



*Conversation with God* shares spiritual insights and provides a clear path for all people to experience a deeper relationship with God through prayer.

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## I. Introduction: Where are you going?

**P** RAYER IS NOT THE PATH BUT THE DESTINATION: Remember the childhood story of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland? When Alice found herself lost in the Enchanted Forest, she arrived at a crossroads. There were several paths she could choose through the forest. Alice was confused, uncertain, and insecure about which road to take.

With bewilderment, Alice looked up in the tree above her and noticed the Cheshire Cat. "Which way do I go?" Alice asked.

The cat posed a critical and very relevant question: "Well, where are you going?"

"I really don't know," Alice replied.

The cat's insightful response was, "Then it really doesn't matter!"

As a follower of Jesus, it matters where we are going. Many Jesus-followers seem a lot like Alice. We're unsure of where we are headed. We're confused by the maze of events, programs, and projects offered along the Christian life. The apostle Paul shared his burden for the believers in Corinth facing similar complexities: "But I am afraid that . . . your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). A life of prayer is to be both our destination and our identity.

## II. Awaken to what he has called you!

*"My house will be called a house of prayer" (Isaiah 56:7).*

### A. You have a name and identity.

The Bible tells us that God has chosen a name for his own house. In Isaiah 56:7, the Lord says, "These will I bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." This becomes especially relevant to us when we understand that God's house

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*A life of prayer is to be both our destination and our identity.*

was not in any way limited to the temple in Jerusalem. God's house existed long before the temple or its predecessor, the tabernacle of Moses. It exists even now and will continue when this age ends and earth ceases to exist in its current form. It is an eternal house and is forever a place of communion with God. As we begin to understand that the church today is God's house, it is critical that we comprehend what it means to live in or be a house that has been named by God as a house of prayer.



**L-5** Living with a passionate longing for purity and to please Him in all things

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**Prayer cannot be something we pull out of a tool bag when we desperately need to do a specific job.**

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**Followers of Jesus are headed toward Jesus! He is the destination. His life and character are our goal. His purposes become our passions**

*Walking in the Light of God's Son . . . Through Fresh Encounters with Jesus* (John 12:35; John 8:12)

The writer of First John assures us, "If we ask according to His will, He hears, and we will have the request we ask" (1 John 5:14–15).

**Pause quietly before the Lord** and ask Him to change you, to make you a person who reflects His name. Based upon God's declaration in Isaiah 56:7, we know this prayer is according to his will, so boldly declare your desire to become more of his "house of prayer." Close with an expression of faith and thanks. "Thank you, Lord for your Spirit's work in me. Teach me to pray."

#### **B. Prayer is a conversation.**

Prayer cannot be something we pull out of a tool bag when we desperately need to do a specific job. Prayer cannot become something we use to get what we want. Rather, it is an intimate, ongoing exchange with God. Prayer allows us to participate with God in his love and work for humanity.

We come to know the voice of God through constant conversation. In such conversation, we hear God calling us to participate with him in the work he's doing in this world. That's why we pray. Jesus told his disciples:

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whosoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:11–14).

Don't use prayer as a tool, but as a genuine, engaging, give-and-take conversation with God throughout your day. Prayer is not the vehicle that takes us where we're going. It is where we're going!

#### **C. Where am I headed as a follower of Jesus?**

The simple answer to this question is in our identity. Followers of Jesus are headed toward Jesus! He is the destination. His life and character are our goal. His purposes become our passions, and prayer without ceasing becomes our identity.

"I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).



**L-10** Practicing the presence of the Lord, yielding to the Spirit's work of Christlikeness

**Colossians 3:16 Moment:** "Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you"

**Pastor/Teacher:** Vulnerably share your heart: "As I reflect on Christ's prayers for me, my heart . . ."

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**Prevailing prayer occurs when I have had a conversation with God until I can finally, and truly, give him all the cares of this world that trouble me.**

*Walking in the Light of God's People . . . Through Faithful Engagement in Fellowship* (John 12:35; Matthew 5:14)

"He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30 NASB).

**Pause with a partner or small group**, and with yielded hearts, express your desire to decrease in your thoughts and attitudes, your decisions and perspectives in order that he might increase!

### **III. Prevail in prayer.**

#### **A. Awaken to the purpose of his prayer for you.**

"He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Imagine heaven—the very atmosphere has a sweet aroma of praise, arising like the cloud that Isaiah saw in his vision. Before the throne is One who looks like the Son of God! Beseeching. His voice is rising and falling with faith, hope, and love for his people. From the mouth of the One risen from the dead, your name is spoken. You! Jesus is interceding for you.

Pause for a moment and imagine this scene: Jesus is kneeling, quietly bowed in prayer. As you get closer, you can hear him praying—and he's praying for you! The Savior of the universe is praying for the burdens of your heart and the needs in your life. We know this is true because we are told in Romans 8:34, "He is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us." What does it do to your heart to know that while you are praying to Jesus, he is praying for you?

*When I imagine Jesus is praying just for me, my heart is filled with . . .*

*When I remember that Christ sits next to God and talks to him about my needs, I feel . . .*

Paul said in Philippians 4:6 to "make your request known to God."

Is there a wayward child for whom your heart breaks? Is there a soul for which you cry out? Are you asking about purpose in life? See the Lord, high and lifted up, his scarred hands spread before the Father and his voice filling the celestial air with faith. He carries your petitions before the throne.

- Make your request known, "Jesus, I bring my need, petition, prayer, and request before you now."
- Begin to thank Him as He takes your petition and presents it before the throne.
- Close your eyes and imagine the scene in heaven as your Lord delivers your petition before Father God.

There is only one adequate response and that is praise—praise to the One who lives to make intercession for you. Let his kingdom come here on this earth, just like it is in heaven.

#### **B. Prayer that prevails is Spirit-empowered prayer.**

What is prevailing prayer? Is it prayer that always gets me what I want? No! Prevailing prayer occurs when I have had a conversation with God until I can finally, and truly, give him all the cares of this world that trouble me.

A prayer is answered once God holds it in his hands. When he has taken my difficulties and cares and says, "This is mine now."

I want to lay my needs before the Lord in conversation with him, saying, "God, I can't bear this anymore. Will you take it?" And God will always say, "Yes, I will take it. Cast all your cares on me. I don't just care about you; I care for you. See, you don't even have to care how this turns out. I am doing the caring. Trust me."

We need to pray for the burdens of life and for each other. Prayer is ministry. In fact, it is missionary work to pray. Paul said in Romans 8:26–27:

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

Spirit-empowered prayer is when you enter a time of prayer, a conversation with God, and pray for people who are bruised and hurting, even though you may not know where they are bruised and hurting. But the Spirit knows because he "searches all things," and he knows the mind of God.

The Holy Spirit will take over and pray in ways that you and I cannot. The Spirit begins to pray, and we enter again into a conversation with God where we do the missionary work of prayer. We begin to pray for people with needs we don't understand, in situations we cannot know.



**L-9** Faithful stewardship and exercise of the gifts of the Spirit for empowered living and service

*Walking in the Light of God's Word . . . Through Experiences of Scripture*

*"But as for me, my prayer is to You, O Lord, at an acceptable time; O God, in the greatness of Your loving kindness, Answer me with Your saving truth" (Psalm 69:13 NASB).*

*"To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens!" (Psalm 123:1 NASB).*

*"Be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18 NASB).*

A life that's lived in the Spirit enjoys and is empowered by intimacy with God. Our self-interests distract us from pursuing Jesus and living lives of communion with him. Spend the next few moments, experiencing Psalms 69 and 123 with a partner or small group. Let your prayer be to God. Ask him to answer by allowing you to experience his fullness. Lift your eyes to heaven and call upon the Lord.

Imagine that God now asks you the question he asked of Adam and Eve, "Where are you?" Be reassured that his heart is filled with compassion, and he longs to relate to you.

Pause in prayer. Yield to the fullness of his Spirit. Say yes to him and his invitation of communion. In response to his pursuit and probing question, "Where are you?" pray these words:

Here I am, Lord. I yield to the filling of your Spirit. Send me into a journey of intimate conversation and daily communication with you. I want to hear your saving truth. Speak it to me. I lift my eyes to heaven and I call upon you to \_\_\_\_\_.