

The Wisdom of Using a Daily Prayer Guide

Christians from ancient to modern times have found using written guides for daily prayer to be wise and practical aids in praying from the Bible and developing a mature life of prayer “face-to-face” with God. Here are some of the reasons why Christians have found these structures helpful.

- Daily prayer guides are a structured means of praying the Bible.

They supply Scriptures and biblically-based prayers that serve as a springboard for our own prayers.

- It provides an experience of praying with others, even when we are alone.

Speaking common prayers together is a biblical form of worship (e.g., the book of Psalms, the Lord’s Prayer, Acts 4:24–26). We can pray together with our fathers and mothers in the faith by praying the very words and the same pattern by which they prayed. Thus, our own individual prayers become situated in the wholeness of the church.

- Freedom from the burden of planning our own content each day.

Deciding to use a prayer guide liberates us from having to decide each day what to pray. Thus, it makes forming a habit of daily prayer a bit easier.

- Freedom from the limitations of our own wisdom and habits

It gives us words to stretch us to pray beyond our capacity, to pray more what would have thought to pray for ourselves, to break out of our ruts. By praying what is assigned, we find God working in ways we would not have planned or chosen for ourselves. One author writes, “It is too easy to choose [Bible texts] that always comfort or console, and consistently reinforce and agree with our point of view. Biblical faith requires us to be vulnerable to challenges, to accountability, to repentance, and to a change of heart.”

- Freedom and focus under pressure

Having words and forms of prayer ingrained in us through much repetition provide us with tools ready for use when the moments of crisis come upon us unexpectedly. Athletes, musicians, soldiers, policemen, and others train so that they will have the ability to respond rightly when the moment of pressure comes and they don’t have time to think about it. Training helps us to pray when we are under great stress from pressure or pain.

- Training in theological balance and depth

Praying well-crafted prayers prepared by others helps us express our prayer with a theological balance and depth that we might not otherwise achieve on our own.

- Training in beauty

Praying well-crafted prayers helps us express our prayer with beauty, which follows the pattern of biblical poetry (e.g., Psalms) and glorifies the quality of prayer.

- Training in humility

We must learn how to pray. Praying well-crafted prayers written by others enables us to submit ourselves to others in humility to learn from them.

- Repetition is essential for learning and permits a kind of devotional freedom

Repetition deepens the meaning of texts if we attend to them, and each encounter can be fresh because we approach the text every time with new life experiences and perspectives.