

Prayer and Meditation

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This column will be shorter than my usual one because I think prayer should be simple. What I learned most about prayer and psychology came from Dr. Sam Menahem from Ft. Lee, New Jersey who was a member of my PhD committee. Sam had written a book entitled, *When Therapy Isn't Enough: The Healing Power of Prayer and Psychotherapy* (1995 -Relaxed Books) on prayer in therapy. I found this book to be very helpful. Most of what I'm going to write today is from what he taught me.

I was raised in a Protestant family by a Catholic mother and a Protestant father. I took two to three years of Catholic instruction and became Catholic in my thirties. I eventually decided religion was not going to be prominent in my life. I just naturally learned more about spirituality. However, in neither religion was I taught how to pray. Clients who have come to me haven't been taught how to pray either. If one of the definitions of prayer is that it is a ritual engaged in as prescribed by a religion, I wonder why people aren't taught how to pray? Or, maybe my clients and I just missed the lesson along the way.

So, for some prayer would be something a religion requires. For others, it's reserved for emergencies – a plea to a higher power, someone or something outside the self. Do you have faith that there is a Higher Power, God or an energy source? This is usually a requirement for prayer - that in your belief system there must be something higher than you are.

It became easier for me to pray once I realized that there isn't only a Higher Power to pray to but that there are my guardian angels, my spiritual guides and my positive ancestors. It made it more friendly somehow that these other three sources can be added as well as a Higher Power.

Some experts say you should have a regular place to pray. Somewhere in your home that is quiet and peaceful. If you're raising kids, that would be either a bathroom or a closet probably. You can also kneel at night at your bedside or go outside for a quiet prayer and meditation if the weather allows.

Sometimes I read inspirational material before I pray. My three favorite books are: *Daily Affirmations for Adult Children of Alcoholics* by Rokelle Lerner (1985) published by Health Communications in Deerfield Beach, Florida. For a bit longer inspiration there's *Streams in the Desert* by L. B. Cowman, Edited by James Reimann (1987) published by Zondervan Publishing House in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And since I've become President of ASCS, there's *Spiritual Insights for Daily Living* by Elizabeth W. Fenske, published by Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship in Independence, Missouri. I understand that inspirational material helps you pray with more feeling which raises your vibration so it's easier for your guides and angels to hear you and for you to hear the messages they may plant in your mind.

I say my name when I begin so "they" know who is speaking to them. When I pray I don't want to appear ungrateful. so I then thank everyone for whatever it is that I'm grateful for at the time – my kids, my grandkids, my job, my house, my support system, etc. etc. This is because I am very grateful for everyone and everything that is in my life and I think I should start off on a positive note.

I then ask "them" to hook up, ground and protect me, which means I am willing to have them and the grace of God come upon me. If I feel there is someone negative in my life causing me problems, I will visualize in my mind that person walking away from me. I visualize me waving goodbye to them and I ask all of "them" to: "Send all deceit and deception back to sender with full knowledge of where it came."

The following are some prayers that my clients and I have found helpful to use in our lives. For simplicity sake, I'll just use God here but you can add anyone else you want to pray to as I do.

A Prayer for Guidance – Dear God, Please give me, (name), the strength and courage to discover the best path for my growth NOW regarding (fill in the blank). Thank you. Amen.

A Prayer for Someone Else – Dear God, This is (name). I am praying for (name). Please give him or her the power and wisdom to do his/her part in solving what problem (and name the problem), connecting his/her will with your will NOW. Amen

A Prayer to be less judgmental – Dear God. Please make me (name), be less judgmental NOW. Amen

A Prayer for Therapy – Dear God, Please give me (name) help to explore my resistances and to discover the root of my problem NOW. Give me (name) the strength to make the needed changes to help all and myself concerning (name the problem) NOW. Amen.

A Prayer for Healing the Planet – Dear God, I (name) pray for this beautiful planet we are all privileged to live on – its lakes and rivers, its oceans and mountains. Please send your energy NOW to heal it and all the peoples who live here. Amen.

Meditation does require you to create a peaceful place somewhere in your house or office. I find it does help to meditate in the same place. Sometimes it's nice to light a candle in this place. I haven't found a special place is necessary for prayer. I pray silently anywhere I am or in the car I've been known to yell out, "Hey Guys (and I name the guys), I need help NOW regarding (name the problem). Amen."

For meditation I like to ring my meditation bell which "takes me into myself." I relax my body starting at my head – relax my jaw line, the area around my eyes and my scalp. I continue down my body as I breathe into the different parts of me ending with all the negative energy leaving through the bottom of my feet.

I concentrate on a mantra which could be something simple like "See God" or just the word "Love." And I keep breathing in and out concentrating on the mantra so my "monkey mind" or words and thoughts do not come in to distract my mind which loves to wander.

I find I meditate best when there is a situation I want to meditate on so my meditation is like a longer and more silent prayer. Usually if I meditate in the morning by the evening or the next day, someone or something will have happened to answer whatever the question was that I was meditating on.

I have never taken the time in life to just sit still and meditate on "nothing" which reminds me of a cartoon of two monks. One of the monks is older and bald. The other one is very young and they are

sitting in the typical Eastern meditation position side by side with their legs folded underneath them. The older monk looks irritated, his brow is furrowed and he says, “Nothing is supposed to happen.”

Whether you pray or meditate or do both, please remember that God is within you and that you have Godly powers. So, please go into the Source and work with it because your thoughts are very real things.