

Do you ever have days that don't seem to go very well? Do you ever have days when a situation seems so stressful that you have a hard time concentrating?

Once there was a man who was tired of driving from the airport to his home in the country. So he replaced the landing wheels on his plane with pontoons so that he could land in the lake in front of his cottage. On the next trip, he approached the runway as usual. Suddenly, his wife screamed out, "Have you lost your mind? You can't land without wheels."

The man yanked up the nose of the plane, narrowly avoiding disaster, and landed in the lake without mishap. After resuming a normal breathing pattern, the man stated to his wife, "I don't know what's wrong with me. That is the stupidest thing I have ever done." And with that, he opened the plane's door and stepped out right into the lake.

The poor guy. Do you ever have days that don't go well? Do you ever have days that feel so stressed you have a hard time concentrating? When those days strike you, what do you do? Where do you turn?

My hope would be that you turn to God. That is why we are in the midst of our sermon series, "O Lord Help! Learning to Pray." In our Scripture for today, Jesus is talking about the importance of prayer. He indicates that God is not only willing to hear our prayers, but God is also willing to respond to our prayers.

Jesus tells us a story of a man who, in the middle of the night, goes to his neighbor with a request for bread. Unexpected visitors have arrived. He says that the neighbor will get up and grant the request either because he is a friend or because he doesn't want his reputation ruined.

The implication in this story is that God wants to hear what our needs are and God is even willing to grant what we need. The challenge as Jesus understands it, is are we even willing to pray? Are you willing to recognize your need of God?

That, for me, is what prayer is all about. *It is recognizing our need for God and asking God to help us with the challenges of living.*

For the last several weeks we have been talking about different methods for prayer. Today, I want to offer you a couple more methods. The first method to talk about today is what I would call *need based* prayer.

This is the type of prayer we ask for when we see something that goes wrong. If it happens to us, it can be as simple as "Oh Lord, Help me!"

When I am out in the community, driving my car, riding my bike or simply walking around, there are several triggers that cause me to pray. When I see a police car or ambulance, I am offering prayers for the people who serve our community as police officers or rescue people. When I hear a siren, I am praying for those for whom the siren is ringing, as well as for those who are responding to the siren.

When people get mad at me in the car, if I do something foolish, or if I am driving too slowly for someone else, I lift them up in prayer. Sometimes when I am driving down the road, I will randomly pick a vehicle and pray for the people in that vehicle. The great thing about this method is that it is simple and we can do it anywhere.

The **second method** I want to talk about today is the one printed as an insert in our bulletin today. It is called the **SOAPY** method or **Life Journal Method** of prayer. I would invite you to take out this insert.

Personally, I have been using this method daily since February 8th of this year. I am finding it incredibly helpful as a way to look to God, to read scripture and to listen to God. In fact, I have found it so helpful that I am asking our program staff to do this and they have been actively involved in doing this method as well.

Here is what you do:

Life Journal

1. Find the scripture for today in the Bible reading program.
2. Read the passages slowly and with an open heart. Ask God to open your heart and mind to what you need to hear from the scriptures today.
3. Pick one of the scriptures that speak to your heart and turn to a fresh page in your notebook. Remember to number your pages in the

upper, outside corner. At the top of the page, write today's date. Remember to title your lesson. Use the following acronym.

- Ⓢ *S (Scripture)* . . . record the scripture that speaks to you.
- Ⓞ *O (Observation)* . . . Write your observation of the passage as the Lord leads you, keeping things in the larger context of the text.
- ⓐ *A (Application)* . . . Make an application of this passage to your life. How does this address/challenge you in an area that you are working on right now?
- Ⓟ *P (Prayer)* . . . Write out your prayer to the Lord to ask for God's help in applying what God has just revealed to you.
- Ⓨ *Y (Yield)* . . . Write down one thing I need to yield to God, because of reading this passage.

4. Designate some pages as a Table of Contents and record your journal entry for quick recall. Write the date, scripture, topic, title, and page number.
5. Conclude your daily devotional time by turning to God in prayer. Pray for the church, for people from the church, for others you know in need of God's touch, for your family and for yourself.

What I am discovering as I do this method is that I feel the presence of God leading me as I face the challenges of life. I find that I have a word from God to focus on as I face stressful times. I am finding this incredibly helpful as I seek to connect with God. That is what prayer can help us do. It helps us connect with God.

One of my favorite authors is Madeleine L'Engle. She tells a true story about a family who has a 2 1/2 year old daughter. When a new baby is born to this family, the parents, out of love, do all they can to soften their older daughter's displacement as no longer being the only child.

They let her hold the baby. They let her change the baby. Everything is fine, until one night they try and put their new baby to bed.

The older daughter begins to get frantic. "I want to see the baby."
"Well, of course, darling, we'll take you to the baby."
"No, I want to see her alone."
"No, mommy or daddy will go with you."
"No, I want to see the baby alone!"

She becomes more and more desperate, more and more adamant. Finally the mother says reluctantly, confused by her daughter's outburst, "Okay, you can see the baby alone."

With the mother waiting outside the room, she is astonished to hear her older daughter say to the baby, "Baby dear, tell me about God. I'm starting to forget as I get old."

I love that story. Sometimes, I believe we too, forget about God, and God's love for us. We get so caught up in our lives and trying to survive. We can get so overwhelmed with the circumstances, in which we find ourselves, that we are tempted to forget how much God loves. And that is why we need to pray.

It helps us face the challenges of life and of living, allowing God to walk with us through this world. May God help us live lives of faith.

Amen