the area where many Kenyan runners come from; perhaps one day Abigail will join them! Abigail still says that she loves Jesus and recognizes that he helps her. *BethanyKids* is a ministry that God uses to heal people physically and spiritually. Abigail's life was changed by both the affirmation of God's love through Chaplain Mercy, as well as his written word.

Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, my God, You have said, "Apart from me You can do nothing." In faith I embrace Your words, Lord, and I entreat Your goodness. Help me to carry out the work I am about to begin, and to bring it to completion. To You I give glory, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Discuss:

1. Do you appreciate it when someone gives you words of affirmation? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever thought about what it means to affirm God's Word? What would you say it means now, after reading this?
3. How often do you spend reading the Bible? Do you feel that you could read more or do you feel that this is a good amount?
4. When you pray, do you spend time affirming God and his Word? If so, how do you do this? If not, how is it something you could embrace?

Do: Affirm someone in your life this week by telling them something loving about them personally, as well as how much Jesus loves them.



Part 4: Thanksgiving for God's Blessings

Read: Psalm 107:21-22, Luke 1:46-47, 49

Ponder:

Thanksgiving is something that people in North America enjoy celebrating (even though Canadians and Americans celebrate it at different times!). But did you realize that thanksgiving-type celebrations are also enjoyed in Germany (*Erntedankfest* - "harvest festival of thanks"), Liberia, Japan (*Kinro Kansha no Hi* - Labor Thanksgiving Day), Norfolk Island, Grenada, The Netherlands and Puerto Rico? There are countless other celebrations around the world that offer thanks for all sorts of things. In general, it's a wonderful human quality that we, as citizens of this world, like to express.

There's no doubt that at some point in our lives we have said "thank you" to someone for something. It's one of the first things we teach kids to say! We often say "grace" before meals, which is a form of thanksgiving to God. Being thankful is ingrained in us, and it's generally a natural reflex for most of us. It's something that we are taught that is important and crucial to being polite and fostering good relations with others.

Being thankful is also something that we should include in our relationship with God; and not just when things are going well. During the COVID-19 Pandemic things have been very difficult for everyone. We've all experienced setbacks and upset in different ways. Prior to COVID-19 we may have thought that we were relatively creative and advanced as a society, but as the pandemic hit and has evolved, people, churches and communities have had to innovate rapidly to keep up with the changing times.

One example of this type of technological innovation can be seen through our Assistive Technology Team. They usually spend their time repairing wheelchairs for the many children that come to the organization for care. But throughout COVID-19 they've had to change the way they work. They brainstormed and realized they could start helping in another tangible way with the resources they already had. They started creating 3D printed face shields that can not only be used by other medical teams, but also by the team themselves as they continue to repair wheelchairs.

At *BethanyKids* we are so thankful that we can find new and creative ways to help others. It is through the gifts God has given us that we can continue to serve those that come to our hospitals. What a blessing to find a way to be thankful amidst such trying times!

Pray: We thank You Lord, Giver of all good things, for these Your gifts and all Your mercies, and we bless Your holy name forever. Amen.

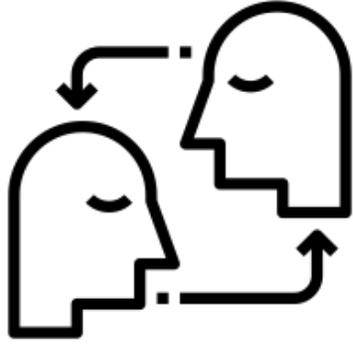
Discuss:

1. Do you find it easy to say thank you to someone? Why or why not?
2. Do you have a spirit of thankfulness? Or do you default to reacting negatively to most circumstances?
3. What are some things/situations/people that you can be thankful for right now in this moment? Take some

time to pause and think about this. Try to name at least 5 things or people.

4. What are some ways that you are thankful for God, who is at work in your life?

Do: Aim to say thank you at least 3 times each day for a week. This might mean that you verbally say this to someone, or perhaps send someone a note or email. Make sure to include God in at least one of these each day! How can you thank him?



Part 5: Intercession for Others

Read: Jeremiah 29:7, John 17:9,14-15

Ponder: One of the most important responsibilities of Christians is the act of intercessory prayer. We are told to lift up one another's burdens as we are all part of one body. When one part suffers, we all suffer. When one part rejoices, we all rejoice. We are connected through our faith and must support one another through prayer.

Praying for our friends and family often comes naturally for us. We love them and we care about their wellbeing. When those we love are experiencing difficult times, we turn to God for peace, comfort, and strength. Our prayers cannot be only for those whom we love and get along with. It is our duty to pray for the entire world, including our enemies. This is a much more difficult task, but a true test of our commitment to intercessory prayer.

In every Orthodox service, there is a series of prayers called the Litany of Peace. These prayers are all-encompassing, praying for the entire world - its people, their leaders, and even the earth itself. This is not a systematic repetition that we simply go through to cover all the bases. It is an intentional way of praying that remembers each person and the ground we live on belongs to God. We ask for His mercy

on all these things. It is a great example of how we as individuals should pray for those in our world.

Dennis, a 10 year old boy from central Kenya, started complaining to his mother about abdominal pain surrounding his umbilical area. At the local hospital, he was diagnosed with an umbilical hernia with surgery recommended. The cost of surgery was unattainable for the family. A relative suggested bringing Dennis to BethanyKids for evaluation.

The cost of surgery was still a struggle for the family, with Dennis' mother relying on casual labor on nearby farms to make ends meet. The family asked for financial assistance from supporters of BethanyKids. "My hope is to see Dennis leading a healthy life without constant pain".

As supporters of BethanyKids we are blessed to be able to help children, like Dennis. Please join with us in praying for Dennis' life post-surgery. Cases like his are common around the world. Through the efforts of BethanyKids and other like-minded organizations, the world can see the beauty and power of love in action.

Pray: For the peace of the whole world, for the good estate of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all men, let us pray to the Lord. For this city and for every city and land and for the faithful who dwell therein, let us pray to the Lord. For healthful seasons, for abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord. For travelers by sea, by land, and by air, for the sick and the suffering, for captives and their salvation, let us pray to the Lord. For our deliverance from all tribulations, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord. Help us; save us; have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by The grace. Lord, have mercy!

Discuss:

1. Who in your life needs prayer at this time?

2. How can you show support and love to people experiencing difficult times?
3. When you tell someone you will pray for them, oftentimes we get busy and forget. How can you remind yourself to actually pray for those who have requested it?
4. Do you ask friends/family to pray for you? Why or why not?

Do: Make a list of those who you want to remember daily in prayer. Update the list as new concerns come along and be thankful for the work that God does in the lives of those on your list.



Part 6: Supplication for Oneself

Read: Jonah 2:2,4, Philippians 4:6

Ponder: There is a sense of tension that comes along with praying for yourself. It is important that we lay our lives down in front of God, asking for His help and guidance as we walk through our lives. Oftentimes however, we want to treat God like a magic genie or Santa Claus. We want things and we want God to give us those things now. It is hard to strike the right balance of sincere supplication and the desire to have our wants met.

One practice of tempering these tensions is the ancient prayer called "The Jesus Prayer". This prayer is simple, only one line long. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." This prayer dates back to the 6th century and is a daily part of prayer for Orthodox monks, nuns, and priests. It is believed that to pray the Jesus Prayer continually leads to inner stillness. This prayer of the heart allows us to focus our prayers on God's mercy rather than our desires.

We are all in need of mercy - compassion and forgiveness when it is undeserved. We allow so many influences in the world to shape the way we think and the way we pray. If we focus on God's mercy in our lives, it allows us to have the

right perspective. The inner stillness allows us to clearly see our hearts and minds without the distractions of the world. We allow God to show us His path for us and we are open to it because we have opened our hearts to Him.

David recently became the Director of Kenya for *BethankyKids* in 2019. This was an unexpected position for him at the time. Being the Director comes with a large responsibility, including working with a vast number of people who have different communication and leadership styles. There have been many decisions that he has had to make that have brought tension and even doubt into his heart and mind. Throughout it all, David has asked for God's wisdom in his life.

"My prayer for wisdom became more earnest and urgent. I am not really sure who said it or how I came to the realization but in what seemed like an instant that changed everything, I realized that *BethanyKids* was God's, and that I was God's and everyone else who I was so worried about was God's."

David was able to have a sincere moment of wisdom from God because he had been praying for a moment such as this. God showed him mercy and gave him the wisdom he had earnestly sought. God cares what happens in our lives and desires for us to know Him through prayer, His scripture, His church, and His people. Let us pray with sincere hearts and with great humility.

Pray: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Discuss:

1. How often do you pray throughout the day? Do you have a routine that includes prayer regularly?
2. What specific things in your life can you lift up to God in prayer at this very moment?
3. Do you find it easy or difficult to see answers to prayer in your life? Why?

4. How can you keep yourself from treating God like a magic genie and instead as the lover of mankind who cares about you?

Do: Say "The Jesus Prayer" as you go throughout your day. As you work, cook, clean, play, or rest, ask God to be with you and show you His great mercy.

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