

COMMON GROUND

Newsletter of United Campus Ministry

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From the office:

I don't know about other people, but praying has not always been an easy thing for me to do. Many times I would reverently close my eyes, bow my head, and think holy things...like, I should have taken out the trash this morning, my clothes have been in the laundry room for a couple of days now, and, wow, Todd's computer sure beeps a lot. I think that many times we are expected just to know how to pray. Why? Jesus' closest disciples weren't clear on the matter. If you weren't raised in a Christian home, you probably were never shown the way(s) to pray, and if you were raised in a Christian home you may still have a restricted understanding of prayer.

A simple study of what the Bible says about prayer will help us understand what to pray—for Christ's return, for the good of those who hate us, etc. We can look to the example of the psalms, which are basically prayers; they are certainly characterized by humility, penitence, and a worshipful attitude toward God. Check out Matthew 6:5-15 for Jesus' instructions on the subject. But within the parameters of scriptural instruction on prayer, there is a multitude of different ways to pray, and I believe it would benefit us all to hear the way others meet the Lord in prayer.

Physically, we may pray kneeling, standing, sitting, lying down, swimming, repelling, etc. (I'll let you address 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 on your own.) I often find, as do others, that taking a walk can help me to focus, especially in places where I am isolated with God in his creation. (I am particularly fond of the ski trails.) At other times I may prefer to be perfectly still. That raises another question—distractions. When we become virtually silent, small noises and movements assume huge prominence in our mind. That's why I find it helpful to find a particular spot that I can count on to be relatively free of distractions.

We can go through our concerns in a number of ways. Some people like to have a list of things to pray for that they can check off as they go. If you find that your mind wanders in prayer, this can give you a concrete "plan" for prayer; you can use it to stay focused but you don't have to stay attached to it. Similarly, in praying for others, Amy Wilcoxson traces people's hands onto a sheet of paper as a physical representation of them to connect to. Some folks like to use the A.C.T.S. acronym. A for adoration (recognize God for who He is), C for confession (recognize ourselves for who we are), T for thanksgiving (what God has done for us), and S for supplication (what we'd like Him to do for us).

Then there is the question of length. Though prayer is a matter of quality, not quantity, I don't think the two can be completely separated. I have found that if you have trouble praying for more than a small amount of time (choose your own standard), three things are helpful in order to increase your prayer stamina—(1) eliminating distractions, (2) committing time/setting a goal, and (3) finding out your particular preferences.

(1) Eliminating distractions is simply a matter of searching for a reliably quiet spot. Be creative (in the dorms, I've found the laundry room, the bathroom, and stairwells to be good spots). (2) Although many people do not function well with a rigid prayer schedule, if you're trying to increase your commitment to prayer, I believe it's a good idea to have both a time set aside for prayer and a goal of how long you want to pray. (3) In order to determine which ways you pray best (are most open, focused, etc.), consider these questions:

1. Do I prefer to pray aloud or silently?
2. Do I prefer to pray outdoors or in?
3. Do I take advantage of both corporate and individual prayer?
4. Do I take time to be silent in His presence?
5. Have I tried writing or singing my prayers?
6. Do I pray all day long as well as at specific times?

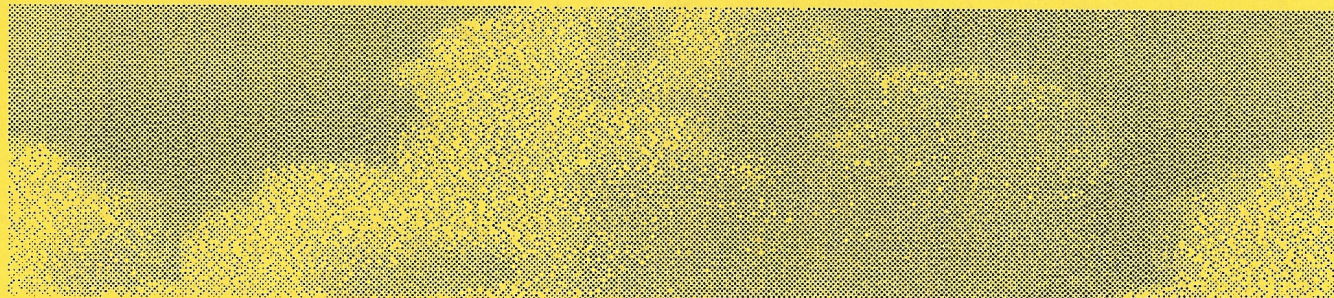
If you've never tried any of the above, you may find it helpful to do so. None of this is scripture, nor should it be taken as such. But I hope you find it helpful to see the many different ways that we may meet God in prayer. You don't need to be familiar with any of the above-mentioned ideas to pray; God can meet anyone in any situation. I hope that you will consider these ideas, but as with other spiritual matters, perseverance and love are of primary importance, not method. Above all, remember that when we pray, we are addressing the Creator of the universe. Think about that.

Peace,

Charlie
Charlie

WEEKLY EVENTS

- MONDAY: **"Ra-Mon-Day"**--Have a free Ramen lunch with friends in the UCM office (306 Constitution Hall). Drop in anytime between 12 and 1:30 PM.
Music Practice--Come to the office at 4 PM to sing, play guitar or just listen as we practice the music for Tuesday's Vespers service
- TUESDAY: **Vespers**--Casual worship service, Upper Lola Tilly Commons, 7:30 PM
- WEDNESDAY: **Bible Questions**--Come help us fill in the gaps in our Bible knowledge and discuss real Christian living. At the office, 5 PM.
- THURSDAY: **Lunch Bunch Bible Study**--Bring your own lunch; we'll bring snacks. 307 Gruening @ 1 PM. This semester we are discussing James.
- SUNDAY: **Leadership**--Open to anyone interested in planning UCM activities. 307 Gruening @ 3 PM.



SPECIAL UPCOMING EVENTS:

GYM NIGHT with Campus Christian Fellowship! Here's a great chance to get some exercise, have a ton of fun, and get to know some of our Christian brothers and sisters on this campus. We'll play basketball, ultimate frisbee, soccer, or whatever. We did this last fall and it was a blast! We'll have two courts in the SRC from 7 to 10 PM on Friday, November 5. Be sure to bring gym clothes, sneakers, and your Polar Express card.

DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING

On **Thursday, November 11**, UCM will hold a day of prayer. You can sign up to be in the office to pray during a half-hour slot (ranging from 7 AM to 7 PM). Concurrently, we will be having a 24-hour fast from dinner on Wednesday to dinner on Thursday. On **Thursday meet in the office at 7 PM** for a short prayer meeting and to go out to dinner at Food Factory.

MONROE HIGH SCHOOL BAZAAR

We will be selling El Salvadoran crafts here to raise money for needy in El Salvador. We need people to help man a table for several two-hour shifts from **10 AM to 4 PM on Saturday, November 13**. Call the office if you'd like to help with this.

CONTRA DANCE

Lotsa fun! Meet at the office on **Saturday, November 20, at 7:45 PM**. If you've never tried it, you definitely should. Here's your chance!

PREPARE FOR THANKSGIVING!

Help buy food and prepare for UCM's Thanksgiving festivities. Many hands make for light labor and a good time, so meet at the office at **6 PM on Wednesday, November 24!**

THANKSGIVING! will be celebrated at the home of the Bonnells. Meet at the UCM office at 12 PM (noon, not midnight) to caravan over to their house. We will give thanks to God, eat, watch football, play football, talk, sing, and who knows what else! Crowding numerous UCMers together along with food always makes for a great (if slightly frightening) time. So, for all of us out-of-towners, celebrate Thanksgiving with your Fairbanks family!

INTERNATIONAL GIFT FESTIVAL BAZAAR *at the fairgrounds*

Again we will be selling El Salvadoran crafts to raise money for El Salvadorans in need, so if you couldn't help at the first bazaar or you thought it was super-groovy, you can volunteer your time for this. We need people to help in shifts from 12 to 4 PM on **Saturday, November 27**.