

Leanne Payne: Listening Prayer

Kingsway 1995 (USA 1994)

Notes by Alison Morgan

1. Keeping a listening prayer journal

1. The simple how to's

Easy organisational tool to bring shape and order to effective prayer.

Loose leaf binder, 5 or 6 dividers, paper.

Sections on:

- word
- praise and thanksgiving
- intercession
- petition
- forgiveness

Most paper needed in word section. Prayer starts with and remains rooted in the scriptures.

This section is our daily dialogue with God.

Other dividers give us easy access to prayer lists and the scriptures and insights that pertain to them, that boost our faith and spur us on to prayer. These lists evolve.

Need plan for daily scripture reading. Choose plan, switch from time to time. Eg BCP, Daily Light. Vary version of bible used. Also use works of great devotional writers with their meditations on scripture - eg Thomas a Kempis, FB Meyer (*Our Daily Walk*), Oswald Chambers (*My Utmost for His Highest*).

Daily prayer outline - type out and place at front of journal.

1. Meditate on the scriptures (listening to God through his written word)
2. Praise and thanksgiving (our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name)
3. Intercession (thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven)
4. Personal petitions (give us this day our daily bread)
5. Repentance and forgiveness prayers (and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us)
6. A full committal of ourselves and our day to God (and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen).
7. Listening prayer.

This format can be used for 1/2 hour prayer time or whole day. Do not need to pray all these parts of prayer every day, or in this order, they hold principles of well-rounded prayer life.

Journal must be absolutely private, or won't be open.

Pray like this in tandem with prayer with prayer partners or others.

2. The word

Lectio, oratio, listening.

Lectio: prayerful meditation on texts

Oratio: response back to God

Listening - neglected today.

Importance of word. Listening done without *lectio* produces gnostic listening; dangerous.

Not to separate study of scripture from prayer either - opposite error. Pray through scripture.

Note passages which grab you. Note also meaningful meditations by others. Also truth in any writer - truth, wherever it is found, is God's truth.

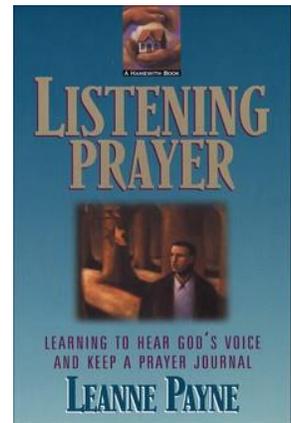
Meditations in this section can be transferred later into intercession, petition and forgiveness sections to be prayed over often; prevents things getting lost.

3. Praise and thanksgiving

In this section we write down our aids for giving praise and thanksgiving to God.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Here put scriptural passages, hymns, insights from saints of all ages that give boost into praise and thanksgiving when needed. When life is tough these are the wings up into the eternal perspective that God intends us to have.



[Put Foster's stuff here]

[Put postcards here]

Here can also keep list of current answers to prayer and other blessings for which can thank God.

New Year's eve - can go through past year's prayer journal and write down the blessings of the year.

OT - thank offerings made on special occasions, and always included praise of Lord for his answer to prayer. Give opportunities in church - eg invite people to come forward in thanks.

Important to have thankful heart.

Include St Patrick's breastplate.

Put on, put off. Power of praise and thanksgiving to transform us; power of sin to defile us.

4. Intercession

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

When we intercede we pray in effect 'thy kingdom come'.

This section contains intercessory prayer requests and whatever else aids us in praying for others. Personal requests go in next section not here.

Intercession doesn't have to be grueling and unpleasant - ascetic idea. On the other hand we do need fasting, solitude, silence and the classic ways of training our bodies to be the temple of the HS. See Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. [Foster again].

Don't pray substitutionally - to take others' pain; Jesus does that.

Don't focus on demons, principalities, powers, in order to bind them; HS does that. We are responsible for sin, not a demonic entity - this is gnosticism. Jesus dealt with persons. Bind the sin, loose the person, heal the wound. Need to help people recognise and repent of sin, not cast out nonexistent demons.

3 great barriers to wholeness: lack of self-acceptance, failure to forgive others, failure to receive forgiveness. Demons may hide in these things; Christ would command, depart. If you focus on casting things out, you focus on Satan not on God. Not to pray against Satan but rather to God. If you find a demon, speak to it and command it to leave; otherwise concentrate on God. Danger of stirring up demonic activity otherwise, and raising spiritual conflict where none necessary.

Need to focus on God, affirm his victory, ask for power to trust in context of spiritual battle in which we find ourselves. Deliver us from the evil one - God to do it, not us.

Christ to be the model in intercessory prayer.

5. Petition

Give us this day our daily bread.

These petitions require listening; will often have to go back and modify them. Always ask for God's mind and will on our petitions. Ask, seek, continue to knock, receive.

Prayer of the heart.

Head petitionary lists with scriptures that urge on to greater faith.

Practice the presence of God - simple acknowledgment that he is with you and never leaves you. Bible study on presence of God helpful.

Get in touch with desires of the heart - not own selfish desires. Write out commands as if given to you personally. Get own will in line with his will. Gradual process; as each layer is acknowledged and yielded to God, another rises to conscious level from unconscious. We are afraid of our true self. Need to get in touch with real fears, limitations, negative feelings about selves. We are often afraid of our true self. Petitionary prayer can lead to great release; to aim of pleasing God.

Include the mundane as well; otherwise in back of mind.

Pray for strength, including physical strength.

Pray for wisdom. To find it is to find an outlet for our capacity to make as craftsmen at the creator's side. Also to find the capacity simply to be in his presence, a condition whereby we are affirmed in the very centre of our beings as children of God. Mary and Martha - Mary's response, to sit and listen, was the true feminine response. Men are only healed in their true masculine (power to initiate and do the will of God) as they are strengthened in their bridal identity - power to respond and be penetrated with the fear of the Lord, fear of a masculine so powerful that we are all feminine in relation to it.

Pray for guidance. Together with wisdom. In seeking guidance for the future we pray for God's wisdom in regard to moving forward in his will; we do not attempt to divine the future. See Dallas Willard, *In Search of guidance: developing a conversational relationship with God*.

Blocks. Won't gain Lord's mind on how to pray if we need/desire to control/manipulate him or others. This called co-dependency today. Won't gain it if desire to please others/ look good in their sight. Or if want to use prayer as crystal ball. Or if want to use others as crystal ball/medium (those who style selves as prophets with word from Lord for you). To receive personal details about another soul that are fruitless for that soul's growth in Christ is to engage in divination. Won't gain Lord's mind if deceived by Christianized secular psychologies which assign innocence to sin and evil. Neognosticism again.

Preparing for death and judgment - excellent novel, Elizabeth Goudge, *The Scent of Water*. Beware denial of death, lack of acceptance of it, demands for healing.

Receiving from God. Another important part of petitionary prayer is appropriation, the moment in which we receive God's answer by faith. Open hearts to receive that which we have asked for in prayer. Forgiveness often the key one. Release the prayer offered in faith (James 5). First must have mind of God on how to pray. Then make request specifically and simply. Then release prayer in faith. Then receive (appropriate) the answer to our prayer. Easy to learn how to do this - start out by picturing with mind's eye what we have requested from God. Hold it before him in such a way that he can continue to speak to us about it. Often then find God changes our picture to be more in line with his will.

6. Forgiveness

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

3 vital petitions. 3 great barriers to personal healing and wholeness: failure to receive forgiveness, to forgive others, to gain virtue of self acceptance. We overcome these barriers when we repent, receive forgiveness, renounce evil one.

Sins - not sin, because condition of separation from God is already dealt with in the Christian. Need to write things down here if any concern needs ongoing prayer; most don't. Also ask for light on any unconfessed sin in our lives.

Best way to start is to take 4 bits of paper and head them:

- forgive us our sins as we forgive everyone who sins against us
- and lead us not into temptation
- but deliver us from evil
- prayer for enemies

Put down scriptures through which God speaks to our hearts, and extracts from writings of others.

New Christians can usefully divide life into segments and go through them in prayer in first section.

Temptation - unbelief, desire etc.

Evil - need to learn how to collaborate with God in spiritual battle. Learn to appropriate protection. Not difficult; just ask for it, visualise it, receive it.

Protection from evil people. Evil is used to winning - evil person needs you to have strength to frustrate their attempts to dominate. Begin by confessing their sins against us. Don't be afraid this will put you back under their power; hate evil, but release evildoer, thereby gaining Christ's strength to defeat and overcome the effects of that evil on ourselves. Need to learn to place the proper boundaries round selves; they consist of truth. Excommunicate the evil person from your life. Aim to break the power their sins have over your life.

Prayer for our enemies. Need for life support system of fellowship.

When the enemy is person you love (family member, member of church). Often happens when a groundbreaking ministry is at stake. Blueprint she discovered:

- pray that the eyes of all who surround these people will be opened to see the situation as it really is
- pray that their associates will be given ways to speak truth and light into the situation
- pray that any demonic power within these people or situations manifest itself
- ask that what can be salvaged in this situation be saved and blessed by God.

7. Listening for God's response

Have done first two steps - word, LP. Now time for listening prayer. Turn back to word section. Often have already received insight and understanding. But may now receive impression on thoughts or picture. Often nothing; but answer will come.

II Listening to God

8. Listening to God

Listening to God can't be a method, but a walk with a person. To listen in prayer is to receive wisdom from above. To listen is to obey; wisdom from above is received by those who are prepared to obey it. Listening prayer modelled by Jesus. Is for all believers.

a) Begin with the practice of the presence of God. Easy to regard the supernatural world as less real than the sensory world; result is we have more difficulty with invisible realities than forebears. 2 Cor 4.18 'we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal'. The practice of the presence is the discipline of calling to mind the truth that God is with us. When we do this consistently we are given the miracle of seeing by faith. They crucified Jesus for claiming to be one with and present to the Father; religious establishment wanted control and power themselves.

9. Hindrances to listening prayer

Denial of parts of own soul as valid. Can't hear God if deny the very faculty of the soul created to apprehend him. Means balancing the intuitive and imaginative faculty with the more objective, rational faculty. Post Enlightenment problem (Kant). By denying the intuitive ways of knowing we can no longer hear God's voice. Danger however - must not confuse experience of God's presence with his objective presence. Learn to avoid this by practising obedience and walking by faith.

b) pray continually that word and presence of God in you will grant you a cleansed and holy intellect, imagination, and sensory feelings. Will gradually deliver a Christian from Cartesian-Kantian split. Picture Christ knocking on door of heart, see self in own heart, open door and bid Jesus come in and talk. Words and pictures will come.

Not subjective; to learn to pray aright and have real fellowship with God puts us in touch with objective reality and truth. God is the ultimate reality; only thus can we approach it. But do not seek experience; immaturity.

Also need laying on of hands for infilling of HS; incomplete baptism also keeps us from hearing God's voice.

Need to focus on God first; not ministry.

Need to grasp our freedom in Christ. Do not go back to the law.

10. Becoming spiritually mature through listening to God

c) learn to quiet selves and listen as Samuel did. God speaks more clearly when you are ministering.

'True prayer is the most exciting thing in the world; it is an awesome thing to dialogue with the living God' 154.

Are however some kinds of prayer God cannot answer; how many hours are there in a mile, is yellow square or round - probably half the questions we ask are like that. CS Lewis.

Prayer can't be turned into message on demand or message a minute. God doesn't want automatons.

Pictures are the language of the heart.

11. Listening prayer is friendship with God

You are my friend if you do what I command - friendship is side by side love (CS Lewis), doing something.

Damage of unhealthy parenting; need to acknowledge it and deal with it.

12. How God speaks to his children

i) through the Bible - the most important way of knowing and hearing God

ii) audible voice

iii) experience with an audible or inaudible message, eg vision, dream, theophany

iv) experience without an audible or inaudible voice, eg being baptised in HS, sensation, conviction

v) angels

vi) God's still, small voice; God deeply impresses his inaudible word on our thoughts - you think his thoughts

vii) other people

viii) dreams and visions - often come at times of change

ix) God's creation

x) the gifts of the HS

FB Meyer, *The Secret of Guidance*

13. The need for exhortation and testing in listening prayer

Don't say 'God told me' - can slander God or take his name in vain. Need to weigh carefully what we hear with others; we all have blind spots. Spiritual pride otherwise. Scripture urges us not to test God but to test everything else, especially own minds and hearts together with the revelation we receive.

Darkness can be preparation; wait. God can use it to warn your emphasis has shifted from him to ministry gifts.

Need to acknowledge own need for forgiveness.

Need to have unity with other Christians

Need for humility - not to put our identity in our giftedness at hearing

14. What to avoid in listening prayer: neognostic listening

Main thing to watch out for in listening prayer is when feelings speak so loudly that they block out all else; result is subjectivity that substitutes for listening prayer, and reality is blanked out. Is horizontal listening instead of vertical listening; leads to demonic.

Neognostic spirituality dominates today. Splits head and heart. Has emerged from atheistic materialism that has linked hands with occult ways of knowing. Characteristic of it is to assign innocence to sin and evil.

Neognostic listening is termed New Age today. Self and its feelings are deified.

15. When neognostic listening infects the church

Conclusion - Living water

Scriptural references to spiritual battle

- This is what the Lord says, he who made the earth, the Lord who formed it and established it - the Lord is his name: 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know' - Jeremiah 33.2-3
- Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfil your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me (Ps 50.14-15).
- The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4.5-6).
- If we first hallow God's name ... we are delivered from all evil, and all things are ours. (P T Forsyth)
- In the Christian story God descends to reascend. He comes down; down from the heights of absolute being into time and space, down ... to the very roots and sea-bed of the Nature He has created. But He goes down to come up again and bring the whole ruined world up with Him. (C S Lewis)
- You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4.22-24)
- Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4.16)
- You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. (Hebrews 10.36)
- This is the confidence that we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us - whatever we ask - we know that we have what we asked of him. (1 John 5.14-15)
- The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. (2 Timothy 4.18)
- This is what the Lord says: 'stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls'. (Jeremiah 6.16)