



## Dear Phil

### HOW MUCH PRAYER IS ENOUGH?

*My question is about prayer. I feel like I am not praying enough for a family member's physical recovery. Although he is constantly on my mind, and I find myself laying him at God's feet regularly, I still feel my praying is inadequate. One of my biggest struggles is that not only can I never be good enough, but I never read my Bible "enough" or pray "enough." I am the super "underachiever." (Imagine if your Dad thought you weren't a Christian, and used every opportunity to inform you that he didn't think you were minding God...even though you were doing your best to serve God.) How do I balance the feelings of guilt over "inadequate praying" with the fact that I know God can heal him, the fact that I want God's will, and the fact that I don't know what God's will is?! —Butch*

Dear Butch,

I can't imagine having a parent who regularly unchristianized me. Any dad who treats his son like that is certainly doing Satan's work. If you were really deceived about being saved, telling you that you aren't saved won't help. Your dad should be praying that God will open your eyes, and allowing the Holy Spirit to work with you. May the Lord grant you grace to render blessing for cursing, and may the Lord open the eyes of your dad to his folly.

Regarding praying enough, my question is, "How much prayer is enough?" If "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17) means that every waking thought is to be occupied with praying, then nobody, including Jesus Himself, prayed "enough."

Jesus' example includes short prayers of thanksgiving (Mat.

15:36), early mornings of prayer (Mark 1:35), late nights of prayer (Mat. 14:25), daytime prayer (Luke 9:18), and a night of prayer (Luke 6:12). However, neither Jesus nor any other Scripture author gives a standard amount of time that constitutes "enough" prayer.

Quantifying prayer in terms of "enough," comes dangerously close to reducing God to a divine jack-in-the-box with a prayer handle which, if turned "enough," causes Him to spring into action.

What helps (and convicts) me is measuring my praying in terms of *relationship and responsibility*. I have a relationship with my wife, but I don't ask myself have I talked with her "enough." The issue in relationships is understanding and intimacy. I am committed to conversing with my wife as a means to understanding her and having her

understand me. When we understand one another at a given time, it is "enough." Of course, creating mutual understanding today does not mean that we won't need to communicate tomorrow. We are in a relationship with God, and prayer is God's appointed means for us to develop the relationship. We must pray however often and however much it takes to keep growing our relationship with God. That will be more some times and less other times.

In terms of responsibility, we all have spiritual responsibilities in prayer. The Bible tells us we are to pray for all men (2 Tim. 2:1), for "kings and all who are in authority" (1 Tim. 2:2), for the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers (Luke 10:2), for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44), for His name to be sanctified, His kingdom to come, His will to be done, our daily needs, forgiveness for any sin committed, protection from the evil one (Matt. 6:9-11), and for all saints (Eph. 6:18). In addition to these specified prayer responsibilities, we also have a responsibility to pray for those over whom we have spiritual oversight and influence. Samuel recognized that to fail to pray for those over whom God had placed him as a spiritual authority would be to sin against God (1 Sam. 12:23). The same is true for us.

I'm out of space, so I'll have to continue my answer next time. May the Lord help you and me to be faithful in our prayer relationship and responsibilities.

Blessings,  
Philip

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