

# How to Pray

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving

**Colossians 4:2**

One thing is crystal clear from this passage: it is God's will that we pray to him. Sometimes we struggle to know the will of God for our lives. But there are some things that you do not have to struggle to know. One of them is that God's will is that you pray to him. The text says, "Devote yourselves to prayer." God wills for you to pray to him.

## **Taking Steps for Prayer:                      When and Where?**

When are you going to pray? You may say, "I don't want a compartmentalized life with prayer in one devotional compartment and the rest of my life in other compartments. I want an integrated life with prayer saturating all I do." Well, amen to that. But it's a false dichotomy, and it won't work to choose between a season of prayer in solitude and prayer soaking the rest of your life, as though those were alternatives. If you want to walk in prayer all day long, you will need to linger in prayer in times of quiet communion with God. So decide on a place and a time for this meeting with God in prayer.

## **Taking Steps:    How Long?**

How long? If you are doing nothing, do something. Start where you are and take a step. Then ask God to grow you into a deep and wise and fruitful person. Maybe twice a day. Maybe three times a day. Start somewhere and ask God to grow you deeper.

## **Taking Steps:    How?**

How? Dozens of ways could be stated. No one way is more correct than another. The important factor is to choose the way that works for you and stay Biblical. I will mention three.

### **1. Pray Concentric Circles**

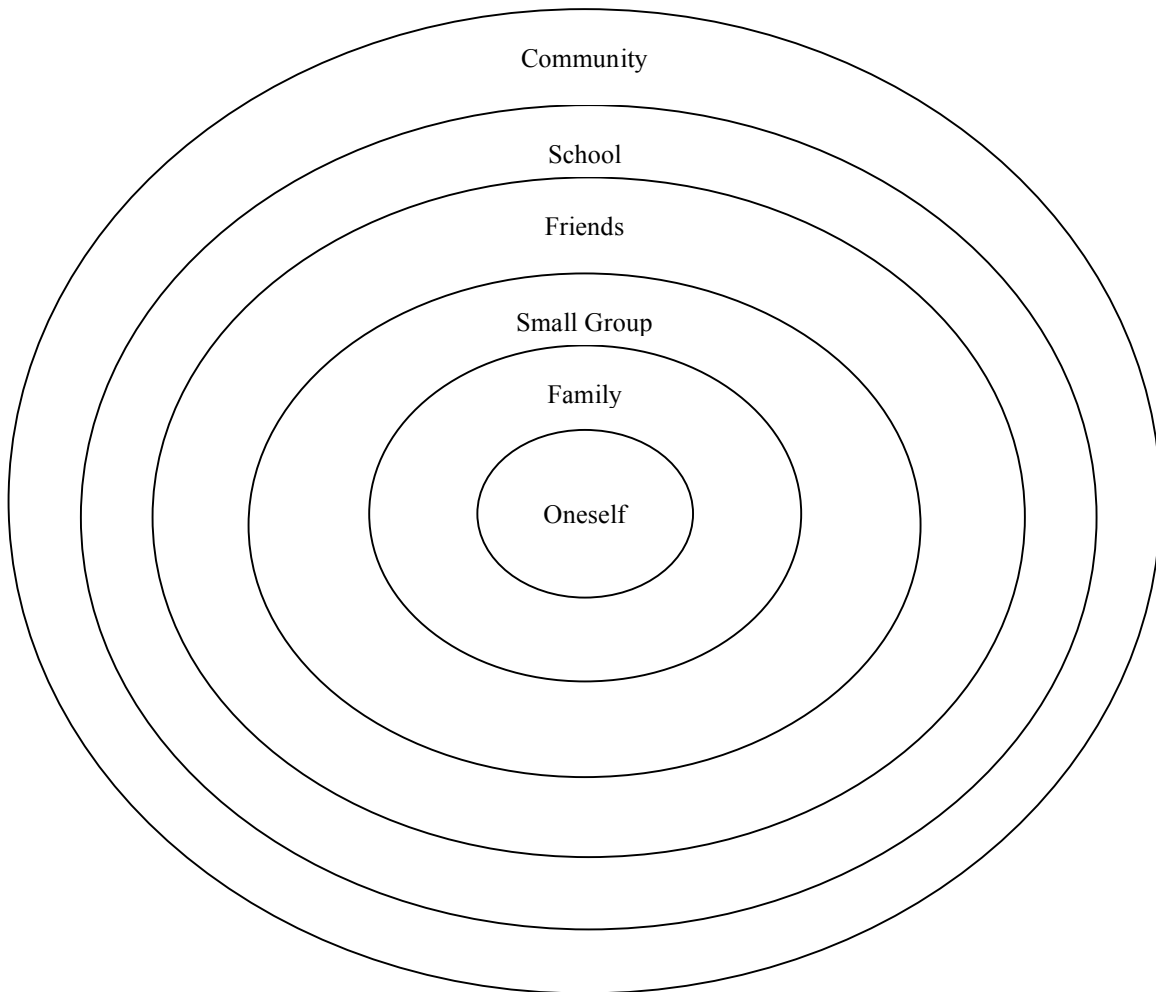
First, consider praying in concentric circles from your own soul outward to the whole world. I pray for my own soul first. Not because I am more deserving than others, but because if God doesn't awaken and strengthen and humble and fill my own soul, then I can't pray for anybody else's. So I plead with the Lord every morning for my own soul's perseverance and purification and power.

Then I go to the next concentric circle, my family, and I pray for each of them by name.

Then I go to the next concentric circle, the staff First Baptist Church Oviedo. This step could include your specific work environment, sports team, school club, etc.

Then I pray for our church, First Baptist Church Oviedo. And then I go out from there to different concerns and groups at different times. The wider circles include the city and the state and the nation and the cultural and social issues of the world.

You can't pray for everything every time. So there need to be differences. And your heart will dictate much of your burden. Some days one family member or one staff member or one crisis in the church or the world will consume most of your time. But if you have a pattern - like the concentric circles - you won't spin your wheels wondering where to start. The following diagram shows Concentric Circles of Prayer:



## 2. Pray Scripture

God's Word reveals God and his will. What you want for yourself and those you pray for is more of God and more of his will. As you see him in his Word, pray that God would make this seen and known and loved in the lives of the people you pray for. And as you see his will, pray that God would cause it to be done in the lives of those you pray for. "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven."

Be intentional about this, but don't be too self-conscious. Contrived prayers seem inauthentic. If we are so self-conscious that we try to craft our prayers with interesting turns of phrase, we will lose the power and reality of prayer. But do try to pray specific Biblical values for people, not worn out cliches and trite generalities that have no spiritual depth.

For example, if you want to pray for somebody, pray the beatitudes: Father, grant that John would recognize his poverty of spirit. Let him mourn for his sins and not be indifferent or unconcerned for his own soul. Work a meekness into his heart. Grant him to be hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Give him the heart of a peacemaker and a reconciler. Make him pure and keep him pure, O Lord. And if you will for him to be persecuted, give him grace to count it all joy and to remember that his reward is great in heaven.

The following link has a number of Scripture references through which to pray:  
<http://www.prayingscriptures.com/praying-in-victory.shtml>

### 3. Pray through ACTS

You can remember the pattern by the acronym: A-C-T-S. Check out what each letter stands for and the prayer examples that we have listed. See if you can spend a minute or two or more per category.

**Adoration:** Spend time telling God how awesome He is and why He is awesome.

Read Psalm 89:6-13

Example: Dear God, you are faithful, you are awesome, you are amazing, you are loving, you are forgiving, etc.

**Confession:** Spend time asking God to forgive you for messing up

Read 1 John 1:9.

Example: God, I'm truly sorry for the way I acted the other day. I have been disrespectful to my parents, I have not been listening at school, I have not been seeking after you like I should be. Please forgive me. With your strength, I will do better next time.

**Thanksgiving:** Spend time thanking God for all that He has blessed you with.

Read Phil. 4:6.

Example: God, thank you for everything that you have blessed me with so much...my parents, food, my house, my health, the ability to see, walk, and talk, etc.

**Supplication:** Spend time making requests to God...remember according to His will not ours.

Read Mark 14:36. This is a good example of Jesus praying for God's will and not His will.

Example: God, I pray for my grandparents, I pray for my dad's job, I pray that you protect our family, etc.