



bits from bob....

Enrich your prayer life
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I want to pray better! More often, about things that matter, connecting with the heart of God, confident of being heard, even when I struggle for words. We have listened to videos, we have attended classes, heard sermons. Yet, many confide that they still come up dry, parched, weary, wanting, waiting. We need more than Bible verses. As Mark Twain remarked about the Bible, we already know more than we do.

I share six ideas that have enriched and given deeper meaning to my walk and talk with God.

When I pray “in the name of Jesus,” I am not heard because I apply a formula. I am reminding myself that in prayer I seek to advance the things that Jesus wants. The phrase we so easily speak to end a prayer really means “by the authority of Jesus.” I want to live and pray with the power of Jesus. He has all power and authority. In prayer, I seek his power to fulfill his purposes in the world. I use his authority to justify my requests. Keeping this principle in mind helps me as I present my requests to God. Is what I am praying something I can present to God, confident that Jesus’ authority backs up my request?

Pray according to or within the will of God. Praying to God must take into account the will of God. This principle is reflected in Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer: “Not my will, but yours.” I cannot change God’s will concerning natural law or his ultimate and eternal will, but as God works in the midst of life’s circumstances, I share my heart and seek to connect with his heart. Is what I am praying for within the will of God?

I want to pray about the things that break God’s heart. I want the things that break God’s heart to break my heart. A helpful question: am I praying about things that are important to God?

Pray about spiritual matters. Even though we pray about many things that are part of living in a fallen world – death, disease, and other difficulties, our prayers can include a spiritual dimension. A challenge of illness and bereavement is that some walk away from God in such times. Pray that faith will endure in the midst of suffering, disease, and death. Pray for God’s presence and his work in the circumstances, comforting, calling, drawing others near. Am I including a spiritual dimension in what I am praying about?

Do not ask God to change things that have already happened. After a medical test has been done, some pray about the results. The test is done – the results are in, even if they are not yet known. Prayer focuses on what has not yet occurred – for example, accurate reading of the results, or the ability to accept and move forward, or that effective treatments will be possible. Am I praying about the future rather than seeking to change the past?

Pray in faith. Pray about things in which God has given confidence and conviction. With confidence based on God’s promises and conviction based on God’s faithfulness, I seek by faith to accomplish his will and purpose. Am I praying in faith with confidence and conviction?

None of these, taken by itself, is a panacea. As you integrate all of these dynamics in your prayers, bringing your heart into tune with the heart of God, your prayer life will become richer and more meaningful.