# Table of Contents

Preface ... 4

Chapter 1: Get Ready To Pray ... 7

- Quiet Time With God ... 7
- How To Get Started With Your Quiet Time ... 11
- Prepare Your Heart ... 13

Chapter 2: The Aim Of Prayer ... 18

- Motives Behind Prayer ... 18
- Know What To Pray For ... 21

Chapter 3: Types Of Prayer ... 22

- Adoration ... 23
- Ways To Praise ... 27
- Contrition ... 29
- Thanksgiving ... 33

Chapter 4: The ABC Of Praying For Your Heart's Desire ... 35

- Ask ... 35
- Believe ... 44
- Commit ... 50

Chapter 5: Ready, Aim, Pray (Summary & Checklist) ... 53

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Appendix: Answers To Your Biggest Questions About Prayer (Video Transcripts)

- How Should I Pray? ... 57
- Is Praying Silently As Effective As Praying With Words? ... 66
- Is There A Best Time/Place To Pray ... 67
- How Do I Pray For Someone Who Is A Thorn In My Side? ... 68
- Why Are My Prayers Not Answered? ... 69
- What Should I Do When I Get Distracted Praying? ... 74
- Are My Prayers Being Heard Or Am I Just Talking To Myself? ... 79
- Is It Ok To Pray For Small Things?... 81
- Why Do We Have To Ask God For Things When He Already Knows What We Want? ... 83
- How Do I Listen To God? ... 86
- Should I Pray To Saints? ... 90
- Is Praying With Others Effective? ... 93
- Is Intercessory Prayer Effective? ... 97
- Why Does God Seem Silent At Times? ... 100
- Answers To Specific Questions About The Rosary, Novena & Fasting? ... 104

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Preface

Since St. Joseph’s Site became part of the World Wide Web in 2002, I have received thousands of prayer requests from people from all walks of life. In many of these prayer requests, I have sensed a certain degree of desperation, frustration, and hopelessness. I even got emails from people who doubted the existence of God as well as from those who thought that God was such an uncaring God who never answered prayers. There were many who ended up disillusioned or bitter. I believe this is because they do not know what the Bible teaches about prayer.

Are there secrets to getting anything that we pray for? Are there secrets to manifesting anything that your heart desires? In recent years, there have been books, e-books, CDs and DVDs about these so-called ‘secrets’ but most of them are without any Biblical perspective. I’m sure you have read or watched “The Secret” by Rhonda Byrne or Michael J. Losier’s “The Law of Attraction”. There are many others and I am not saying that the concepts and ‘laws’ they teach are false. In fact, I agree with some of them but I also differ with some.

I differ in that I believe that the “Force” behind the Universe is personal and not impersonal. God knows each and everyone of us and longs to have a relationship with each one of us.
I differ in that manifesting anything we want do not depend on us alone. It is more about having a relationship with Him who is our Creator and practicing the spiritual laws or truths which He has laid down for us in the Bible.

In this e-book, I will share with you these spiritual laws/biblical truths which I apply in my prayer life. My prayer journey has not been easy. I have been lost but by the grace of God, I found my way. I have stumbled but I got up, and I have had moments of desperation but I found hope.

I am on a continuing prayer journey and I still stumble and fall sometimes but God is always there to help me get up and continue on my journey.

You may be wondering why I entitled this e-book “Ready, Aim, Pray”. This is what I actually practice in my prayer life. I get READY to pray. I AIM for something as I know exactly the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of my prayer. And then I PRAY. I call this way of praying my “RAP Session”.

People have different ways of praying. What is in this e-book is how I pray. We are all unique individuals and we communicate with God differently. It is never my intention to ask you to duplicate what I do in my prayer life because I believe that God deals with us individually and He has a ‘custom-made’ way for each one of us to communicate with Him most effectively.
My only hope is you would gain some insights about prayer from this e-book and apply the biblical truths I will be sharing with you in ways that will work for you, given your uniqueness.

This is version 2 of the e-book. It has a new look and I have added a checklist of things which I do or ask when I do my “RAP Session”. Usually, when my prayers are not granted, I go through the checklist and I realize that I have missed or neglected one of the items in the checklist.

I also appended the video transcripts of the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. This is based on a survey which I conducted among subscribers of St. Joseph’s Site last February 2009. In this short survey, I asked them this: “What’s your biggest question about prayer?” More than 2,000 people responded and after processing the responses, I was able to identify 12 biggest questions about prayer. I answered them all in a series of 13 videos which can be found at http://www.babestanmagkalas.com. As I said earlier, what is in the appendix are the video transcripts.

God bless you as you embark on your prayer journey.

Babes Tan-Magkalas

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Chapter 1: Get Ready To Pray

How does one get ready to pray? My prayer preparation involves keeping my daily appointment with God. This is my quiet time with Him; this is the time when I sing praise songs, or read the Bible or devotionals, meditate on God’s Word or just simply keep still and listen. To some people, a quiet time with God means walking off to the beach or garden or mountain, and not doing anything but leaving themselves open to God.

I also believe one should have a certain ‘heart-set’ (attitudes of the heart) when approaching God through prayer, foremost of which is humility, gratitude and a forgiving heart.

Quiet Time With God

We live in a very busy world that it becomes a challenge to slow down the pace of life. Making a daily appointment with God is one thing but keeping it is something else entirely. Finding a quiet place at home can be difficult and more so, quieting one’s mind.

Do you notice that just when you’re trying to keep your mind still, all sorts of thoughts start pouring in? I’ll tell you in a short while how I am able to still my mind quickly.
I am not a morning person so I prefer to keep my appointment with God at night before I go to bed, when the rest of the world is sleeping. It also makes me sleep soundly because I still have God in my thoughts when my head hits the pillow.

You may prefer to do it in the early morning which is also good as this sets you up for the rest of the day, helping you to deal with the hassles and stresses of life much better.

Some people spend a portion of their lunch hour alone with God. It is really up to what your schedule allows. The most important thing is that you set aside a definite time to get to know Him.

Our Lord Jesus Christ set an excellent example for us regarding quiet time:

*In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.*  
*Mark 1:35 NRSV*

*But he would withdraw to deserted places and prayed.*  
*Luke 5:16 NRSV*
I cannot stress enough the importance of having a regular quiet time with God. But don’t look at these quiet times as a formula for getting what you pray for. Don’t think that if you don’t do it, then your prayers won’t get answered. Because if you do, you might feel ‘obligated’ to do it; or it may become a burden instead of a joy. You may feel that God’s love is methodical and conditional. And you will eventually quit!

Rather, see these quiet times as opportunities to get to know your Creator and build/strengthen your personal relationship with Him. This builds your faith and trust in Him. Just think of all the people you trust. Why do you trust them? Isn’t it because you know them? How did you get to know them? Isn’t it by spending time with them?

I firmly believe that getting to know God is the greatest pursuit of our lives. There is nothing that we need more than to know God in an intimate and personal way.

As the prophet Jeremiah said:

*Thus says the LORD: “Do not let the wise boast in their wisdom, do not let the mighty boast in their might, do not let the wealthy boast in their wealth; but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the LORD.* Jeremiah 9:23, 24 NRSV
I found this short write-up about the value of a quiet time when I was surfing the Net the other day:

Value of a Quiet Time

This comes from a Xerox I found in my father's bible. I read it and saw how true it was and how I needed to make this part of my life.

1. Change your schedule and you will change your life. From being a mediocre Christian to being a consistent Christian. From a frustrated yo-yo existence to stability

2. When you get your priority with God established (appointment with God), all your other priorities (family and business) will fall into correct position. The urgent will not longer usurp the important

3. The best evidence of the value of a Quiet Time is remembering the day you skipped it.

4. A consistent Quiet Time eliminates 95% of the temptations.

5. Being an organized person is a direct result, not of personality temperament, but of a person's life being in divine order because of a Quiet Time.

6. Having a Quiet Time sets loose the spirit of wisdom, revelation, insight, understanding, knowledge and instruction within you.

7. Having a Quiet Time affects positively all those around you, especially your business associates and your family. You will have an increased kindness, sweetness and they will recognize that you are being led by God. It's easy to flow with someone being led by the Lord.

Source: http://geocities.com/johndavidmueller/quiet_time.htm
How To Start Your Quiet Time With God

When first started out with my quiet time with God, I had a difficult time quieting down my mind. Just when I started to read the Bible or my daily devotional, my mind would start to give me a list of things I have to buy in the grocery store, or who I need to call that day or errands I have to run.

So I asked God to help me quiet my mind. A few days later, I got my answer. I was at home listening to the radio when the radio announcer talked about how the Gregorian Chant, sung by the Benedictine monks of the small monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos in central Spain, has made it to number one on Billboard’s classical chart and number three on its pop chart as well. And then he played the first track of the recording.

As soon as I heard it, I felt a certain peace came over me and that’s when I knew that the Gregorian Chant will be part of my daily appointment with God. I bought the CD as well as the accompanying book entitled “Chant -The Origins, Form, Practice and Healing Power of Gregorian Chant” by Katherine Le Mee.
Since then, the Chant has never failed to still my mind. It is my background music during my quiet time. Lately, I started singing one track (the book has the lyrics of the Chant in Latin and the English translation), definitely not as good as the way the Benedictine monks sing it (it’s not even close), but ‘chanting’ it takes me to deeper levels of being.

On my first year of keeping my daily appointment with God, I simply followed the readings in my Daily Missal. I was just starting out so I felt I needed some structure. I am more spontaneous now. Some days I would focus on the Psalms or Proverbs; there are times when I would focus my reading on some pressing issues of the day because I want to know what God has to say about them.

Oftentimes, someone would email me and ask me for advice and so I would look for the appropriate passages in the Bible and reflect on them so I could email back with a sound advice based on the word of God. While I refer to the traditional concordance, I also find the book entitled "Where To Find It In the Bible" by Ken Anderson very useful in finding Bible verses dealing with today’s contemporary topics such as credit cards, diet, women’s rights, politics, etc.

Persevere in keeping your daily appointment with God. The devil will try to stop you, he will try to wear you out and discourage you. But persevere. It’s all worth it. Getting to know God and building a relationship with Him is awesome. If having a best friend who is imperfect is one of the best things in
PREPARE YOUR HEART

There is a certain 'heart-set' or attitude of the heart that one needs to have for prayers to be more effective. Foremost among these I believe are:
- Gratitude
- Humility
- Forgiveness

Gratitude

It can be so easy to whine and complain that we forget to be grateful for all the things God has blessed us with. Having a grateful heart is so important to our prayer life. It is something God delights in and when you give pleasure to God, you become closer to Him. It also predisposes you to receive more from God.

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God.* Philippians 4:6 NRSV

*Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* 1 Thessalonians 5:18 NRSV
We are all blessed. Everything in life is a blessing - helping us to learn, grow and become better persons.

If you keep on griping about things, then it would be hard for God to bless you and give you what you are asking for. Besides, why would God give you something else to complain about. Seriously, if there is one thing that hinders you from getting what you prayed for, it is an ungrateful heart! So cultivate and maintain a grateful attitude at all times. It is the will of God for you.

**Humility**

It’s hard to be humble, isn’t it? It’s difficult to be humble especially when we’re so successful in our career, when we’re rich and famous, when we’re physically endowed, when we’re so gifted, etc.

It is so easy to think that everything we have comes from our own efforts, from our hard work, from our skills. We forget that God gave us life. He gave us our talents and skills. If one has an IQ of a genius, that is a gift from God. Everything comes from Him and He could take it away anytime.

Being humble in heart means acknowledging the fact that we need God, that without Him, we are nothing. It is an honest admission of our sinfulness, our dependence upon God for forgiveness, and our confidence in His mercy.
So it is very clear that being proud is not pleasing to God but being humble is. Pride blocks the grace of God from coming into your life while a humble heart lets it in.

We need to be humble not only before God but also in our dealings with others. This means looking at others as God looks at us - with equal value. Some may be more educated, others may be more talented or richer but our personal value is measured not by what we achieve but who we are.

We were all created in the image of God. And when He created us, He gave us our own unique qualities but He gave us all the ability to love and to receive love, to choose what is right, and to serve others as Christ serves us all. What are we to do, therefore, with our own arrogance when even Jesus Himself has humbly chosen to love and to serve?

**Forgiveness**

It is a must that we have a forgiving heart when we come to God. Unforgiveness is a major deterrent to answered prayers. Our Lord Himself tells us to forgive in the following verse:
Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your father in heaven may also forgive your trespasses. Mark 11:25 NRSV

We are but human - we get hurt and offended by other people. Some hurts we let go easily but there are others we hang on to. It’s hard to forgive some wrongs done to us and I am not saying that we should deny them. But we have to work through the pain and get healing and understanding from people who care about us. Otherwise, we will be in bondage to those who have hurt us. Forgiveness is the only thing which will set us free.

Let go of the hurts because in time they will pollute your soul. Always remember that unforgiveness only hurts the person who is not forgiving; the person who hurt you doesn’t feel your pain, you are not punishing him/her, but punishing yourself.

Below is another explicit command to forgive:

And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

So, have a heart that forgives and pave the way for your prayers to be granted. It is hard to forgive but remember that forgiveness is first and
foremost a decision. When you have decided to forgive, that ‘forgiving feeling’ will not come right away. It usually takes a while before you can feel it but you will eventually feel it. It takes time for what is in the mind to flow to the heart.
Chapter 2: The Aim Of Prayer

Why do we pray? What are our motives? God sees through our hearts and knows the real motivation behind our prayer. Our selfish nature sometimes causes us to be so self-absorbed that we think that prayer is all about us when it’s really all about God. Wrong motives hinder prayer.

And do you really know what you want? Are you crystal clear about what to ask God? Do you truly seek His will in your life? When you pray solely for yourself, you are missing the mark, you are not aiming properly. You must focus, not on your things, but on the things of God.

MOTIVES BEHIND PRAYER

What are the right and wrong motives to prayer? Let me answer that by giving examples from the Bible. An example of a wrong motive can be found in Mark 10: 35-37:

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” Mark 10: 35-37 NRSV

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Here is an example of a good motive taken from 1 Kings 3: 5-12:

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.” And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to Your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and you have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people which you have chosen, a great people, so many they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant an understanding mind to govern your people, be able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this great people?”

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, “Because you have asked this and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed, I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you, and no one like you shall arise after you. 1 Kings 3: 5-14 NRSV

See the difference between the two examples? The first one was selfish; the second one was not. Prayers born out of selfishness, the desire to get even or manipulate someone, jealousy, feeling of self-importance, and the like will not be granted by God.
You ask and do not receive, because you asked wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.  

James 4:3 NRSV

When you begin to examine the motives behind your prayer, you will notice that your prayer will change. When I first started out singing as part of our church’s music ministry, I used to pray that God will not allow me or any member of our group to make mistakes because I was so conscious of what our parish priest and the congregation would think about our singing. When I examined my motives, I realized that I was singing for men and not for God. I wanted all of us to sing well because I wanted the congregation to be impressed with us. When I realized this, my prayer changed. Now I pray that God will help us all to sing in harmony and with our hearts, along with all the angels and saints in heaven, for His glory.

As I said earlier, God sees what’s inside our hearts so before praying, be honest and examine your motives. Not a lot of people do it but it is an essential step in making prayers more effective. Examining your motives is more of an exercise of the heart and less of the mind. It can be painful at times to admit that your prayer intention is driven by a selfish desire but it’s a must that you approach God with a pure heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you. There will be times when your prayers will change because the motives behind your prayers changed. Just remember that a prayer borne out of love for God and fellowmen is very pleasing to Him.
KNOW WHAT TO PRAY FOR

After you have examined your motives, you will know what to pray for. If you don’t, do not worry. It will come...you will know soon enough. As I mentioned earlier, your prayer may change but it will be better and more aligned with the will of God.

The type of prayer I am referring to in this chapter is the prayer of petition or supplication - asking for what we want and what we need. There are other types of prayer - adoration/praise, contrition/confession and thanksgiving.

Strive to have a balance among the different types of prayer. The prayer of petition should not prevail over the other types. We cannot just ask God for whatever we want all the time. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving are powerful and should not be neglected. We also have to clear the way for a deeper relationship with God by being truly sorry for our sins and asking God for forgiveness.

The next chapter will discuss the different types of prayer more in detail.
Chapter 3: Types Of Prayer

I was born and raised as a Catholic and I still am. I can still remember in school, I was taught about the different types of prayers and in order to recall them easily, my teacher said just to remember the word ACTS.

A - Adoration (Prayer of Praise)
C - Contrition (Confession)
T - Thanksgiving (Prayer of Gratitude)
S - Supplication (Prayer of Petition)

This is actually a pattern of prayer which you can follow and to a lot of people, this works well. Sometimes I do follow it and sometimes I don’t. There are times when I just feel like praising God and at times, I just feel like thanking Him. At times, I am so sorry for something I have said or done that I just feel like apologizing to Him and asking for forgiveness.

The times when I do follow the ACTS pattern, I don’t really follow it exactly. Personally, I prefer to do the CATS instead of the ACTS. Not because I’m an animal lover, but I just feel that I can praise Him better when I have cleared my heart.
ADORATION OR THE POWER OF PRAISE

Adoration, praise, worship - they are very similar that it’s hard for me to tell the difference. They tend to overlap.

The Bible is full of instructions to praise God among which are:

> For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; 1 Chronicles 16:25 NRSV

> Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! Psalm 150: 1-2

Learn to praise God and discover the secret of how to lift up your spirit and rise above your problems. Praising God will do wonders for your life. It will enable you to see through all your disappointments, unfulfilled desires and shattered dreams from a true perspective. You will feel good more often... things won’t look as bad as they seem to be... you will experience the presence and peace of God.
What is Praise? The word “praise” according to Webster’s dictionary means “to commend, to applaud, to magnify.” What does it mean then to praise God? A simple definition is given by Ruth Myers in her book, “31 Days of Praise”. She said that to praise God is “to admire God for who He is and what He does.”

Hence, there are two (2) basic components of praise. One is pure praise which means exalting and magnifying God for His attributes and virtues alone; while the other is thanksgiving, that is, being grateful and thanking God for what He has done and what He does for you.

What happens when you praise God? Psalm 22:3 says that God inhabits the praises of His people. This means that praising God brings you to His presence and power. What better way to illustrate this truth than through the story of Paul and Silas in Acts 16. Both were arrested, severely beaten and imprisoned. Their bodies were hurting and their feet were fastened in stocks and so they were unable to move. Their situation was further worsened by the depressing atmosphere of a dark, damp and stinking prison. One would think that the last thing they would think of doing was to pray and praise God. But that was exactly what they did at midnight and suddenly, there was an earthquake. The prison doors swung wide open and Paul and Silas as well as the other prisoners were released from their bondage. Their praises unleashed the mighty power of God!
You may never be in a situation in which Paul and Silas were in but mounting problems may weigh you down, you may feel you are stuck and unable to move on, and your emotional pains may be too much to bear.

Don’t despair. Instead, try to praise God because when you do, you focus your attention on Him and you remember the good things He has done for you and how great, how generous and how merciful He has been to you. Then you begin to look at your problems in a new light and realize how little they are compared to a mighty and powerful God. This may not happen right away but just continue to praise Him.

Oftentimes, He will manifest His presence in a special way. You will feel His warm embrace or experience joy welling up from your heart or feel a certain lightness as if a heavy burden has been lifted from your heart. There will also be times, however, when you will not feel anything at all. But this doesn’t mean He is not present.

In whatever way He chooses to manifest His presence, one thing is certain. When you praise Him in both the best and worst times of your life, your faith will be renewed or strengthened and you will rise above any problems that may come your way.

What if you don’t feel like praising God? Cultivating a lifestyle of praise can be
a long and difficult journey and there will be times when you won’t feel like praising God. Hence, as you embark on this journey, ask God to lead you each and every step of the way. You certainly cannot do it on your own. The devil will keep on trying to divert you from praising God for obvious reasons. Satan will always attempt to keep your attention focused on things other than God. But remember, you have God on your side. Ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit and He will surely enable you to praise Him.

You don’t have to deny or repress your negative thoughts and feelings. You can follow the example set by David and other psalmists. First, they praised God, then they expressed their problems and poured their hearts out and afterwards, they went back to praising God again.

So every time you feel the ‘blues’ and you don’t feel like giving thanks and praise, do it just the same. For those who are just starting their praise journey, you can simply say ‘Praise the Lord’ or ‘I praise you Almighty Father’ or ‘I praise you Lord Jesus’ over and over. Then tell God what’s troubling you and then praise Him again. In time, you’ll notice that you will feel like it more often. Your praising will become more spontaneous. Instead of just saying ‘Praise the Lord’, you will find that there will be more and more words of praise coming from your heart.
Ways To Praise

Speaking words of praise is not the only way to praise our almighty God. You can dance (Psalm 150:4), lift your hands (Psalm 134:2), or sing songs of praise (Psalm 9:11). Praising can also be quiet and meditative (Psalm 4:3-5, Psalm 46:10). Do whatever you feel most comfortable with.

If you like, you can do what I do when I praise God. As mentioned earlier, focus on who He is and what He has done in your life. When beset with financial problems, for instance, focus on God as the Great Provider and refer to what Paul said in 2 Cor:9:8 - “And God is able to give you more than you need, so that you will always have all you need for yourselves and more than enough for every good cause.” Apply these words to yourself (replace the word ‘you’ with ‘I’ or ‘me’) so say, “I praise you Father for you are able to give me more than I need so that I will always have all I need and more than enough for every good cause.”

Repeat these words as many times as you want and then recall the times in your life when you experienced His great providence.

Here are a few more examples:

**Problem:** Poor Health

**Bible Verse:** Ex. 15:26 - “I am the Lord, the one who heals you.”

**Focus:** God as the Divine Healer
Problem: Losing Faith in God

Bible Verse: Rom. 16:25 - “He is able to make you stand firm in your faith.”
Psalm 36:5 - “Lord your constant love reaches the heavens; your faithfulness extends to the skies.”

Focus: God who is faithful

Problem: Overburdened

Bible Verse: Psalm 68:19 - “Praise God who carries our burdens day after day.”

Focus: God who carries our burdens

Problem: Fear

Bible Verse: Psalm 91:2, 4 - “You are my defender and protector... He will cover you with His wings; you will be safe in His care; His faithfulness will protect and defend you.”

Focus: God Our Protector

Strive to lead a lifestyle of praise. Make praising an integral part of your prayer life. It takes discipline and commitment and yet, the rewards are great. There is nothing more joyful than being in the presence of God. Praise God everywhere, not only in church but at home, at work, in the bus or in your car, or anywhere you may be. Praise Him when you’re sad and happy. Praise Him when you’re sick and physically fit. Praise Him in all circumstances.
Contrition

Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said 'I will confess my transgression to the LORD', and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Psalm 32: 5 NRSV

Contrition or confession (as a type of prayer, I’m not referring to the sacrament of reconciliation) is admitting to God the things that we have done wrong, and seeking forgiveness for them. It means to openly and honestly admit our sins instead of hiding it or offering excuses for it.

Remember the old cliché “Confession is good for the soul”? It’s true. Do you recall the time when you sincerely apologized to someone you’ve done wrong and he/she accepted your apology? Didn’t that feel good? Didn’t you feel light-hearted afterwards? It’s somewhat similar with asking God for forgiveness because you have sinned. Sin keeps our harmonious relationship with God from continuing. Confession restores that harmony. But some of us don’t really confess our sins frequently or easily.

It may be easier for us to pray for what we want, or even to thank God for his blessings. But with confession, there seems to be no urgency. Why, I wonder.
Perhaps because sin in itself doesn’t really make us sick physically so we can delay it, or even ignore it for the time being. Can you imagine if every time we sin, we will immediately have a severe headache which would not go away until we confess?

We are not perfect so we sin. The apostle John encourages us to confess our sins in the following verses:

*If we say that we have no sins, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John 1:8-9 NRSV

Take note that John said “all unrighteousness”. Hence, no sin is too big for God not to forgive. He is faithful and He is always ready to forgive if we’re truly sorry for the wrong we have done.

God also wants us to be specific about our sins, not generic, as in the following verse from Daniel:
I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, ‘Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love with those who love you and keep your commandments, we have sinned and done wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and ordinances. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, princes, and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

Daniel 9: 4-6 NRSV

I must admit that there was a time in my life when I confessed just to confess or because I had to do it. The result - I committed the same sins over and over again. Obviously, this is not the type of contrition I’m talking about here. Rather, it is that kind of repentance brought about by sorrow because you know you have sinned against God who loves you, and who is so kind and generous with you. It is not the kind of sorrow you feel because you were caught or you fear being punished.

True contrition is being genuinely sorry for what you did with the firm intention of never to do it again with God’s help. The contrite heart is intent on moving away from sin and becoming obedient to God.

Just look at what God promised those who obey Him:
And the LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and the fruit of your soil. For the LORD again take delight in prospering you, just as he delighted in prospering your ancestors, when you obey the LORD your God by observing His commandments and decrees that are written in the book of the law, because you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 30: 9-10 NRSV

“Turning to God, with all your heart and with all your soul” - this is what true contrition is. It takes more than a half-hearted effort to avoid sin. It takes your whole heart and soul. You cannot do it all by yourself, you need God to help you.

I once had what I call a ‘nagging sin’. It just kept on coming back. It was like an addiction that no matter how hard I tried not to do it again, I couldn’t help myself. And temptations to do it again seemed to be haunting me endlessly. Finally, I cried out to God and I asked Him to help me because I couldn’t fight this battle alone. One day, I was driving to work and all of a sudden, I started crying and a genuine sorrow pervaded my heart. I started saying “I’m so sorry Lord... I’m so sorry... Forgive me... forgive me...” I think this is one of the best prayers I have ever uttered in my whole life! I realized that I kept on sinning because something was missing - true contrition. That short but heartfelt prayer changed me. Since that day, that ‘nagging sin’ was no more. God started to arrange certain life situations which enabled me to avoid the
temptations of sin. Through His Holy Spirit, I was able to harness that firm resolve not to do it again because I love God and He loves me and I will never ever again deliberately offend Him.

THANKSGIVING

Another type of prayer is thanksgiving. It is also a type of praise.

We thank God not just for what He had done but for who He is. We thank Him for His love and mercy; we thank Him for answered prayers; we thank Him for others; we thank Him for His provisions. We are to give thanks FOR and IN EVERYTHING - in every circumstance, experience, life situation - nothing should lie outside the scope of our thanksgiving.

_Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you._ 1 Thessalonians 5:18 NRSV

If you truly want to follow God’s will, give thanks in all circumstances. Impossible! Some may say. But not to those who have faith in God. Thanksgiving is a profound spiritual activity and without faith, it would be difficult to give thanks in everything.

It is the faith which helps us see that in circumstances which we perceived

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as bad or negative or painful, there is a blessing and an opportunity to grow and therefore, we should be thankful. It is the faith which helps us to see that as a door closes, another one opens; that for every ending, there is a beginning.

I give thanks for all my financial challenges for they taught me how to live within my means and distinguish between what I want and what I need. I give thanks for all the failed relationships which broke my heart for they taught me what true love is. I give thanks for plans which never materialized because they made me realized I was heading for the wrong direction. I give thanks for the times that I doubted God for they made me closer to Him. I give thanks for prayers not granted for they made me look closely at my prayer life and encouraged me to write this e-book!

The following chapter will deal specifically with the ‘S’ in ACTS which is Supplication or the Prayer of Petition.
Chapter 4: The ABC Of Praying For Your Heart's Desire

Let me keep this simple: there are three basics or building blocks to praying for your heart’s desires and you can easily remember what they are.

A - Ask specifically & persistently

B - Believe and have faith

C - Commit your prayer to God

They’re quite easy to remember but how many of us know how to ask (or even ask at all), how many of us have the faith to believe and how many of us can be fully committed to God.

A - ASK

You may be surprised but a lot of people don’t know exactly what they want. You may be thinking why you have to ask when our All-Knowing God knows what you need anyway.

I was talking to a friend one time and he said he had long wanted to be an
English teacher in Japan. So I asked him if he has prayed about it and he looked at me rather sheepishly and said ‘No’.

You see, **you have to ask to get!** Do you know the story about Bartimaeus who was once blind? Read the following story below which was taken from Mark 10:46-52:

> Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

> Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

> Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

> “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. **The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”**

> “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Bartimaeus was asked by Jesus, “What do you want me to do for you?” Our Lord certainly knew what Bartimaeus wanted but still He asked him. And
Bartimaeus told Jesus specifically what he wants, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

“You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.” James 4:2

And nothing is too big or too small for God to handle. I ask Him for things which some people may consider trivial such as help when I need a parking spot; I also ask Him for guidance about major decisions I have to make. My point is to make God a part of your daily life.

So, ASK. But when you ask:

Focus on what you want and not on what you don’t want. I want to stress this as we all have a tendency to try to ‘fix’ something that doesn’t work or to focus our attention on what we don’t want to happen instead of what we want. Our training has been to think that we have these issues that we have to overcome or resolved and hence it has become our habit to focus on things we don’t want so we can fix them.

Some people ask God to help them with their financial problems but day and night they think about their lack of money; some ask God for healing but focus their attention on their illness; some ask God to help them lose weight.
but all they think about is how overweight they are.

How can the grace of God get through under these situations? So choose thoughts which are in harmony with what you are praying for. If you are experiencing any lack in your life, it is because you are thinking thoughts which are the opposite of what you are asking God for.

“That as a man thinks in his heart, that is what he becomes.”
_proverbs 23: 7 nrsv_

Expect to get what you ask. You should expect that God can and God will grant that which you seek, in His own time and in His own way.

I don’t have children but I have two (2) dogs named Martin and Joey and I love them like they are my kids. Every morning, after we have played a bit, I would go the kitchen and they would follow me and wait with expectancy for their food. Why? Because I have done it so many times before so they expected to be fed.

It should be the same with us. Our God has been providing for us for so long and for so many times that it should come natural to us by now to pray and expect Him to hear and answer.
Our Lord Jesus said:

*Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who search finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.*  *Matthew 7: 7-8 NRSV*

Ponder the above verses in your heart. Our Lord cannot be more explicit. He said “For everyone who asks receives...” So ask with a positive expectation. God is love and everything positive. Everything that He does is what is best for you so when you pray, expect that He will do something. You can even expect that He will do something more than you ask as the following verse says:

*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine...*  *Ephesians 3: 20*

Wow! Did you get that? What Paul is saying in the above verse is that God can even give you “abundantly far more” than what you can ask or imagine! That should give you confidence to pray with positive expectation.

When I was studying to earn a Bachelor’s degree, I would always pray to God...
to help me pass my exams. I wasn’t asking for high grades, I just wanted to pass. So I would do my part and study and would say to Him afterwards “Ok God, I have done my part, I have prepared for the exam, now it’s your turn to do your part.” And I really expected Him to help me. And you know what? He just didn’t let me pass, He did much more. He made me graduate with honors! I know I couldn’t have done that without Him. So my point is, God will oftentimes give you much more than you ask.

Pray persistently

You pray day and night. Still, God doesn’t seem to hear you. You are still jobless...your friend is still seriously ill...the man of your dreams is nowhere in sight. What should you do?

You may think you should do nothing because if you continue praying, God may think you lack faith. Or you may think that God is teaching you the virtue of patience so you should just accept His silence with stoic resignation.

Perhaps you think that if you pray longer and harder, God will eventually answer your prayer. After all, isn’t that what Jesus was implying in the parable he told about a man who kept knocking at his neighbor’s door in the
middle of the night asking for bread, until his neighbor finally got up and gave him the bread just to make him go away (Luke 11: 5-8)?

What about the parable that Jesus told about the widow who kept coming back to an unjust judge begging for justice until she wore him out that he finally relented and granted her justice (Luke 18: 2-5)?

On the surface, it seems that you have to literally nag God and He will eventually answer and grant your heart’s desire. Pray persistently and you will get what you want. But is this really what Jesus was saying? Will God give you what you asked for just to get rid of you so that He could attend to the countless others who demand His attention?

Surely, you know God is not like that. Just remember Jesus who personifies the character of God in the flesh. The Bible shows various accounts of Him always ready to help the needy, hearing their cries and showing compassion. The truth is God always hears and answers prayers. At times, He immediately responds to a prayer with a resounding ‘Yes’ but there are also times when He responds differently in spite of persistent praying.

Still, have no doubt that God wants you to pray persistently. Why? Let’s look at the life of the apostle Paul. He had what he referred to as “a thorn in the
flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). He didn’t say what it was but it must have been a chronic and debilitating problem which at times kept him from doing his work. He prayed more than once for God to take this ‘thorn’ away. But did he get what he prayed for? No!

Yet, Paul got something better. Because he persistently prayed, he heard God’s voice and found out God’s will. He heard God say to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians: 9) Further, Paul realized that his ‘thorn in the flesh’ kept him from being conceited. He had such wonderful spiritual experiences and preaching prowess that it would have been hard not to brag about them. His ‘thorn’ kept him humble, however. He was always aware of his weakness and knew that whatever he achieved was God’s doing, not his.

You see, returning to God again and again in prayer keeps your communication lines with Him open. It gives God an opportunity to communicate with you and more importantly, gives you an opportunity to hear Him. It is usually after you have prayed and prayed that you run out of words and then, you stop talking and hear God in the silence.

Praying persistently is a way to rely on God for His solution to a problem. You may think that you know the solution so you pray and pray for it, but your solution may not be God’s. There are times when God has to bend your will
to match His and it is only when you pray persistently that you begin to realize that you have to let go of your own solutions and let God work in your life. Oftentimes, our first prayers are not the best ones and so sometimes, God makes us wait. If we keep on praying, God will reshape our desires until they match His desires.

Hence, pray persistently not because you think that by doing so you will eventually get what you want, but because by doing so you are keeping your communication lines with God active which is what He wants. Don’t lose heart. Keep on praying. Otherwise, you will miss out on a great opportunity and that is, allowing God to work through you, in you and with you.

But take note. Even if you want something so bad, it doesn’t mean that you have to bombard God with your urgent pleas all the time. Sometimes, you have to let go. You may ask how you can tell when to press on with your prayer or when to release it. Personally, I ask the Holy Spirit for discernment and I can tell when I should still pray about something when I can easily pray about it, it’s almost effortless.

On the other hand, I can tell when it’s time to let go when I pray about something and I don’t feel at ease, like I’m struggling. So I release my prayer and thank God for it knowing the answer to my prayer is on its way.
This brings us to next building block of the prayer of petition which is BELIEVE...

**B - BELIEVE**

Believe, have faith in God, trust in God - I’m sure you must have read or heard those words a thousand times. We all know that faith in God is the foundation of answered prayers. Trust is the essence of faith and positive expectancy is an attribute of faith.

Faith is defined by Paul in Hebrews 11: 1 as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”. Remember the story of Thomas the apostle who said he wouldn’t believe that the Lord has risen until he sees His wounds? When Jesus appeared to Him and he finally believed, our Lord said: “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (John 20: 29 NRSV) Believing without seeing - that is faith.

What does the Bible say about praying with faith?
And without faith, it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. *Hebrews 11: 6 NRSV*

Remember that faith is not a feeling. It is more of a willful decision to believe that He hears our prayers and will answer them even though we cannot see Him or feel Him or see the answer to our prayers immediately. It is a belief in God's impeccable integrity and His wonderful faithfulness to keep every promise He makes.

There are so many verses in the Bible which state the importance of faith or belief, among which are the ones below:

*Jesus said to him, If you are able! - All things can be done for the one who believes.* *Mark 9: 23 NRSV*

*Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, ‘Take heart, daughter, your faith has made you well.’ And instantly, the woman was made well.* *Matthew 9: 22 NRSV*

*Then Jesus answered her, ‘Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.’* *Matthew 15: 28 NRSV*

In Mark 9:22, the father of the boy who was possessed by a spirit told Jesus,
‘if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.’ And that was when Jesus replied in the following verse (Mark 9:23), ‘If you are able!’ To me, it seems like our Lord was telling him something like, “If? Do you know what you just said? There are no Ifs to those who believe!”

So you cannot just talk faith, you have to walk it as well. You got to believe 100% that God loves you, knows what is best for you and will answer your prayer in His own way, in His own time.

But what happens to a lot of people after they pray? They doubt, they worry, their faith waivers and this is what the Bible says when this happens:

*But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.*  
*James 1: 6-8 NRSV*

You may ask - how do I grow in my faith, how do I start? How do I keep the doubts and unbelief out of my life? I asked myself the same questions before. There were times when I seemed to have gotten off track in my walk with the Lord. I got distracted. I started to focus more and more on my problems instead of God’s faithfulness to help me go through the challenges in my life. What did I do to get back on track?
Here’s what I did (and still do):

**Spend time with God.** This is why right at the beginning of this e-book, I already started discussing about the importance of a **Quiet Time with God.** This is very crucial in your faith journey. Read the Bible, ponder His words in your heart. Get to know your Creator, who He is, His promises. Because when you get to know Him, you will trust Him and trust as I said previously is the essence of faith.

**Remember what He has done for you as often as possible.** I consciously make an effort of recalling what God has done for me in the past. This brings me back to focusing on God’s ability to come through for me and reinforces my faith.

**Listen to Christian Music.** I love music and I enjoy singing, especially contemporary Christian music. Don’t get me wrong, I like listening to and singing church hymns too. For songs which we sing in church, I like those composed by Dan Schutte and David Haas. For contemporary Christian music, I like listening to Mercy Me, Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith and Brian Littrell. Their songs just move my heart and soul. I can identify with the lyrics of their songs, they seem to speak to me and convey a message I need to hear at that very moment in time.
When I’m driving, I would oftentimes turn the volume of my car stereo just a little louder and sing my heart out. Brian Littrell’s song “In Christ Alone” always make my heart swell and put tears in my eyes.

Join a Ministry. You grow by serving others and using your God-given gifts. I joined our Church’s music ministry and committed to it. By committed I mean attending scheduled practice sessions consistently and being there on time to sing during the Mass.

Be part of a small group of fellow believers. We grow better together. There is nothing like having that special “bond” with a few people who are in the Lord when you need someone to talk to, when you are discouraged, when you need a shoulder to cry on, when you need advice and other times when you simply need a friend. Oftentimes the Lord will communicate with you through them. They will also hold you accountable in a loving way.

Attend Mass regularly. I don’t mean every day (although that would be good) but even just on Sundays. Some people don’t go to church anymore or just hear Mass when it’s Christmas or Easter Sunday or when they act as a sponsor for a child during the sacrament of Baptism/Confirmation or when they want something from God badly. How can your faith grow if you don’t even feed yourself with the Word of God even once a week? If you don’t get excited going to your parish church, then find one which inspires you and
motivate you to grow in faith.

**Acknowledge God often or say short prayers.** During the course of your day, talk to God. Even a simple ‘Thank you Lord for the nice weather’ or ‘God, how beautiful those flowers are. And I know you made them. You’re awesome!’ You know what I mean. When you make Him part of your daily life, things go more smoothly.

**Choose carefully what you read, watch and listen to.** In this day and age, there is just so much out there which can confuse someone growing in faith. I don’t watch too much news, documentaries or books which go against my faith, movies with lots of nudes, etc. I also don’t listen to radio announcers who swear on air or music containing references to violence, swearing, depressing thoughts, sex and other negative stuff.

So take that first step of faith. I remember the time when I took the first step to trusting God. I was working in one of the coastal villages in the Philippines many years ago and I remember going to the beach after work and noticing the beautiful sunset over a very calm sea. That spectacular view so touched my heart that I stopped for a while and said to myself, “Surely God alone can create such an amazing scene. If He can do that, certainly HE can easily take good care of me.”
C - COMMIT

When you commit your prayer to God, you turn over your prayer completely to Him to do with it as He pleases. We have to leave it to God to grant our prayer if it is His will to do so. Trust that if it is not right for you, He will give you what is best for you. Committing also means you are also submitting yourself to His timing which means waiting patiently. Always I find that if I maintain a positive attitude, He gives me something better if He cannot give what I asked for.

So after you have prayed about a problem, a relationship, something that you want to have, anything that you asked for, don’t worry about it, stop analyzing how it will come about, just leave it to God to figure everything out.

*Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will act.* Psalm 37: 5 NRSV

*Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established.* Proverbs 16: 3

Commit your way to the Lord. That means letting Him control whatever it is that you’re committing to Him. All of us have burdens to carry, they
preoccupy us, stress us out. A common example is money problems. I’m sure there isn’t one of us that do not know what it’s like to have a financial burden. You try and try to make it go away, but it continues to grip you and you lie awake at night anxious. Some of us have prayed about it and handed it over to the Lord and have left it with Him. But there are still some of us who worry and fret and we give it over to God and then we take it back from Him by worrying again, analyzing the problem and trying to figure everything out for ourselves.

I had often been guilty of only half-heartedly allowing God to take control of my problems. I would pray and hand over the reins to Him but I couldn’t seem to get out of the way and allow Him to be God. You see, I used to be an extremely analytical person perhaps because my line of work involved databases, data analysis and report generation.

So even if I had prayed about something, my analytical mind just wouldn’t stop from analyzing the problem at all angles and coming up with various possible solutions. There were times when I would lie awake at night because my mind just kept on churning.

Consequently, the solutions I came up with on my own didn’t work out well. It was only when I started to calm down, when I stopped worrying and analyzing, and truly allowed God to take charge did the right ideas,
strategies and directions start coming in.

So don’t put God in the back seat of your life. Make Him your first priority and allow Him to drive your life. It is the best decision you will ever make!
Chapter 5: Summary And Checklist

Below is a graphical representation of the “READY, AIM, PRAY (RAP)” style/method/way of praying or whatever you wish to call it. As I said earlier, this is how I do my “RAP” session.

Answered Prayer

1. Pray
   - Commit
   - Believe
   - Ask
   - Be crystal clear as to what to pray for
   - Examine your motives
   - Have the right heart-set: Be humble, grateful & forgiving
   - Spend some quiet time with God
Below is a checklist for the “RAP” session. No one can really know the exact reasons why some prayers are not granted except God but I usually would do or ask the following before, during or after I pray. Oftentimes, when my prayers are not granted, I go through the checklist and I realize that I have missed or neglected one of the items in the checklist. Please note that this is just a guide to enhance your prayer life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RAP Items</th>
<th>Things To Do Or Ask/Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>READY</td>
<td>Do this regularly (as much as possible, daily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read and meditate on His word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write your thoughts about His Word on your prayer journal (optional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>Do you acknowledge the fact that you need God, that without Him, you are nothing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you honestly admit your sinfulness, your dependence upon God for forgiveness, and your confidence in His mercy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are you humble not only before God but also in your dealings with others? Do you look at others as God looks at us - with equal value?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count your blessings and thank God for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recall to mind the people who have annoyed/hurt/offended you. Forgive them and if you find it hard to forgive, ask God to transform your heart.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Checklist (continued)

| ☐ Examine your motives | ☐ What is the motive behind your prayer? Is it driven by love or by selfishness, the desire to get even or manipulate someone, jealousy, feeling of self-importance, and the like? |
| ☐ Be crystal clear as to what to pray for | ☐ Is your prayer clear and specific? Is this really what you want now that you have examined your motives? |
| ☐ PRAY | ☐ Ask | ☐ Are your prayers specific? |
| | | ☐ Are you focus on what you want, and not on what you don’t want? |
| | ☐ Believe | ☐ Are you praying persistently? |
| | | ☐ Do you believe 100% that God loves you, knows what is best for you and will answer your prayer in His own way, in His own time? |
| | ☐ Commit | ☐ Do you truly turn over your prayer completely to God to do with it as He pleases? |
| | | ☐ Do you allow God to drive your life? |
Appendix

Video Transcripts - ANSWERS TO YOUR BIGGEST QUESTIONS ABOUT PRAYER
How Should I Pray (Part I)

Hey everybody, this is Babes Tan-Magkalas and this video is the first of a series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. In Part I of this video, I will do my best to answer the question “How should I pray?” In Part II, I’m going to answer specific but related questions about how to pray and these are:

- “Is praying silently as effective as praying with words?”
- “Is there a best time and place to pray?”
- “How do I pray for someone who is a thorn on my side?”

Let me start by defining what prayer is. So what is prayer? Well, prayer is simply a communication between you and God. I like to use the word communication because it implies a 2 way process - it is not just talking to God but listening to what God is saying as well. Usually, when we pray, it is easier to do the talking and the listening part is harder, right? Most of the things I will be discussing here is the talking part of prayer. How to listen to what God is saying is a question to be answered in another part of this appendix.

Now, what are the types of prayer. What a lot of people are most familiar with is the prayer of petition. This is asking God for what we want and what we need and we also raise up the needs of others. So with this type of prayer, we ask God for help in various areas of our lives and other people’s lives - relationships, finances, health, employment, and so on.

Another type of prayer is the prayer of gratitude or thanksgiving. We thank God not just for what He had done but for who He is. We thank Him for His love and mercy; we thank Him for answered prayers; we thank Him for others; we thank Him for His provisions. In fact, we are to give thanks FOR and IN EVERYTHING - in every circumstance, experience, life situation - nothing
should lie outside the scope of our thanksgiving.

Another type of prayer is the **prayer of contrition**. With this type of prayer, we admit to God the things that we have done wrong, and seeking forgiveness for them. We openly and honestly admit our sins instead of hiding it or offering excuses for it.

Next we have the **prayer of praise**. Adoration, praise, worship - they are very similar that it’s hard for me to tell the difference. They tend to overlap.

What is Praise? The word “praise” according to Webster’s dictionary means “to commend, to applaud, to magnify.” What does it mean then to praise God? A simple definition is given by Ruth Myers in her book, “31 Days of Praise”. She said that to praise God is “to admire God for who He is and what He does.”

Before I go to the models of praying, allow me to talk a bit about distorted approaches to prayer. This is from the book “What God Does When Men Pray” by William Carr Peel.

There is what Mr. Peel called the **‘spare tire approach’**. Prayer is resorted to only for emergency needs. One only prays when he or she is in trouble. This is similar to going to church only when you have something that you strongly or desperately want and you pray that God will give it to you.

There is also the **‘stained glass approach’**. The prayer requires certain “right” formulas and especially “Thee” and “Thou” of Elizabethan English. Now I’m not saying that it’s wrong to use thee and thou when praying, no, when we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we say ‘hallowed by thy name”. What is wrong about this approach is the rigid adherence to a certain way of praying, like a formula, such that if one misses a step or an equation or whatever then one thinks the prayer is worthless.
William Carr Peel also mentioned in his book the so called ‘blue book approach’. God is perceived as similar to a college professor who grades based on the number of pages you fill. It is trying to impress God with all the spiritual -sounding words one can think of. The more words, the more apt God is to respond.

Next we have the ‘Monty Hall approach’. Monty Hall was the host of a popular American television game show way back in 2003 called Let’s Make a Deal. With this approach to prayer, one is saying something like “God, let’s make a deal. If you answer my prayer, I will donate an x amount of dollars to charity”, something like that...

Then there’s the ‘Aladdin’s Lamp approach’ where God is seen as some kind of a celestial genie. Rub him the right way and he’ll grant your wish.

With the ‘wrestling match approach’, God is forcefully reminded of His promises and obligations.

I must admit that once upon a time, I used one or two of these approaches. Do you? Did you?

Now let’s move on to the how of praying. So how should we pray? There are many ways to pray, people pray in different ways and I believe there is no single right way to pray. There are various prayer models and I will go over two of these models: the Lord’s Prayer, also known as the disciples prayer and the ACTS model.

In Matthew 6, verses 9-13, Jesus teaches us how to pray. He said “This, then, is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass among us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’” This
prayer contains 5 key points or steps that are the essential to prayer.

Our Lord teaches us to address God as if he was our own Father. So he wants us to have a personal and intimate relationship with God. When you have a personal and intimate relationship with someone, there is no barrier between you, you’re free to say anything. And that’s how it should be with our God.

“Hallowed be thy name”. Hallowing of God’s name is an act of reverence, honor, and respect, and how do we do this - by giving praise. So our prayer should start by giving him praise for in doing so we honor him, we glorify him. Yes, we call him Father but we must remember who we are coming to.

“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We should accept His will over our own will. If God is to spiritually reign over all his creation, then all should make way for the Father’s will to be done in their lives. We should also pray that God’s kingdom will spread, expand, and finally come into the hearts of all people.

After we have given praises to God and accept that His will be done in our lives, we now ask him to take care of our daily needs as well as others. Our Lord teaches us to pray for our daily bread, he said daily, not weekly or monthly or yearly because he wants us to trust God for his provision each and every day.

“And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”. This is obviously about asking forgiveness for our sins and forgiving those who have done us wrong. Why is this necessary? Because asking for God’s forgiveness allows us to maintain our relationship with God.

Now I know it is very difficult to forgive. People say that they can forgive but they can’t forget. We are but human - we get hurt and offended by other people. But our Lord wants us to forgive not just seven times but seven times
seven, so no limit, no restrictions.

So forgive. Otherwise, you will be in bondage to those who have hurt you. Forgiveness is the only thing which will set you free.

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” Finally, we are to ask God for the grace and strength to fight the temptations of sin. In this day and age, we are tempted from all directions. We simply cannot overcome sin without God’s grace and an inner strength which he alone can provide.

Now let’s move on to another model of prayer which is ACTS. ACTS is actually an acronym for Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving and Supplication. I have touched on these earlier when I was discussing the types of prayer.

This is actually a pattern of prayer which you can follow and to a lot of people, this works well. Sometimes I do follow it and sometimes I don’t. There are times when I just feel like praising God and at times, I just feel like thanking Him. At times, I am so sorry for something I have said or done that I just feel like apologizing to Him and asking for forgiveness.

The times when I do follow the ACTS pattern, I don’t really follow it exactly. Personally, I prefer to do the CATS instead of the ACTS. I just feel that I can praise God better when I have cleared my heart.

At this point, please allow me to share with you what I call my “prayer success ritual”. It’s what I do on a daily basis before, during and after I pray, kinda like a routine but I prefer to call it a ritual because to me, a ritual implies something that is sacred. I also call this my RAP session, RAP, R for Ready, A for Aim, and P for Pray. This is what I actually practice in my prayer life. I get READY to pray. I AIM for something as I know exactly the ‘what’ and the ‘why’ of my prayer. And then I PRAY.
How does one get ready to pray? My prayer preparation involves keeping my daily appointment with God. This is my quiet time with Him; this is the time when I sing praise songs, or read the Bible or devotionals, meditate on God’s Word or just simply keep still and listen. To some people, a quiet time with God means walking off to the beach or garden or mountain, and not doing anything but leaving themselves open to God.

I cannot stress enough the importance of having a regular quiet time with God. But don’t look at these quiet times as a formula for getting what you pray for. Don’t think that if you don’t do it, then your prayers won’t get answered. Because if you do, you might feel ‘obligated’ to do it; or it may become a burden instead of a joy. You may feel that God’s love is methodical and conditional. And you will eventually quit!

Rather, see these quiet times as opportunities to get to know your Creator and build/strengthen your personal relationship with Him. This builds your faith and trust in Him. Just think of all the people you trust. Why do you trust them? Isn’t it because you know them? How did you get to know them? Isn’t it by spending time with them?

I firmly believe that getting to know God is the greatest pursuit of our lives. There is nothing that we need more than to know God in an intimate and personal way.

I also get ready to pray by preparing my heart. I believe one should have a certain ‘heart-set’ (attitudes of the heart) when approaching God through prayer, foremost of which is humility, gratitude and forgiveness.

Now for the AIM of prayer. Let’s ask ourselves Why do we pray? What are our motives? God sees through our hearts and knows the real motivation behind our prayer. Our selfish nature sometimes causes us to be so self-absorbed that we think that prayer is all about us when it’s really all about God.
Not a lot of people examine their motives behind prayer but I personally believe it is an essential step in making prayers more effective. Examining your motives is more of an exercise of the heart and less of the mind. It can be painful at times to admit that your prayer intention is driven by a selfish desire but it’s a must that you approach God with a pure heart. There will be times when your prayers will change because the motives behind your prayers changed. Just remember that a prayer borne out of love is very pleasing to Him.

After you have examined your motives, you will know what to pray for. It will be crystal clear to you.

So after I have spent my quiet time with God, prepared my heart, examined the motives behind my prayer and is now crystal clear as to what to pray for, I begin my prayer. Now, there are three basics or building blocks to praying for your needs and you can easily remember what they are for they literally start with the letters A, B and C.

A - Ask  B - Believe  C - Commit

They’re quite easy to remember but how many of us know how to ask (or even ask at all), how many of us have the faith to believe and how many of us can be fully commit our prayers to God.

Remember, when you ask:

Focus on what you want and not on what you don’t want. I want to stress this as we all have a tendency to try to ‘fix’ something that doesn’t work or to focus our attention on what we don’t want to happen instead of what we want. Our training has been to think that we have these issues that we have to overcome or resolved and hence it has become our habit to focus on things we
don’t want so we can fix them.

Some people ask God to help them with their financial problems but day and night they think about their lack of money; some ask God for healing but focus their attention on their illness; some ask God to help them lose weight but all they think about is how overweight they are.

How can the grace of God get through under these situations? So choose thoughts which are in harmony with what you are praying for. If you are experiencing any lack in your life, it is because you are thinking thoughts which are the opposite of what you are asking God for.

Another thing to note when you ask is to expect to get what you ask. You should expect that God can and God will grant that which you seek, in His own time and in His own way.

I don’t have children but I have two (2) dogs named Martin and Joey and I love them like they are my kids. Every morning, after we have played a bit, I would go the kitchen and they would follow me and wait with expectancy for their food. Why? Because I have done it so many times before so they expected to be fed.

It should be the same with us. Our God has been providing for us for so long and for so many times that it should come natural to us by now to pray and expect Him to hear and answer.

Also, pray persistently not because you think that by doing so you will eventually get what you want, but because by doing so you are keeping your communication lines with God active which is what He wants. Don’t lose heart. Keep on praying. Otherwise, you will miss out on a great opportunity and that is, allowing God to work through you, in you and with you.

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But take note. Even if you want something so bad, it doesn’t mean that you have to bombard God with your urgent pleas all the time. Sometimes, you have to let go. There is a time when you need to let go.

In Mark 9:22, the father of the boy who was possessed by a spirit told Jesus, ‘if you are able to do anything, have pity on us and help us.’ And that was when Jesus replied in the following verse (Mark 9:23), ‘If you are able!’ To me, it seems like our Lord was telling him something like, “If? Do you know what you just said? There are no Ifs to those who believe!”

So after you asked, you got to believe 100% that God loves you, knows what is best for you and will answer your prayer in His own way, in His own time. So you cannot just talk your faith, you have to walk it as well.

Trust in God is the key and trust is the essence of faith. Remember that faith is not a feeling. It is more of a willful decision to believe that He hears our prayers and will answer them even though we cannot see Him or feel Him or see the answer to our prayers immediately. It is a belief in God’s impeccable integrity and His wonderful faithfulness to keep every promise He makes.

Finally, commit your prayer to God, you turn over your prayer completely to Him to do with it as He pleases. We have to leave it to God to grant our prayer if it is His will to do so. Trust that if it is not right for you, He will give you what is best for you. Committing also means you are also submitting yourself to His timing which means waiting patiently.
Hi everyone. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas and this is Part II of the video on How To Pray where I will be answering 3 specific questions and these are:

- “Is praying silently as effective as praying with words?”
- “Is there a best time or place to pray?” and
- “How do I pray for someone who is a thorn in my side?”

Ok, let me start with question # 1: Is praying silently as effective as praying with words?

The answer is YES. Whether you vocalize your prayers or just pray in your mind don’t matter. Both are essential to your prayer life. What matters most is that when you pray, your heart should be present to him to whom you are speaking in prayer. If you’re praying but your heart is not really into it, then irregardless of whether you’re vocalizing your prayer or praying silently, your prayer won’t be as effective as when you are praying with your whole heart, mind and soul.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did both. He prayed silently but he also prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue and as the Gospels show, he also raised his voice to express his personal prayer to our heavenly father.

Some people find that praying out loud makes it easier for them to focus their thoughts on what they’re saying. Others prefer to pray silently. Your lips do not have to physically move in order for prayer to be effective. But there are times when group, recited prayers are encouraged and are also good and effective.
Ok, let me move on to question #2: **Is there a best time or place to pray?**

With regards to a best time, the answer is there is really no best time to pray because the Bible tells us to pray all the time! It says, “Pray without ceasing” (this is from Paul’s 1st Letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 17).

We can come to God at any time. He knows we need Him, and He wants to help us. But praying without ceasing doesn’t mean that we should lock ourselves up in our room and do nothing but pray 24 hours a day. What God wants is for us to turn to Him in prayer all day long, not just praying about our needs or the needs of others, but also praising and thanking Him for all He has done and is doing for us. He wants us to cultivate the habit of quietly praying in our souls about everything throughout the day.

So we can pray anywhere - in our room, in our office, inside our car, anywhere.

But it’s good to set a special time and place for prayer. Some people do it in the early morning which is good as this sets them up for the rest of the day, helping them deal with the hassles and stresses of life much better.

Others do it at night before they go to bed, when the rest of the world is sleeping. It may help them to sleep soundly because they still have God in their thoughts when their head hits the pillow.

It is very important to pray in a place that is free from distraction. Many people choose to pray in their bedroom, the den, or a sun room. Others enjoy praying outdoors in a favorite spot in their garden or among the trees of nearby woods. Wherever you choose, make it your own personal, private spot.

In the Gospels, Jesus went to places where he could be alone: boats; the desert; the wilderness; up the mountains; and gardens.
Let’s move on to the last question: **How do I pray for someone who is a thorn in my side?**

So these people who are thorns in the side can be an annoying neighbor, an obnoxious co-worker, a back biting relative, or any person who has hurt you or annoy you the most.

So the question is how do you pray for these people?

The first thing to do is to pray for yourself. Bring your anger or your hurt or your frustration to God because when you do this, you are letting him transform your heart. If you try to do the work of transformation before you turn to God, you are leaving God out of the forgiveness process and it will be harder to succeed at transforming your heart. In time, God will slowly fill your heart with his love and compassion. You will experience a heart-change.

So after you have asked God to soften or transform your heart, ask Him to touch the other person’s heart so that he/she may become the person God wants him/her to be (not what you want him/her to be)

Then pray for his or her needs, you may not know what they are but ask God to fill whatever needs he/she has.

Then ask God to shower the other person with his blessings of peace and abundance.

Keep praying. Since our hearts aren’t transformed in an instant, we may have to turn to God several times before we truly forgive the one who has hurt us.
Why Are My Prayers Not Answered?

Hello, this is Babes Tan-Magkalas once again and this is video # 3 in a series of 13 videos on the Answers to Your Biggest Questions About Prayer. In this particular video, I am going to answer the question “Why Are My Prayers Not Answered?”

We’ll never know exactly why some prayers seem to be unanswered as God’s ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not like our thoughts. And sometimes you may think that God didn’t answer your prayers because what you expected to happen didn’t. But God isn’t under obligation to say ‘yes’ to us all the time and this is a good thing considering some of the things we request! God may say, ‘Yes, but you have to wait’, or ‘Yes, but not what you expected’, or ‘Yes and so much more’ or even ‘Yes, I thought you’d never asked’ or ‘No, because it’s not good for you’.

Many are saying: “I pray, but I get no answers. I’ve prayed so long, so hard, didn’t get any results, not even a little evidence of God changing things. Things go on as usual - nothing change.”

When this happens, I can think of several probable reasons why. One reason that can hinder our prayers from being answered is an ungrateful heart. It can be so easy to whine and complain that we forget to be grateful for all the things God has blessed us with. Having a grateful heart is so important to our prayer life. It is something God delights in and when you give pleasure to God, you become closer to Him. It also predisposes you to receive more from God.

On the other hand, if you keep on griping about things, then it would be hard for God to bless you and give you what you are asking for. Besides, why would God give you something else to complain about. Seriously, if there is one thing that hinders you from getting what you prayed for, it is an ungrateful heart! So cultivate and maintain a grateful attitude at all times.
Another reason is Pride. In the first letter of Peter, chapter 5 verse 5, it is said that “God opposed the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” So it is very clear that being proud is not pleasing to God but being humble is. Pride blocks the grace of God from coming into your life while a humble heart lets it in.

Being proud is when you do not acknowledge the fact that you need God, that without Him, you are nothing. You do not admit your sinfulness, you do not acknowledge your dependence upon God for forgiveness and your confidence in His mercy.

Another reason is unforgiveness. It is a must that we have a forgiving heart when we come to God. Unforgiveness is a major deterrent to answered prayers. Our Lord Himself tells us to forgive in Mark Chapter 11 verse 25. He said “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your father in heaven may also forgive your trespasses.”

Another reason why some prayers are not answered is lack of faith. What happens to a lot of people after they pray? They doubt, they worry, their faith waivers and this is what the Bible says when this happens, as written in James, chapter 1 verses 6-8: “But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.”

Having the wrong motives behind prayer can also hinder answered prayers. Prayers born out of selfishness, the desire to get even or manipulate someone, jealousy, feeling of self-importance, and the like will not be granted by God. In James, chapter 4 verse 3, it is said: “You ask and do not receive, because you asked wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.” God sees what’s inside our hearts so before praying, be honest and examine your motives.

Another reason for unanswered prayers is anxiety. This is related to a lack of
Another deterrent to unanswered prayers is disobedience. Acts of disobedience is considered sins. There is no doubt that sin will disrupt the flow of God’s blessings and answers to prayer. Psalm 66:18 says, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear”. Regarding iniquity in your heart means that you are aware of sin in your life but you just dismissed it or refuse to deal with it.

Nobody’s perfect, all of us sin. But once God has made us aware of our sins, we should stop and repent. Otherwise, our relationship with him is obstructed and when that relationship is obstructed then our prayers will go unanswered.

There are times when our prayers are not answered because it is not according to God’s will. In 1 John 5:14, he said: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.” So God answers those prayers that are in “His” will. And God’s will is revealed through His Word. Anything promised by His Word is His will and we can pray with confidence that He will hear our prayers based on His Word.

There are times when we pray and we don’t know whether what we are praying for is God’s will for us. When this happens, we simply ask God to grant our prayers if they are in accordance with His will and to help us accept graciously and be satisfied with whatever His will is in our lives.

Another reason for unanswered prayer is the lack of action on our part. Realize that you are partly responsible for the outcome of your prayer. When you say a prayer, you just don’t sit around and wait for it to happen and then blame God if things don’t turn out the way you expect. Remember, God helps those who help themselves. You have to do your part.

And lastly, and this may seem so obvious but one reason why some prayers go unanswered is because we haven’t really prayed about it. We tell our friends
or think about it a lot but we do not pray. In James 4:2, it is said: “You do not have because you do not ask.”

There were two questions related to the Big Question ‘Why are my prayers not answered’ which were also asked and these were:

- Should I stop praying for prayers not answered?
- If I don’t get any results after months of praying, what should I do?

Both these questions point to one answer and that is to Pray Persistently. God wants you to pray persistently. Why? Let’s look at the life of the apostle Paul. He had what he referred to as “a thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). He didn’t say what it was but it must have been a chronic and debilitating problem which at times kept him from doing his work. He prayed more than once for God to take this ‘thorn’ away. But did he get what he prayed for? No!

Yet, Paul got something better. Because he persistently prayed, he heard God’s voice and found out God’s will. He heard God say to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”(2 Corinthians: 9) Further, Paul realized that his ‘thorn in the flesh’ kept him from being conceited. He had such wonderful spiritual experiences and preaching prowess that it would have been hard not to brag about them. His ‘thorn’ kept him humble, however. He was always aware of his weakness and knew that whatever he achieved was God’s doing, not his.

You see, returning to God again and again in prayer keeps your communication lines with Him open. It gives God an opportunity to communicate with you and more importantly, gives you an opportunity to hear Him. It is usually after you have prayed and prayed that you run out of words and then, you stop talking and hear God in the silence.
Praying persistently is a way to rely on God for His solution to a problem. You may think that you know the solution so you pray and pray for it, but your solution may not be God’s. There are times when God has to bend your will to match His and it is only when you pray persistently that you begin to realize that you have to let go of your own solutions and let God work in your life. Oftentimes, our first prayers are not the best ones and so sometimes, God makes us wait. If we keep on praying, God will reshape our desires until they match His desires.

Sometimes, you have to let go. You may ask how you can tell when to press on with your prayer or when to release it. Personally, I ask the Holy Spirit for discernment and I can tell when I should still pray about something when I can easily pray about it, it’s almost effortless.

On the other hand, I can tell when it’s time to let go when I pray about something and I don’t feel at ease, like I’m struggling. So I release my prayer and thank God for it knowing the answer to my prayer is on its way.
What Do I Do When I Get Distracted While Praying?

Hi there. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas and this is video #4 in the series of videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. I will be answering today the big question “What do I do when I get distracted while praying?” plus 2 related questions:

- Should I still continue to pray when I cannot concentrate?
- How can I engage the mind fully in times of grief and joy?

Ok, what is a distraction? How do you get distracted while praying? Well, there are basically two types of distraction – the external and the internal. How many times has it happened that while you’re praying, the baby starts crying, or the dog starts barking and wouldn’t stop or you hear two people in the house arguing with voices so loud you can hear them even if your bedroom door is closed or even if you’re down in the basement.

Usually, it is easier to avoid or minimize external distractions - you can pray early in the morning or late at night when everybody is sleeping and there is peace and quiet. I normally would tell my husband or my mom that I will be praying so I don’t want to be disturbed.

The internal distractions seem to be harder to control. So here you are praying and then all of a sudden, you start to think of some grocery items you need to buy or people you have to call or you or some corporate strategies your company just announced, you know, all sorts of things!

Oh, I’ve been there, I know and you know what I did and still do to minimize or stop internal distractions? I play a certain kind of music on the background and this type of music is called the Gregorian Chant.
Now what is a Gregorian Chant? According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, a Gregorian Chant is synonymous with plain chant, comprising not only of the Church music of the early Middle Ages, but also later compositions written in a similar style down to the sixteenth century and even in modern times.

This is how I discovered it. I prayed to God to help me get rid of all these internal distractions. A few days later, I got my answer. I was at home listening to the radio when the radio announcer talked about the Gregorian Chant, particularly the one sung by the Benedictine monks of the small monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos in central Spain. Apparently, he was amazed that it has made it to number one on Billboard’s classical chart and number three on its pop chart as well. And then he played the first track of the recording.

As soon as I heard it, I felt a certain peace came over me and that’s when I knew that the Gregorian Chant will be part of my prayer life. I bought the CD as well as the accompanying book entitled “Chant -The Origins, Form, Practice and Healing Power of Gregorian Chant” by Katharine Le Mee. I bought the book because it has the lyrics of the Chant in Latin and the English translation.

Since I started listening to the Gregorian Chant, it has never failed to quiet my mind. It is my background music during my quiet time with God. I also put it in my mp3 player so I can listen to it whenever I want to.

I’m not saying that it will work for you just as it works for me. It may or it may not. Who knows. I’ve put a link on the images so just click on them if you want to know more about this type of music.

There are other ways to avoid or minimize internal distractions. Some spiritual writers advised that one simply brushed distractions away as if they were annoying flies. But you have to do it gently. It’s like when you’re having a conversation with someone outdoors and a fly suddenly landed on your nose and you just gently brush it away and continue with the conversation.
Another way is to **include the distractions in your prayer**. For example, you’re praying and then, your 4 year old nephew came to your mind, then don’t dismiss the thought, pray for him.

Another way to is to **settle down and collect your thoughts before you start to pray**. St. Therese of Avila, a Doctor of the Church is called the Doctor of prayer. She said that most of the problem one has during prayer is related to what one does when one begins to pray. So she really stressed the importance of beginning prayer by placing oneself in the Presence of God. This simply means to collect your thoughts. Give some time to settle down to prayer. Breathe deeply, find a comfortable position, forget about what you were doing a few minutes before, etc. Don’t begin your prayer already distracted.

Some people would look at an image, perhaps a picture of Jesus and imagine Him before them. There are times when I look at the picture of the Divine Mercy and imagine myself being showered by the light coming out of his heart.

**Your health** also affects the way you deal with distractions during prayer. If you’re sleepy or tired, worried, or tensed or hungry, it is easy for the mind to wander. Someone said to pray now while one is healthy because it is so hard to do so when you are sick. It’s so hard to think when one has a bad headache, how much more to pray. So try to minimize these problems as much as possible. If you cannot, then pray about them or pray for the grace to be able to pray given your current health condition.

**Playing soft meditation music** also helps to minimize distractions during prayer. There are many meditation music available out there it’s really a matter of choosing the one which works for you.

**Praying out loud** can also keep you focus during prayer. It works especially when you’re talking to God, when you’re pouring your heart out to him, and so on. You can easily know when you get distracted because obviously, you stop praying. So you can do this when you’re alone and you’ll be surprised how it
keeps you from getting distracted.

The bottom line is when you get distracted while praying, **tell God all about it and ask Him to help you.** And He will.

A question which was also asked and related to the big question on what to do with distractions during prayer is: “How can I engage the mind fully in prayer in times of grief and joy?”

It’s easier to pray in times of joy. A simple ‘thank you Lord’ when coming from the bottom of your heart is sufficient. It’s much easier to tell God how grateful and thankful you are for the event, or the person, or the thing which made you happy. When you’re feeling joyful and you’re praying and you remember the cause of your joy, it need not be a distraction when you include that event or person or thing as part of your prayer of thanksgiving or gratitude.

Personally, I found it harder to pray in times of grief, not because of the distractions but because of something else. In March of 2007, my sister passed away. She had pancreatic cancer. We had nine days of group, recited prayers after her funeral. But when all these were over, I stopped praying. Not that I didn’t want to pray anymore, I just couldn’t. I wanted to and I needed to but I couldn’t. My heart was so broken, my soul so wounded that when I tried to pray, nothing came out of my heart, nothing came out of my mind, and nothing came out of my lips.

So my problem wasn’t the distractions during prayer, it was my ability to pray! All the stress, all the pain simply empowered me. God did not abandon me, my relationship with Him was still there but I just couldn’t talk to him.

Well, I knew it will pass, I knew I will be able to pray again but what gave me so much comfort that I didn’t really panic was what Paul said in Romans 8:26-27. He wrote:

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“In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for us believers according to God’s will”.

So I knew the Holy Spirit would come to my aid. I was too weak to pray and I knew he would thrive in my weakness. I also knew in my heart he would intercede for me, he would take charge of my prayers, he would pray to God what I would have prayed if I was able to and surely, he would do a much much better job than if I have done the praying myself. I also knew he would pray for me according to God’s will. So I found comfort and rest knowing that I couldn’t possibly pray wrong because the Holy Spirit was doing the praying for me.

So in times of grief, when you have difficulty praying, with all the distractions, all the pain, all the stress, just give it your best shot and let the Holy Spirit take it from there.
Are My Prayers Being Heard?

Hi everyone. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas and this is video #5 in the series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. In this video, I’m going to answer the question, “Are my prayers being heard or am I just talking to myself?” plus 2 other related questions:

- How do I know that my prayers have been heard?
- How do I feel at ease that my prayers are important enough to be heard?

In prayer, we are addressing God whom we do not see, touch, or rarely or never audibly hear. It is so different from talking to a friend whom you can see, hear and touch. So sometimes, you may feel that your prayers are going nowhere.

So, are all prayers heard? At the most basic level, God hears all prayers in the sense that He is aware of all our prayers. He is God, He knows everything. Jesus said he numbers the hairs on our heads. So He is aware of the details of our lives.

In another context, the word ‘heard’ can mean ‘answered’. So when someone asks “are my prayers being heard?”, it is likely that another question follows and that is, ‘if my prayers are being heard, how come I don’t seem to get any answers to my prayers?’

As I said in video # 3 where I answered the question ‘Why are my prayers not answered’, sometimes you may think that God didn’t answer your prayers because what you expected to happen did not happen. But God isn’t under obligation to say ‘yes’ to us all the time. He may say, ‘Yes, but you have to wait’, or ‘Yes, but not what you expected’, or ‘Yes and so much more’ or even ‘Yes, I thought you’d never asked’ or ‘No, because it’s not good for you’ or ‘No’ for probable reasons I already discussed in Video #3.
I truly believe God hears our prayers, whoever we are. He just responds to prayers differently. Remember that He is the same God who sends rain and sunshine to the evil as well as the good, and calls on us to love our enemies because that’s how He loves.

So if you asked me how do you know that God has heard your prayers or your prayer is important enough to be heard, I will tell you that it’s a matter of faith. Because it is unlikely that you will hear God whisper in your ear and tell you that He has heard your prayer. You just believe. He is God, He loves you and so He hears you and He will respond to you in His own way and in His own time.

Sometimes we forget the prayers that God has already heard and answered. So it’s important to remember the times when God has responded to your prayers. Remember the times in the past when He has been faithful to you. Remembering these times will help you not to lose confidence in the fact that He hears and answers prayers.
Is It Ok To Pray For Small Things?

Hey everybody, this is Babes Tan-Magkalas once again and this is video #6 in a series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. In this short video, I’m going to answer the question “Is it ok to pray for small things?” plus 2 related questions and these are:

- Compared to world peace, my prayers are less important so why would God listen to me?

- Is it ok to ask for an empty spot in a full or busy parking lot?

So, is it ok to pray for small things? In my humble opinion, yes! I pray for both small and big stuff. And yes, I pray for an empty spot in a busy parking lot, and I also pray for a cure for cancer and the end to hunger.

Allow me to quote from Paul’s letter to the Philippians, chapter 4, verse 6:

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God.”

In this verse, Paul did not say to pray only for the big things, he said “in EVERYTHING, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God”.

God loves us. He is our father. He wants us to have a personal and intimate relationship with him. When he listens to our prayers, I don’t believe He would say something like, “ok, this man is asking for world peace and this girl is asking for a new pair of shoes...world peace is more important so I’ll work on this first,
the pair of shoes can wait”. I don’t think God is like that!

God is concerned about the details of our lives. As our Lord said, he numbers the hairs on our head. And because he cares about the details, he knows all about our mortgage payments, our fear about losing our jobs, the traffic we encounter on our way to work and other concerns which consume our waking hours. So when we pray, our prayers can and should embrace these things.

Personally, when I pray for small things, I feel closer to God because that’s my way of making him a part of my daily life. Praying for small things also teaches me a kind of humble dependence. When I pray for the small stuff, I encounter a God who doesn’t frown on my needy prayer requests but instead delights in answering them concretely.

When my needs overwhelm me, I discover a gracious God who tells me “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest”. So take all your needs to him, big and small, and leave them all in his hands.
Why Do We Have To Ask God For Things When He Already Knows What We Need?

Hi there. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas and we are now in the seventh video in the series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. Today, I will answer the question “Why do we have to ask God for things when He already knows what we need?” and 2 other related or follow up questions and these are:

- Should we not just abandon everything to Divine Providence?
- Do we have to be specific in our prayers?

You may be thinking why you have to ask when our All-Knowing God knows what you need anyway.

I was talking to a friend one time and he said he had long wanted to be an English teacher in Japan. So I asked him if he has prayed about it and he just looked at me and said ‘No’.

I believe you have to ask to get! Do you know the story about Bartimaeus who was once blind? Let me read the following story which was taken from Mark 10:46-52:

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son
“Ask and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks the door will be opened.”

Matthew 7: 7-8 NRSV

of David, have mercy on me!”

Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Take note that in this story from the Bible, Bartimaeus was asked by Jesus, “What do you want me to do for you?” Our Lord certainly knew what Bartimaeus wanted but still He asked him. And what did Bartimaeus told Jesus? He didn’t say ‘Rabbi, you know what I want, please just do it!’ instead, he specifically said what he wanted, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

Even in the Lord’s Prayer, the prayer which our Lord taught us, there was nothing fuzzy or vague about what Jesus was asking. He prayed for personal things, kingdom things, important things so he prayed for God’s provison, God’s protection, for God’s glory and honour, for God’s kingdom, and so on.

So there is no bigger advocate about asking God for what we need than our Lord. Here’s some verses which clearly state it:

“Ask and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks the door will be opened.”

Matthew 7: 7-8 NRSV
And here’s another one from Matthew:

“And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” Matthew 21:22 NRSV

And here’s one from the Gospel of John:

“If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish and it will be done for you.” John 15:7 NRSV

And lastly, this one is from James:

“You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.” James 4:2

So ask. What are your problems that need solving? What do you want God to help you with? Start praying. God wants you to ask him.
How Can I Listen To What God Is Saying To Me?

Hey everyone. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas once again and you are watching video #8 in a series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. I will be answering in this video the question “How can I listen to what God is saying to me?” plus 2 related questions and these are:

- How do I know that the message is from God and not from myself?
- Will it take long before I can hear him?

Prayer is a communication between us and God and so we need to learn to listen to what he is saying to us. And indeed, God speaks to us. In James chapter 1 verse 5, it is said: “If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.” So if we ask for wisdom to deal with the issues of life, God will certainly give it to us.

I don’t know if any of you have read the book “God Guides” by Mary Geegh (her last name is spelled as g-e-e-g-h). Mary was a missionary in India for 38 years and in this book she tells of her experiences about listening to God.

The way she listened to God was quite simple. Whenever she needed to consult God about something (and this happened everyday), she would sit down, with a notepad and pencil and would wait for God to respond, then she would write down whatever she heard and then do whatever God asked her to do.

She would obey even if what she was asked to do seemed strange. I remember one story she was telling about a fellow missionary whom she was at odds with. When she asked God what to do so that they would reconcile, she heard that ‘inner voice’ tell her, “Give her an egg”. And she did exactly that. She gave her colleague an egg, half apologizing for what seemed to be a rather strange, irrelevant act.
Well, it turned out that her colleague needed exactly one more egg so that she could feed her family that night and she was wondering where she could get one. And this is just one experience which Mary talked about in her book. There were many more.

The first time I read her book, I wished I could hear from God in that same simple and natural way that she did. Then later, I realized that God speaks to us in so many ways.

On way is through that “inner voice” inside us. Some refer to it as the Holy Spirit. Others describe it as a still small voice. From my experience, I call it a ‘voice without a voice’. It’s like a thought that just comes to your mind but there is a certain peace or calm that surrounds it.

God also speaks to us through our conscience. Through our conscience, He speaks to us about what is right and what is wrong.

God also communicates with us through daily events that happen in our lives. For example, we get a job offer out of the blue that changes our career direction. Somebody we haven’t heard from for quite a while calls us. You know, we can learn much simply what God is saying by observing what transpires around us.

Another way that God speaks through us is through our pain. As C. S. Lewis said: “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pain: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” It is oftentimes when we hurt that we hear what, in our pride and self sufficiency, we would otherwise never bother with.

When we’re flat on our backs in bed or in pain, we slow down and tend to listen, we ask deeper questions. Our pain can lead us to God.
God also uses other people to speak to us. Sometimes we find the answers to our questions while listening to a homily during Sunday’s mass. Or somebody tells us something we don’t want to hear but need to.

God can also communicate with us through our dreams, through nature or his physical creation and in many other ways but most importantly, He speaks to us through His Word. Much of the listening is simply taking to heart what God is telling us through His written Word, the Bible. Much of the listening is in soaking ourselves in the wisdom of the Scripture.

So how do we learn to listen?

One way is to simply become more alert, more aware, more conscious, more reflective in reading the clues as God unfolds His will in the daily happenings in our lives. Usually, at the end of the day, I reflect on what happened that day and ask myself what God is trying to tell me. Sometimes, I get some insight, sometimes I don’t.

You can also ask God to speak to you. One of my favorite stories in the Bible is the story of young Samuel. His guardian who was the temple priest Eli told him that if God calls him, he should say “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.”

I apply this advice of Eli in my life so when I need some guidance or even when I just want to be more receptive to God’s promptings, I would go through my day repeating quietly, “Speak Lord for your servant is listening.” The actual ‘hearing’ may not come at the end of the day but it’s the preparation of my heart to hear that makes the difference.

I also find that having a journal helps me to hear what God is trying to tell me. I know that journaling may not be for everyone and I myself don’t really write on my journal daily. But I do strive to write a page or two every so often about my insights on what has happened in my life that week, what I think God’s
message was. When I look back later to what I have written, sometimes I would notice a theme or a certain pattern and this gives me direction as to how my life should go.

If you want to really be in tune with God and hear His voice, you must study or reflect on His Word. Because when you do, you will learn more about His mind. Then the Holy Spirit makes that Word applicable to you at the times when you need God’s guidance and wisdom.

As St. Paul said: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.” So we read, we listen to what God tells us in His written Word. And then we try to let what we read or what we heard stay with us and hence we grow gradually in His wisdom.

You asked: how do you know that the message is from God? Well, it must be weighed and measured against His Word. God’s voice will never contradict His word and this is one reason why study of scripture is so important.

We cannot really depend on our feelings. A message coming from God and from some other source can both make us feel warm inside. Moreover, our hearts can be deviously intelligent in helping us justify and rationalize what we want.

Will it take long be you can ‘hear’ Him? I don’t know. God comes at his initiative, not our conjuring, so you have to open yourself up continuously to what he may want to say. You just don’t try to listen to him when you’re not sure about something and therefore need some guidance. Listening is part of an ongoing and loving relationship with God, the source of all wisdom.

Listening requires discipline and I must admit, it is a discipline that at times, I lack. In the hustles and bustles of life, I don’t always listen to him attentively or sometimes I don’t listen to him at all. But times when I do, what I hear becomes food for my hungry soul.
Should I Pray To Saints?

Hello. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas and we are now in video #9 in the series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. I’m going to answer in this video the question “Should I pray to saints?” plus 2 related questions and these are:

- Shouldn’t I just pray directly to God?
- Can saints hear us when we pray to them?

Praying to the saints means asking our departed brothers and sisters in Christ for their intercession. While a lot of people question the “rightness” of our practice of praying to the saints, I do pray to them and everybody who knows me know that I am a devotee of Saint Joseph.

I believe the saints hear our prayers and intercede for us before God, as implied from the following verses from Revelation.

*When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* Revelation 5:8 NRSV

*Another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar; he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.* Revelation 8:3-4 NRSV

But let me emphasize that when I pray to the saints, I ask for their intercession, that is, I ask them to pray for my prayer intentions. I do not pray that they
grant my prayer rather, I ask them to pray to God that my prayer be granted. So when I pray to them, I don’t say, for example, “St. Joseph, please send me the money I need so that my house won’t be foreclosed.” Instead, I pray, “St. Joseph, please pray for me, please pray to God that I will have the money I need to pay the bank so that my house won’t be foreclosed.” It is God who grants our prayers, not the saints.

This seems to be a simple matter but I have received emails containing prayer requests from many individuals asking St. Joseph to find them a good husband, or sell their house, or send them money to lighten their financial burden, or restore their relationship with their husband or wife, etc. And then, their prayer requests will end with a ‘thank you’ to St. Joseph for granting their prayers.

This may just be a matter of semantics, perhaps they meant to thank St. Joseph in advance for interceding for them but I thought I’d mention this here just to be sure that we’re on the same page. Again, it is God who grants our prayers, the saints pray and intercede for us so that our prayers will be granted.

Praying to the saints in heaven is like asking fellow Christians to pray for us. From this perspective, I don’t think this runs in conflict with praying to God directly. Yes, we should pray to God directly for all our needs but this doesn’t mean that we cannot ask our fellow Christians in heaven to intercede for us. Praying for each other is simply part of what we do as Christians. St. Paul in his writings encouraged Christians to pray for one another.

The saints are already free from the temptations and distractions of this earthly life. They have already been made perfect otherwise they wouldn’t be with God. Hence, their prayers are efficacious. As James said:

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not...*
rain, and for three years and six months did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

James 5: 16-18

The saints are certainly righteous and surely, their prayers are powerful and effective. It just makes sense to ask for their intercession. But don’t forget to pray to God first and then ask the saints for their intercession.
Is Praying With Others Effective?

Hey everyone. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas and we are now in video #10 in the series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. In this video, I’m going to answer the question “Is praying with others effective?” plus 2 related questions and these are:

- I’m not comfortable in praying with others so can I just pray alone?
- How do I start praying with others?

When someone asks me about praying with others, I am often reminded of some verses in the Book of Ecclesiastes, specifically in Chapter 4, verses 9-11 which state:

“Two are better than one for they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to the one who is all alone and falls and does not have one another to help.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-11

We cannot live well without help. All of us have friends, family members, people who have influenced our lives in one way or another, people who have helped us become better persons. We need people in our lives and it is the same with prayer. Our prayer journey is more easily traveled when we got company.

And so I believe prayer is more of a shared activity than a private activity. We are all members of the body of Christ. We are all part of a community. As Timothy Jones said in his book ‘The Art of Prayer’:

“Spirituality is not a spiritual do-it-yourself project. We were made for others in life and love, and we were made to be with others when we pray.”
Now I’m not saying that one-on-one individual prayer is not powerful and effective. Certainly, God wants you to establish a one-on-one, close, personal relationship with Him. However, there will be other times when He will want you to group together and unite with a few other believers in prayer.

Our Lord Jesus Christ wants us to do both - pray alone and pray with others. In Matthew, chapter 6 verse 6, He said:

“But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father, who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” Matthew 6:6

But He also said and this time in Matthew 18:19-20

“Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:19-20

Also, note that in the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus used plural instead of singular pronouns:

Instead of “MY father”, He said “OUR Father…”
Instead of “Give ME today”, He said “Give US today…”
Instead of “Forgive ME”, He said “Forgive US…”
Instead of “Lead ME not”, He said “Lead US not…”
Instead of “Deliver ME from evil”, He said “Deliver US from evil….”

There are various avenues or opportunities to pray with others. You can pray with your husband or wife, with your friend or friends, with your family, as part of a prayer group, as part of a church congregation, during prayer meetings, during Mass, and so on.
There are those of you who would say that you much prefer to pray alone. But actually, you need both. I personally find praying with others indispensable for my growth in prayer.

Some of the benefits of praying with others are:

1. **It provides us with the support and encouragement we need in our prayer life.** We certainly can benefit from the wisdom and reinforcement we get from others.

I first experience the benefit of praying with others many years ago when I was a still a student. I had a friend who was quite prayerful and she asked me one day if we could pray together. I hesitated at first but decided to give it a try. So once a week, after class, we met for an hour and discussed our problems and struggles, listened to each others’ different perspectives on the subject at hand and towards the end, we prayed for each other. We noted down what we prayed for and God’s answers to our prayers. There were times when I was so discouraged but my friend gave me the encouragement I need. There were times when my prayers were flat and dry but my friend was there to make up for it. And I did the same to her. My prayer life during those times would have been in shambles if not for the wisdom, reinforcement, and courage which I got during those times of shared prayer.

2. **It helps keep our praying on track.** If left on our own, we can simply stop praying, pray only when we are in dire need, or become so self-absorbed or self-indulgent. We can even stray away from the truth. It’s true that we can be led astray not just by our own hearts but by others but we are more likely to stay focused on truth if we pray with others.

There were times when my prayer life felt so lethargic only to have my passion rekindled again by kind words from a fellow believer or by a sermon I heard while attending Mass or by the overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit during a prayer rally.

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3. **Praying with others also fosters a sense of community.** It feels good to pray as part of a larger community. When we worship with others, we don’t orchestrate it but instead, we participate in it. We don’t worry about what to say and instead somebody else like our parish priest or our pastor, jumpstarts our efforts to reach out to God. We are led and fellow believers all join in a chorus of praise and worship.

Dr. Harold Koenig, director of the Center for the Study of Religion, Spirituality and Health at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina, pointed out that there are health benefits gained from the sense of community that religious activities such as group prayer foster in those who regularly do them.

So, if you are not in to praying with others, start now. You can start with a friend or someone you’re comfortable with. Do not be afraid that you may not know what to say when you meet. Start by talking together about your needs, your problems. Listen to each other’s joys and struggles. And towards the end, pray together. Thank and praise God for His goodness and pray for each other’s concerns. The praying need not be long, perhaps you can pray for 10 minutes, gradually increasing it as you become more comfortable with praying with someone.

Keep a relationship with those you pray with that is based on mutual respect and love. Avoid anything that is divisive like jealousy, envy, resentment, etc. I believe that praying with others is most effective when the people involved relate to one another in a spirit of love, respect and harmony.
Is Intercessory Prayer Effective?

Hi everybody. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas once again and we are now in video #11 in the series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. In this video, I’m going to answer the question “Is intercessory prayer effective?” plus 1 related question and this is: How can I be more effective at intercessory prayer?

For those of you who already have a copy of my free e-book “Prayer Tips”, you will be familiar with what I’m going to discuss in this video since I devoted a section of the e-book to intercessory prayer.

So what is intercessory prayer? It is prayer offered by one person for the well-being of another person. While it is important that every believer devotes a daily time for prayer, the Bible provides us with various illustrations of the power of intercessory prayer. To name a few: Luke 11:5-8 tells the story of one person going to another person to get bread for a third person; Abraham intercedes for godless Sodom (Genesis 18: 23-25) and Moses interceded for the Israelites (Exodus 32:12-14).

For those who are scientifically inclined, let me cite two respected scientific studies on the effects of intercessory prayer.

The first is a study conducted in the late 80s by Dr. Randolf Byrd, a practicing cardiologist at San Francisco General Hospital. The controlled ten-month study which was published in The Southern Medical Journal in 1988, involved 393 cardiac-care-unit patients.

The subjects of the study were selected randomly by a computer: 192 patients were prayed for by Roman Catholic and Protestant prayer groups while 201 patients were not prayed for.
The results showed that those who were prayed for were five times less likely to need antibiotics than those who were not prayed for. The former were also three times less likely to develop pulmonary edema than the latter. Furthermore, all those who were prayed for did not need mechanical respiratory support.

The second study was conducted in 1998 at St. Lukes Hospital in Kansas City and was published in the well-respected Archives of Internal Medicine. Led by William Harris who has a doctorate degree and specialized in research on heart disease, the study involved 990 patients admitted to the coronary care unit of the hospital.

The patients were split this way: 466 were selected randomly and prayed for every day and 524 were not prayed for. A total of 75 volunteers from various denominations did the praying.

And the result...35 different health issues were used to analyze the progress of the patients such as the number and type of medications the patients required, time spent on respirators, length of stay in the hospital, etc. The conclusion of the study was that the patients who were prayed for did 11% better than those who weren't prayed for. Statistically, such results are significant.

There is Power in Numbers! Does the number of prayers matter? It certainly does!

Many studies conducted by Spindrift, an organization based in Salem (Oregon) show the effectiveness of prayer. Researchers at Spindrift don't limit themselves to studies involving humans. They also try to get down to the very basics such as a batch of seedlings.

In order to find out whether more prayer is more effective, the researchers set up four containers: a control container which would not be prayed for and
containers X, Y and Z. The seeds in containers X and Y were prayed for as a unit; the seeds in containers Y and Z were also prayed for as a unit. So the seeds in container Y actually got twice the prayers.

And you know what happened? In terms of germination, the seeds in container Y did twice as well. Hence, the conclusion was the greater the amounts of prayer, the stronger the effects!

So harness the power of intercessory prayer. Ask others to pray for you.

How can you be more effective at intercessory prayer? I think that first and foremost, you must have a relationship with God. I won’t go into the details of how to have a relationship with God as I have already touched on this in the other videos. And for those who haven’t gotten a copy, I wrote a short guide on intercessory prayer and you can download it for free at:

http://stjosephsite.com/SJS_Prayer_Warrior.htm
Why Does God Seem To Be Silent At Times?

Hey everyone. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas and we are now in video #12, the second to the last, in the series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. I’m going to answer in this video the question “Why does God seem to be silent at times?” plus 1 related question which is, “What will I do when God seems silent?”

Most of us have experienced what seemingly appears to be God’s silence. We pray, but our prayers seem to bounce back unheard. We want to hear from God, but it looks like He’s giving us the silent treatment. So we wonder where God is - or even if He’s there at all.

So, why does God seem to be silent at times?

The keyword here is the word ‘seem’ because in a lot of times, God is not really silent, the silence is not for real. We only think He is silent. And why is that?

One reason is we have stopped listening. We can’t hear God because we have allowed the worries and cares and distractions of this world to plug our spiritual ears.

Another reason is there are times when there is just too much noise in our lives which assaults our senses so much that we cannot hear the voice of God. We are constantly badgered by technology like emails, cell phones, mp3 players, a schedule that’s too hectic, and even too much clutter in our own minds that we are unable to think clearly.

Unconfessed or persistent sin also puts a plug on our spiritual ears so that
even when God is talking, we can’t hear him. When we turn to him in repentance and confess our sin, then God by His grace removes the plug from our ears. We soon find out that he has been talking to us all along, we just couldn’t or wouldn’t hear him.

Another reason why God seems silent is we have neglected His Word. God speaks to us through His word and so we should spend time reading and understanding His word.

What if God is really silent? What could be the reason? The following words from Oswald Chambers in “My Outmost For His Highest” is very comforting. He said:

“When you cannot hear God, you will find that He has trusted you in the most intimate way possible -- with absolute silence, not a silence of despair, but one of pleasure, because He saw that you could withstand an even bigger revelation.”

From these words, it is apparent that God trusts us to trust Him that despite His silence, we will not waver in faith because we know that there is a divine purpose to His silence which is greater than we can ever imagine.

Recall the story about Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. They were close friends of Jesus and so when Lazarus got very sick, his sisters sent word to our Lord to come and heal him. But what did Jesus do? Did He drop whatever He was doing and rush to Bethany where Lazarus was? No. He stayed 2 more days in the place where He was. You can just imagine the anxiety of Martha and Mary while they waited for Jesus. They must have expected Him to come right away. And when He didn’t, they must have thought that He didn’t care.

Aren’t we like that sometimes? When we prayed and prayed and there seems
to be no response from God, we think that He doesn’t care, that it’s useless to pray because He doesn’t respond anyway.

So going back to the story, when Jesus finally came, Lazarus was already dead. Both sisters had the same sentiment. They told Him, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died.” It’s like saying ‘where were you when we needed you’. And as you all know, what happened afterwards was Jesus raised Lazarus to life. Mary and Martha and the other people who were there witnessed the power of God. They saw the glory of God.

So what should you do when God is silent?

First and foremost is to hold on to your faith. Trust that God has a purpose for His silence and know that something wonderful will eventually result if you hold onto your faith through a time of silence. Remember God’s promise to always be with you and trust Him to be faithful to His promise. Know that He is always there, even when you’re not aware of His presence. Remember that His timing and ways may be different from what you want, but He always knows best.

You can also reflect on the possible reasons why you can’t hear Him. See if any of what I have mentioned earlier apply to you. Have you stopped listening? Is there too much noise in your life? Are you harboring unconfessed, persistent sins? Have you neglected reading and understanding His word?

Another thing you can do is to spend time alone in a quiet place regularly where you can pray, meditate on scripture, and truly seek God. Or you can do as David did. When God seemed to be hiding His face (Psalm 30:7), what David did was to cry out to God (Psalm 30:8,10). And the result? The Lord turned his mourning into dancing and his soul was filled with gladness and thanksgiving (Psalm 7:11-12).
Also, don’t expect God to speak to you with bells and whistles as God mostly speaks to us in subtle ways. As I mentioned in my other video, God can speak to us not just through His word, but also through that inner voice in our hearts, through other people, through nature, through the daily ordinary circumstances in our lives, through our dreams, and in many other ways. So strive to be sensitive to these different ways God may be speaking to you.
Specific Questions About The Rosary, Novenas & Fasting

Hi everyone. This is Babes Tan-Magkalas and we are now in the last video in the series of 13 videos on the answers to your biggest questions about prayer. I’m going to answer in this video specific questions about the Rosary, novenas and fasting.

Ok, let me answer the first question which is about praying the Rosary: “When you go to the next set of mysteries, do you have to repeat the 3 Hail Marys and 1 Our Father?”

The answer is No, you don’t have to. All you have to do is go back to the first decade and start a new set of mysteries. Let’s say you’re done with the Joyful Mystery and you want to continue with the Sorrowful Mystery. What you do is just go back to the first decade (the first set of 10 beads) and proceed from there.

The next question is “Do I have to pray a novena the same time/place always?”

Generally, No, you don’t have to. You can pray a novena at anytime or at any place. There are novenas, however, which are usually prayed at the church, an example of which is the novena to the Mother of Perpetual Help which is usually prayed every Wednesday, usually before or after Mass.

Read the instructions on how to pray a specific novena. Some novenas would specify a morning prayer, while a lot doesn’t. Other novenas are said at a specific day like the first Saturday of each month, or every Sunday and so on.
There were 3 specific questions about fasting. The first was “Does the length of time matters?”

Personally, I don’t think it does because fasting is more about the condition of the heart or your heart-set, not the length of time. The most important is your motive. Why are you fasting?

If you’re new to fasting, you should start slow. You can start with one meal a day or one day in a week or a week in a month. It’s like when you’re starting a physical exercise. You don’t go on a treadmill, for instance, for one hour right away. With fasting, you have to build up your spiritual muscles first so that you will be prepared to fast for longer periods of time later.

The second question about fasting was “Can I take water while fasting?”

Yes, you can. In fact, you can even take juice as well especially when you’re fasting for several days as this will provide you with extra energy. If you will just take water only when fasting, please take note that if you plan to fast for several days, it is best that you consult your doctor first.

According to Dr. Bill Bright, “water-only fasts that last for more than several days need to be undertaken with complete rest and under medical supervision because of the extreme danger of over-toxification, breakdown of vital body tissues, and loss of electrolytes”.

The last question regarding fasting was “Do I have to spend it in prayer?”

Let me put it this way. Fasting is a time for intimately communing with God so the more time you spend with Him in fellowship, worship, and adoration, and the more you read and meditate upon His Word, the more effective and meaningful your fast will be. It depends on whether you will just be at home or
in some quiet place alone when you do your fast or whether you will be at work so it’s all up to you to arrange your schedule accordingly.