



“And we thank you, O sweet, sweet Lord of hosts for the smörgåsbord you have so aptly lain at our table this day, and each day ... by day. Day by day ... by day”



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The background features a light blue-grey gradient. A large, dark blue, textured shape resembling a mountain or a cloud is centered. To its left is a solid orange circle representing a sun. To its right is a dark blue silhouette of a plant with long, thin leaves. Below the plant is a small, orange, sunburst-like pattern.

Prayers



Prayers

Help my Unbelief

Mark 9:14-29

Mark 9:14-29

¹⁴ When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵ As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. ¹⁶ “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked. ¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.

Mark 9:14-29

I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”¹⁹ “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.²¹ Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered.²² “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.

Mark 9:14-29

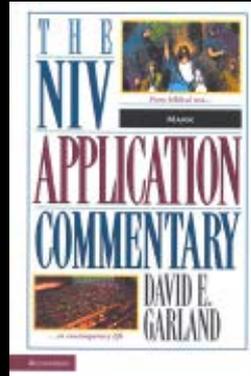
But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”²³ “‘If you can?’” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”²⁴ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out.

Mark 9:14-29

The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.”²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”²⁹ He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

“This vivid account shows that disciples are just like the rest of us: beset by failure, too ready to engage in arguments, undisciplined in prayer life, and more eager to learn techniques than to take time to walk closely with God.

David E. Garland, Mark, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 358.



1. What is prayer?
2. Why pray at all?
3. How do I pray?

What is prayer?



Transcendent

What is prayer?



Self discovery.
Self actualization.
Self realization.

Sun, July 18th
@ 11am EDT
In Person and Zoom

Transcendent

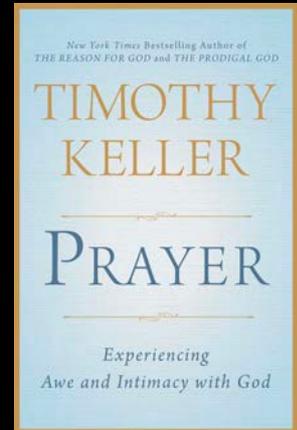


Personal

Mark 9:14-29

¹⁴ When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵ As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. ¹⁶ “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked. ¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid.

Prayer is ultimately a verbal response of faith to a transcendent God's Word and his grace, not an inward descent to discover we are one with all things and God... prayer also can lead regularly to personal encounter with God, which can be indeed a wondrous, mysterious, awe-filled experience.



1. What is prayer?

2. Why pray at all?

3. How do I pray?

“In our current era of non-stop technological innovation, fuzzy wishful thinking has yielded to the hard doctrine of personal optimization. Self-help gurus need not be charlatans peddling snake oil. Many are psychologists with impressive academic pedigrees and a commitment to scientific methodologies, or tech entrepreneurs with enviable records of success in life and business...”

“What they’re selling is metrics. It’s no longer enough to imagine our way to a better state of body or mind. We must now chart our progress, count our steps, log our sleep rhythms, tweak our diets, record our negative thoughts — then analyze the data, recalibrate, and repeat.”

Alexandra Schwartz, “Improving Ourselves to Death”
What the self-help gurus and their critics reveal about our times.
<<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/15/improving-ourselves-to-death>>



Mark 9:18-22

I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”¹⁹ “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.²¹ Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered.²² “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him.

John 17:13

¹³ “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

Why Don't We Pray?



Busy



Distracted



Self-Assured

Mark 9:17-19

“Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

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Mark 9:17-19

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¹⁹ “You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

Mark 9:22-24

²² “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

²³ “ ‘If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

Psalm 78:13-32

¹³ He divided the sea and led them through;
he made the water stand up like a wall.

¹⁴ He guided them with the cloud by day
and with light from the fire all night.

...

³² In spite of all this, they kept on sinning;
in spite of his wonders, they did not believe.



In the hot, arid sun, people started to act ...
strangely ... and in ways that play into the hands of
the killer always on the edges of the periphery.
Reliable friends start bickering. Complaints about
navigation choices become heated, almost
murderous. If only they had never left in the first
place. There never seems to be enough food or
water. At each misstep, death arrives to exact its
retribution. The ground opens beneath them and
swallows up hundreds whole. Poisonous snakes
appear out of nowhere and more die.”

Panic and fear grip the camp as the travelers seem to be cursed by something or someone. Mysterious, incurable illnesses spread like wildfire. Those who try to flee only beckon the inevitable. Finally, everyone is killing each other. By journey's end, nearly all who first set out for paradise are dead. Though hundreds of thousands went into the wilderness, only two survived to tell the chilling tale."

Todd Brewer, THE BIBLE'S (TRUE) HORROR STORY But Was God the Monster Holding the Knife?
<<https://mbird.com/bible/the-bibles-true-horror-story/>>



Hebrews 3:19

¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter,
because of their unbelief.

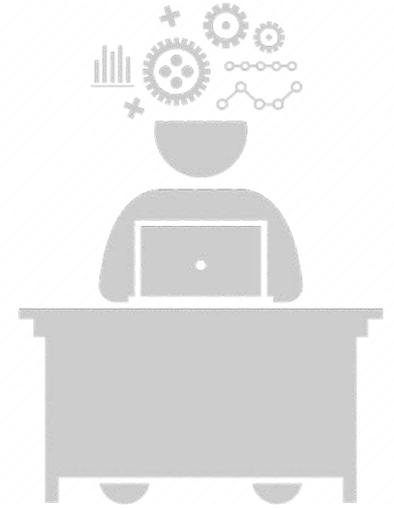
Why Don't We Pray?



Busy



Distracted



Self-Assured



UNBELIEF



“I believe; help my unbelief!”

Mark 9:24

1. What is prayer?
2. Why pray at all?
3. How do I pray?

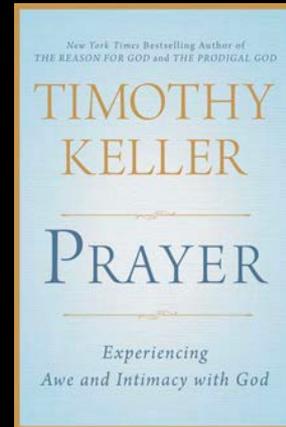
The background features a stylized landscape. On the left, a solid yellow sun is partially obscured by a dark blue, textured mountain range. To the right, a dark blue palm tree with long, thin fronds stands against the sky. Below the palm tree, there is a small cluster of yellow dots, resembling a sunburst or a field of flowers. The word "Prayers" is written in a large, white, serif font across the center of the image, overlapping the mountain and palm tree.

Prayers

“we don’t know what to pray for as we ought...”

Romans 8:26

“Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through his Word and his grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with him...The power of our prayers, then, lies not primarily in our effort and striving, or in any technique, but rather in our knowledge of God.”





Galatians 3:1

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

Mark 9:14-29

But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”²³ “‘If you can?’” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”²⁴ Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out.

Mark 9:26-29

The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.”²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”²⁹ He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

Gospel Application



Be gone unbelief, my Savior is near,
And for my relief will surely appear:
By prayer let me wrestle, and He will perform,
With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm.”

John Newton, 1803