

Reaching God?



Reaching God? Like anyone else, you clicked on this link to “Reaching God” because there is something within you that would like to connect with God in some way. It’s built into the fabric of who you are. We are relational beings – born to live in relationship with others. But we long for more than just human relationships. We long to know and be known by God.

What is Prayer?

You believe in the presence of God in your life and you’ve found yourself praying. And what is prayer anyway?

This isn’t rocket science. Prayer is trying to communicate with God.

Some people think that “prayer” is talking AT God – telling God what they think about how things should be. Some see prayer is being aware of God’s presence in a way that allows them to express what they feel and think to God. Some understand that prayer is also about listening to what God might be saying back in some ways. While listening to the exquisite soprano voice soar above the rhythms of melodious altos, tenors and base voices worship, you might hear God speaking to you. Whether alone or with caring friends of your community, you could perceive the presence of God while taking in the vast

panoramic sweep of the Grand Canyon or seeing the soft light filtering down through the canopy of trees in a forest glen. Some people assume that prayer is about being thankful.

There’s one thing that a lot of us seem to forget, me included. We forget that if God actually showed up in seven minutes from now, we’d probably faint or immediately crumble to the floor in unrelenting fear. I mean, get this, . . . you’re sitting with a few friends having a chat in the kitchen and God suddenly appears, . . . right there, . . . at the same table around which you’re all sitting. What would you say?

“Hi God. I almost forgot You’re always here anyway, so it’s good You made Yourself visible to remind me again. . . . Cool shirt? You make that Yourself?

“Want a Pepsi? . . . Say, . . . who’s gonna’ win the Nick’s game tonight? And, uh, would You pass me the remote? We wanna’ check in on the soccer game in Brazil.”

Hardly. The scriptures tell us that whenever God’s actual presence was made known to people, they were terrified and had to be calmed. So to start with, we’re afraid of the reality of the actual presence of God. It’s too much for us to handle. We want to meet God but not really, . . . because if God REALLY

SHOWED UP NOW, it might be so stunning that we'd be reduced to silence.

We forget how awesome it is to take the presence of God seriously, so most of the time we find ourselves praying as if we're sort of leaving a message on God's answering machine. 'God will listen to what I'm saying sometime in the future but not in real time NOW.' We say words, express feelings and make some effort to communicate to what or to Whom we assume God is. But we don't do this anticipating that as soon as we start talking, God will visibly materialize before our eyes and verbally respond. (Remember the George Burns movies "Oh God?")

Yet we still pray.

Some pray with some regularity. Some pray only when they are upset and at a physical emotional or intellectual crossroad. We've also read passages which describe how people in the Scriptures prayed. Jesus taught us that when we're stuck for something to get the conversation going with God, we could try talking about the basics:

'Hi God; You made everything and You're like a Parent in Heaven to me so may Your name always be holy. I hope Your kingdom becomes fulfilled soon. I hope that everything You want will come about in the heavens beyond and also right here where we're living.

As usual, I'm mindful of needing things like food and other necessities in life but I'd like You to forgive me for the things

I've done wrong. But in saying that, I realize I deserve to be forgiven by You only to the same extent that I've been forgiving of others for doing the same things.

Lead me away from temptations that would hit me at the weakest points in my character. Keep me away from what is evil. Because when all is said and done, it's all about Your reign and power and unspeakable holiness that stands in eternity.' (*That's a paraphrase of the two versions of "The Lord's Prayer" that Jesus taught.*)

If you're new at trying to talk to God, where do you start?

It might be helpful to sit down, somewhere, by yourself and in a quiet place.

Once you're settled, start thinking about how God is always with you. Tick off a few accomplishments on God's resume: Infinite, eternal, all powerful, just and compassionate. Those skillsets were pulled out of the family of God's scrapbook through time (the Bible). So wherever you go, there you are and God is with you. But God won't suddenly appear because God knows you'd be scared. Just know that God is personally with you, no matter where you are or what you're doing - regardless of who is around you.

What do you say when you talk to God?

Anything you want, actually. How you feel. What you think. What you want for others or for yourself. Think about what God might want.

Maybe you can just listen. Your mind is working all the time, so as soon as you sit still, you'll notice how fast your mind is

racing. You'll notice that even in times of being silent and doing nothing, you're thinking of twenty-million things at once. In them all, you'll gradually notice several major themes emerging in your thought process. Things you've thought of before. Things for which you should be planning. Tasks you haven't yet done. Things you wish you hadn't done. You will undoubtedly be mindful of concerns you continue to have.

Try mentioning or directing these things to God. Ask for clarity on the things that seem confusing. Ask for wisdom in these matters. Ask for healing. Try just listening to your inner Voice as you are mindful of all these things swirling in and around you. You may begin to hear an inner Voice of clarity. You may hear words of wisdom. You may find healing. Whatever you find, you'll be experiencing it with God.

That's a start.

But whether you have a regular practice of meditation or time of prayer, whether while talking, thinking, walking, working or just listening to life around you and within you, you can pray anytime. You can be in the midst of a group of caring people and be mindful of God's presence. Even in the act of working, talking on the phone or traveling, you can do it with a sense of being open to God's presence in your life. "Pray without ceasing" Paul put it one time. It's about mindfulness of God's presence with you every minute you live.

You may find help in reading some of the links on the subject of prayer that will appear on this website. Watch for links to come on the "Pathways of Illumination" page. This will contain articles written by several of us about times and ways we've found the reality of the presence of God in our lives.

Wherever you are on your spiritual pathway, know that we travel with you. Contact us at any time, . . . the pastors, the members of this church. We have all found God to be wonderfully present in life and our lives have been changed forever.

Enjoy life because we all live in God's presence.

. . . Philip Siddons