



THAT I MAY
KNOW HIM

PRAYER JOURNAL



THIRD QUARTER 2007

CONTINUING OUR JOURNEY

This four-week prayer journal is the third in a series of prayer journals published by Prestonwood Baptist Church for its members, all with clear intent—to help us establish and continually deepen our personal walk with the Lord.

Our first journal, *Beyond All Limits*, published in the fall of 2006, is considered foundational to helping establish a consistent and effective prayer life and a deeper personal relationship with the Lord. The second, *After God's Heart*, published in the spring of 2007, focuses on the Psalms of David as illustration of a life lived in personal intimacy with God—the life that is open to us all.

In this, our third journal, *That I May Know Him*, we turn to the life of the Apostle Paul as our example of one who not only lived in a deep, personal relationship with Christ, but who wanted that desperately for all believers. Paul prayed to that end, and in this journal we reflect on the meaning of his prayers and adopt them as our own.

Copies of all three prayer journals are available in the Prayer Booth on Main Street, or through the Prestonwood Prayer Ministry (972-820-5302). The foundational journal, *Beyond All Limits*, is also available to those who go through the NextStep class.

The Prestonwood Prayer Journals are intended to help us personally draw closer to our Lord, learning to discern His voice when He speaks to our hearts. They provide a simple journaling technique that requires but a few words to capture meaningful moments from our quiet times. May knowing Him be our goal.

T H A T I M A Y

K N O W H I M

“...that I may know Him...” (Philippians 3:10a)

PRAYER JOURNAL  THIRD QUARTER 2007

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PrayerPower Ministries

1-800-949-PRAY | prayerpower@learntoprayer.org | www.learntoprayer.org

INTRODUCTION

That I May Know Him

The Apostle Paul, a man of prayer

The Apostle Paul was always and essentially a man of prayer, as we see throughout his letters:

“I have never stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers” (Ephesians 1:16–17);

“I thank my God every time I remember you [and] in all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy . . .” (Philippians 1:3–4);

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you” (Colossians 1:9).

This great man of God not only shows the depth and sincerity of his own prayer life; the prayers in his letters reveal his deep love for and commitment to the believers for whom he lived and labored.

We’re blessed that Paul’s prayers are available to us today because they so beautifully reflect his understanding of the spiritual equipping we need if we are to live the life he was anointed to teach. We should study the prayers of his letters as carefully as we study the doctrines. We have them not only as the meaningful prayers of a mature Christian, but as prayers with practical application for our lives today.

Paul wants us to live as mature believers

Paul was a man among men, one who lived a life so surrendered to God, that he could declare, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). He knew first-hand what it means to live a Spirit-filled life of service and commitment to the Lord. He also knew that the life he was experiencing, the life he was doing his best to explain in his letters, is open to all believers. Yet throughout Paul’s letters there is a thread of frustration—at times exasperation—that many believers don’t understand or experience the same fullness of life, and often don’t seem to care.

So Paul took his concerns to God. As we carefully consider his prayers, we’ll see in them the quality of spiritual life that is available to us all, the

growth and maturity that we should be asking God for ourselves and our loved ones. Ask, as you move through the journal, is Paul praying for things that are God’s will for any believer’s life? For my life?

The secret of Paul’s life

As we look carefully at his prayers in the pages of this Journal, let’s keep Paul’s strongest passion in mind: “. . .that I may know Him [Jesus Christ] . . .” (Philippians 3:10). The depth of his desire is beautifully expressed in the *Amplified Bible*:

[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly] . . . (Philippians 3:10a, *AMP*)

Paul’s deep and intimate relationship with Christ is open to all who receive the Savior, but there is more to it than being born again. Paul made it his *determined purpose*, acknowledging that it was a progressive relationship that was his responsibility to maintain, as it is ours.

Embracing Paul’s prayers as our own

Paul’s prayers are as valid for us today as they were for the early church. Though the circumstances of our lives—and the technologies that affect us—are different, we deal with the same human issues today. Let us, then, not simply study Paul’s prayers, but use them as prayers for ourselves and our loved ones. This Journal will help us make that a regular part of our prayer life.

And for yourself: let these prayers serve as a measure of your own personal spiritual maturity, and lead you to a new and vital determination to know your Lord better, and to surrender to Him more completely, that He may live His life through you. Your personal relationship with Christ is an evolving one, with always more to come. So wherever you are now in your relationship with Christ, make it your purpose to go deeper. He is ready to help.

Father, show me the way to go deeper with Christ. . .

Journaling Briefly—and Effectively

The purpose of journaling is to capture what you sense God is speaking to your heart, meaningful moments that can be noted in very few words.

This particular format doesn't require writing skill or eloquent language. It's designed to save you time and to make it easy to scan at a later time and find things you've written; this is especially important when you're trying to discern God's direction or will. It will help you clarify for yourself when God is speaking (not audibly, but through impressions of your heart as you are reading His Word).

Although this journal has 30 devotional/journaling pages, one for each day of a month, you need not journal that often on a continuing basis. What is important is that on the days when God has a word for you, you have a way to quickly and effectively note it, even with only partial sentences. Try it over the coming weeks and prove to yourself what a personal blessing such journaling can be.

Sample Journaling Page

Date: (today's date)

Scripture or quote: *(In this booklet you'll find Scriptures already selected for you, but you would normally copy whatever verse had impressed you from your daily Bible reading (see page 35):*

"He did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything." (Mark 4:34)

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

He spoke to His disciples, and through my heart, He'll speak to me.

My prayer response:

Help me to know when You are speaking to my heart.

My impression of what God wants me to do:

Believe that He will, especially when I'm in the Word. I need to be in the Word!

BLESSED BE GOD

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...
I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers...."
(Ephesians 1:3, 16)

After opening his letter to the Ephesians with praise that he couldn't seem to contain—Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!—the Apostle Paul sets before them the spiritual blessings that are already theirs (Ephesians 1:1–3). Then, in light of these blessings and the instruction he's about to give them in his letter, he takes a moment to let them know that he has been praying for them, thanking God for the beginning steps of spiritual growth and maturity he has seen—their faith and their love for one another.

Paul approaches prayer in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving (Psalm 100:4), recording it in his letter not only as an encouragement to them, but as an example for their own prayer lives. Let it be an example to us as well.

Reflect upon your prayers of the past few days. How have you entered into God's presence?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

I KEEP ASKING

“I keep asking that....”
(Ephesians 1:17a)

Paul was adamant about the need for the specific things for which he was about to pray, “I keep asking that....” We must keep in mind that he was praying for Christians, for those who had been given every spiritual blessing in Christ, who were adopted as children of God—redeemed, forgiven, sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:3–14). He has just thanked God for their faith in Christ and love for all the saints (Ephesians 1:15–17). He was grateful for all these things, but he wanted even more for them and he was about to ask God to bring them even further in their spiritual walk.

So it is with each of Paul’s prayers. He prays for believers, asking for continuing spiritual progress, prayers that are appropriate no matter what the level of present spiritual maturity. Let us not only pray them for ourselves, but hold up each request as a measure of our present walk, asking—how far have I come? What more do I need?

Father, in what ways are You pleased with my spiritual progress?...

Where do I most need to grow?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

FATHER OF GLORY

“I keep asking that...the God of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the Father of glory....”
(Ephesians 1:16–17a)

As the Apostle Paul continues in his prayer, he clearly is in an attitude of praise and thanksgiving, and pauses to again turn his thoughts to God. He doesn’t rush into his prayer, but pauses to reflect on the One to whom he is about to speak. In a spirit of worship, Paul honors God by acknowledging who He is: the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory.

Do we ever find ourselves hurrying into God’s presence, short of time, eager to get on with our day? How easy it is to begin our prayers with a quick, “Father, help me...” or “Father, they need....” Perhaps on those occasions we can learn from Paul that we can worship and honor God with very few, yet well-chosen words.

Pause to worship Him now....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

THAT WE MAY KNOW HIM

“...may [God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ] give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”
(Ephesians 1:17, *NIV*)

Knowing Christ was one of the driving forces of Paul’s life (Philippians 3:10a). We know from the language he used that he meant *knowing* God *personally*, not simply having an intellectual understanding. He was referring to a continuing personal relationship, one that grows deeper and progressively more intimate. Jesus indicated that this relationship is the very essence of our Christian walk: “And this is eternal life, that they may *know* you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3, italics added).

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he encouraged him to take hold of the eternal life to which he had been called (1 Timothy 6:12), as he might well be encouraging us today. Paul wanted more than salvation for us; he wanted us to know and walk with Christ.

Pause to reflect, how well do you sense that you know the Lord personally today?...

Tell Him how you feel about that relationship....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

THAT WE MAY KNOW HIS POWER

“I pray also...that you may know the hope to which he has called you... his glorious inheritance...and incomparably great power for us who believe.”
(Ephesians 1:18, *NIV*)

Paul’s prayer seems bordering on frustration that God’s people are failing to grasp the fullness of the life that is theirs—theirs—in Christ. He seems to be praying, “God, show them! Help them to understand the glorious inheritance that is theirs because they’ve given their lives to Christ. Help them to comprehend that Your incredible power, the power that raised Jesus from the dead (verse 20), is available to them!”

Have we fully understood this? Paul wants us to because he knows if we ever really grasp the truth of our inheritance as saints, we’ll begin to understand and accept that it’s ours. Only then will we ask for this power, and it will be released in our lives—not as a lightning bolt, but as the steady, certain power of electric current, there when we need it.

In what ways have you sensed God’s power at work in your life?...

Where do you need it most right now?... Ask Him for it....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

MIGHTY INNER STRENGTH

“I pray that...he will give you mighty inner strength
through his Holy Spirit.”
(Ephesians 3:16, *NLT*)

This, then, is where the power comes from—the Holy Spirit who lives in us, ready to give us the inner strength we need to live the life that we should. We need inner strength to grow and change, to put off the old nature and put on the new, to resist sin and turn from it. We need inner strength to persevere in faith and develop fundamental disciplines such as daily prayer and Bible study.

But do we ask for it? Perhaps the more difficult question is, do we want it or are we satisfied to live without it, trying to change in our own strength? Paul knew first-hand of the struggles we would face (Romans 7:19), and he wanted nothing to interfere in our living out our new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Knowing we need God’s help, Paul prayed for it. May his prayer prompt us to do the same.

In what ways do you need the Spirit’s inner strength today?...

Ask God for what you need

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

CHRIST IN YOUR HEART

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you...
so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith....”
(Ephesians 3:17, *NIV*)

Paul’s prayer reveals why inner strength is so important—so that Christ will dwell in our hearts, settle in and be comfortably at home. Paul knew this reality—“I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20)—and he wanted that experience for us, a life so surrendered that Christ’s life in us becomes our daily reality (Romans 12:1).

This is a gradual process that we can accelerate or slow down. The more we read and absorb the Scriptures, the more we’ll think like Christ. The more we pray, the better we’ll know our Shepherd (John 4:10) and the more clearly we’ll hear His voice (John 4:3–4). The more we put off the old and put on the new, the more like Christ we’ll become (Ephesians 4:22–24). Paul prayed for us because he knew we could never live such a life on our own.

In what ways do you sense Christ living His life through you today?...

How is it obvious to you? Where might it be missing?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

ROOTED AND ESTABLISHED IN LOVE

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power...
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ...”
(Ephesians 3:17b–18, *NIV*)

Help them to stand firm, Paul prayed, and keep them nourished by Christ’s love. He wanted us to be unshakable, certain that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35–38). Paul prayed that through the power of the Spirit we might begin to grasp the height and depth, width and length of Christ’s love. Though we live in its reality, how can we ever fully understand the love of Christ who loves us *as the Father loves Him* (John 15:9a)?

Linger over this thought. Ask yourself what such perfect love must be like. Paul understood this love, and he never lost his amazement of it—Christ’s love was the compelling force of his life (2 Corinthians 5:14). Is it of yours?

Ask yourself, to what degree am I motivated by the love of Christ?...

In what ways is it obvious to others?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

TO EXPERIENCE THIS LOVE

“[That you may really come] to know
[practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ,
which far surpasses mere knowledge....”
(Ephesians 3:19a, *AMP*; italics added)

Understanding the concept of Christ’s love isn’t enough for the Apostle Paul—he wants us to experience the amazing love that took Christ to the cross. He is asking that we’ll be given a sensitivity to see and experience the practical expressions of Christ’s love that help make Him real to us.

Ask yourself, what does Christ’s love look like in my life today? Is He giving you peace under fire, joy in grief, the right words in difficult situations? Has He answered prayers, even seemingly small ones others often call “coincidence” or “serendipity?” We each experience Christ’s love uniquely, just as He relates to us uniquely. That’s the joy of having a personal relationship with Him, and Paul doesn’t want us to miss that.

Reflect over the last few days. Ask Christ to reveal the loving things He has done for you, and thank Him for it....

Ask Him to make His love more real to you than it’s ever been....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

FILLED WITH THE FULLNESS OF GOD

“...that you may be filled to the measure of all of the fullness of God.”
(Ephesians 3:19b, *NIV*)

Paul is praying for believers, those who already have been given the Holy Spirit to live within (John 14:15–17). But he wants more for us than the Spirit’s presence—he wants Him to fill us completely with all that He is. Do we really grasp his meaning? Do we consider what our lives would be like if it were true?

When Paul prays this for us, it’s with the understanding that we have our own responsibility in living such a life (Ephesians 5:18)—we must be completely surrendered to Christ (Romans 12:1). We can’t be filled with the fullness of God, if we are full of self. Paul doesn’t spell that out in his prayer because he doesn’t have to; he knows that as God answers, He will make sure we are living the surrendered life. The fullness follows the surrender.

In what ways do you sense God’s fullness in your life today?...

Where do you sense it is missing?... Pray about these things....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

OVERFLOWING LOVE

“I pray that your love for each other
will overflow more and more....”
(Philippians 1:9, *NLT*)

As Paul begins his prayer for the Philippians, the image here is of a river overflowing its banks. He wants us to have so much love for each other that our hearts cannot contain it. He speaks of perfect *agape* love, the love that Christ wants us to have for each other (John 13:34). If Christ commands it and Paul prayed for it, shouldn’t this *agape* love be evident in our relationships? *All* our relationships?

On our own we’re not able to love others perfectly, but the Spirit within us can and will (Romans 5:5b), if He’s not quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The Spirit is making us like Christ (Galatians 4:19), producing His fruit, the character of Christ, in us, and the preeminent fruit is *agape* love (Galatians 5:22). The Spirit is meant to flow from us as rivers of living water (John 7:38), pouring forth Christ’s love. Do you see this happening in your life and relationships?

Father, what do You see in me?

Show me where Christ’s love overflows from my heart.... And where it doesn’t....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

GROWING IN SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

“...and at the same time keep on growing in spiritual knowledge and insight....”
(Philippians 1:10, *TLB*)

Paul’s prayer for the Philippians begins with overflowing *agape* love—and now, keep growing spiritually. What all-encompassing prayers! We know how important this is for Paul, for he admonishes believers who are not growing spiritually, comparing them to babes so immature they can only have milk, not solid food (1 Corinthians 3:2).

Here, Paul prays that we’ll keep growing in spiritual knowledge and insight, choosing words that mean having the fullest possible knowledge, an increasingly more complete knowledge. It’s not intellectual understanding he asks for us, but bold application of the truth, as we can see it applied in his life. Have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), he said. Set your mind on what the Spirit desires (Romans 8:5), let your mind be controlled by the Spirit (verse 6). This is where our growing insight comes from, the discernment that guides us to make right choices.

Father, show me where I’m applying the spiritual truths I’ve learned....

And where I’m not....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

BE PURE AND BLAMELESS

“For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until Christ returns.”
(Philippians 1:10, *NLT*)

Paul prays for our continued spiritual growth because he wants us to be able to weigh the choices we make, not only between good and bad, but between good and best, in the context of Scripture and the life we’re to live in Christ. He wants us to understand what *really* matters. If we lack such discernment, how can we live pure and blameless lives? We must be able to understand more than what is obvious in worldly terms, if we’re to apply the truth of Scripture with full understanding.

When Paul prayed for us to be pure, the original language he used refers to being *genuine*, the real thing. He doesn’t want us to be those who have only the appearance of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5), but who are genuinely pursuing righteousness (2 Timothy 2:22).

Father, hold my life up to the light and show me anything I need to see....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

FILLED WITH THE FRUIT

“...[and be] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”
(Philippians 1:11)

Paul concludes his prayer for the Philippians, after praying for their overflowing love, continued spiritual growth, and genuine walk, asking that they’ll be filled with the fruit of righteousness—right thinking and right living.

We praise God for our righteousness by faith (Romans 1:17), which comes to us through Christ, but we are also told to pursue righteousness (1 Timothy 6:11). This is a matter of our character and the daily choices we make. Paul wants those choices to be guided by the filling of righteousness that comes when we are filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) and the fruit that He produces in us (Galatians 5:22–23). Our part is to be intentional in our spiritual disciplines such as Bible study (Colossians 3:16) and prayer (Matthew 6:9–13). We may, if we choose, remain shallow and unproductive, but Paul’s prayer is for something much better—that we live with purpose, for the glory of God.

Father in what ways is my life bringing You glory?...

Where am I falling short?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

ASKING TO KNOW GOD’S WILL

“...asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will....”
(Colossians 1:9, *NLT*)

Now Paul is praying for the Colossians and for us, as believers, wanting us to be completely filled with the knowledge of God’s will, the way a net is so full of fish it’s about to burst. He asks not for a one-time filling, but for continual growth in understanding of the will of God.

Paul asks God to help us, but he also acknowledges that we have a responsibility. He admonishes believers not to be foolish, but to understand what the Lord’s will is (Ephesians 5:17). This implies effort on our part, effort most effectively applied in studying God’s Word, where we find His general will for all of us. We’re to be immersed in the Bible, because the more we’re in the Word, the better we understand His will. We begin to think biblically, and God’s will becomes the mindset that governs our choices and lights our path (Psalm 115:105).

Father, help me find the time and energy I need to study Your Word....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

APPLYING SPIRITUAL WISDOM

“...and we ask him to make you wise with spiritual wisdom.”
(Colossians 1:9b, *NLT*)

Wisdom is the application of knowledge, and in the Christian life, the two must go hand in hand. What good does it do for any of us to be filled with the knowledge of God’s will if we don’t know how to apply it to our lives?

This is what Paul wants, for us to be wise with spiritual wisdom. The Holy Spirit is our Counselor (John 14:15–17), the One who teaches us all things (John 14:26). We’re to be led by, live by and keep in step with the Spirit (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:25), and let Him control our minds (Romans 8:5). If He is this much a part of our lives, we cannot fail to apply God’s truth—standing firm in the will of God (Colossians 4:2), doing His will from our hearts (Ephesians 6:6). None of us would say we’re there yet, but where are we on the journey? How much progress have we made?

Father, how far have I come in walking with the Spirit? . . .

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

WALKING WORTHY OF THE LORD

“...so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord...”
(Colossians 1:10a)

Paul has prayed that we’ll live with full knowledge of God’s will, applying it to our lives with the Spirit’s wisdom—and here’s why. He wants us to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Knowing how to walk worthy of the Lord, living to honor Him, is no mystery for us, because Paul’s letters are full of instruction. We soon realize that such a life is impossible to live on our own; we must have God’s help.

And that is exactly what Paul is asking for in each of his prayers. These prayers are strong and appropriate for us today, because he asks for the very things he knows we’ll need in order to live the life he describes. He never tires of praying that God will keep us growing and maturing in our walk; he is relentless, wanting nothing less than perfection for us. To this end, he struggled and labored in God’s power (Colossians 1:28–29). Are we determined—committed—to live the life for which he prayed?

Father, how would You describe my determination?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

FULLY PLEASING THE LORD

“...so as to walk in a manner worthy
of the Lord, fully pleasing to him....”
(Colossians 1:10b)

Since Paul has already asked for God to help us have a complete understanding of His will so that we’ll walk worthy of the Lord, why would he add another request, that we will fully please Him? Is it possible to understand and live according to His will and not please Him? Perhaps he had our attitudes in mind, knowing God understands what is in our hearts (1 Samuel 16:17). Is our desire to please Him an expression of love (John 14:21) or legalism (Galatians 3:1–5)? He wants us to please God in every way.

The blessing is that we don’t have to do this in our own strength. In his letters, Paul explains that it’s God who works in us, giving us the desire to obey Him and the power to do what pleases Him (Philippians 2:13, *NLT*). Our part is to surrender, so that He can.

Father, that’s the hard part, to surrender. Show me where I need Your help....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

BEARING FRUIT

“...so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him,
bearing fruit in every good work....”
(Colossians 1:10)

Here, Paul prays for fruit “in every good work.” Is it possible to do good works that don’t bear fruit? Of course it is, especially since Jesus made it clear that we’re to bear fruit that will last (John 15:16). Apart from the Word of God (Psalm 119:52), what in this life will last forever? Believers! (John 11:25–26).

Our “good work” has no impact on lives for Christ apart from our prayers and witness; without these, it’s simply a matter of doing good deeds. We can change that by praying for the people we serve, and bearing witness as we have opportunity. Lasting fruit isn’t produced overnight—some break up the ground, others plant the seed, tend the crop, or bring in the harvest. We all have a role to play. Shouldn’t every good thing that we do fit somewhere into this process that bears lasting fruit?

Father, show me the ways in which I’m presently bearing fruit....

How can I be more effective?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

KNOWING GOD BETTER

“All the while, you will learn to know God better and better.”
(Colossians 1:10b, *NLT*)

This is the second prayer in which we find Paul’s theme of knowing God personally. He keeps stressing that he wants us to know God better and better, always wanting more, deeper, richer experiences with Him. The fact that Paul is adamant in praying for this shows clearly that such a relationship doesn’t just happen when we are born again (John 3:3, 5). As in any other relationship, we must do our part. We must be willing to devote time and attention to spending time with God (Matthew 6:6).

Perhaps an even more foundational truth is that we must, in our heart of hearts, genuinely believe that we *can* know God personally, that we can live in intimacy with Him (1 John 1:3). As we grasp this truth and begin to pray as Paul prays, God will help us to do whatever it takes to establish and maintain the relationship with Him—the relationship we were created to enjoy.

Father, show me anything that is standing in the way of my knowing You better than I ever have....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

STRENGTHENED FOR PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE

“We also pray that you will be strengthened with his glorious power so that you will have all the patience and endurance you need....”
(Colossians 1:11, *NLT*)

Endurance and patience are things some of us hesitate to ask for, out of concern we’ll be put to the test. But trials and tests will come into our lives anyway. Why not pray as Paul prayed, to be strengthened with God’s power as a constant in our lives to be available as we need it?

Paul wants us to stay in shape spiritually so that we can press on (Philippians 3:14), run the race (1 Corinthians 9:24), make every effort (Ephesians 4:3), stand firm (1 Thessalonians 3:8). Paul wants us to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power (Ephesians 6:10), ready for anything. He knows that in our weakness, God will be our strength (2 Corinthians 9:12). Are you as confident as he was? If not, could it be that you’ve been facing challenges in your own strength?

Father, when do I best count on Your strength?...

When do I not?....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

STRENGTHENED TO GIVE THANKS

“May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God’s holy people....”

(Colossians 11–12, *NLT*)

As we grow in the spiritual understanding that Paul asked for us at the beginning of his prayer (Colossians 1:9b), we will increasingly become aware of our inheritance as co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). This should fill us to overflowing with joy as we begin to grasp what it means that we are now in Christ—among other things:

recipients of God’s grace (2 Timothy 1:9),
 forgiven (Ephesians 4:32),
 chosen, redeemed, and holy in God’s sight (Ephesians 1:7, 4),
 reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:19),
 new creations; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17).

None of us can fully express the joy and thanksgiving here on earth that we’ll know in heaven, but shouldn’t we try?

When was the last time you thanked God for your salvation?...

Thank Him now....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF LIGHT

“...always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God’s holy people, who live in the light.”

(Colossians 1:12, *NLT*)

Paul completes his thought with this: “For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son....” (Colossians 1:13–14). Paul wants there to be no doubt in any of our minds that we were in the kingdom of darkness before God rescued us and brought us into the kingdom of light. This is how Paul described his own ministry, saying the Lord sent him to the Gentiles to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17–18, *NLT*).

Do we fully realize this truth? Or do some of us think we were once in a neutral zone, somewhere between darkness and light, until we chose the light? Does it make a difference in the way we pray for the lost?

Is praying for the lost a priority in your prayer life? Ask God what He thinks....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

ABOUNDING IN LOVE

“And may the Lord make your love grow and overflow to each other and to everyone else...”
(1 Thessalonians 3:12, *NLT*)

A bounding, overflowing love is again on Paul’s heart, this time as he prays for the Thessalonians. He asks God to increase our *agape* love for one another and for *everyone else*. It is His love, the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) that enables us to love our enemies (Luke 6:35). *Agape* love is patient and kind, does not envy or boast, is not arrogant or rude; irritable or resentful; it does not insist on its own way (1 Corinthians 13:4–5).

In other words, *agape* love is beyond our human ability and must come from the Spirit (Colossians 1:8). Such love is a choice, not an emotion—an act of our will, an intentional yielding to the Spirit. This is the love that fuels our prayers so that we are willing to sacrifice time and energy, praying for both the lost (Romans 10:1) and the saved (Ephesians 6:18), the lovable and those who are not (Matthew 5:45).

Father, in what ways are my prayers strengthened by Your love?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

HEARTS STRONG AND BLAMELESS

“As a result [of your love growing], Christ will make your hearts strong, blameless, and holy when you stand before God...”
(1 Thessalonians 3:12–13, *NLT*)

Paul doesn’t want us to be complacent or satisfied with where we are spiritually: “...brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we...urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Paul was pleased with their progress, yet still prayed earnestly, asking God to help them love even more, and to be strong, blameless, and holy. He was asking God to make it happen, but the unspoken part of his request is that they will be wholly available to Him—living surrendered lives unhindered by unconfessed sin.

Do you see the economy in Paul’s prayers? He always asked for hugely important things with very few words, prayers that reflected God’s will, that have inherent in the request whatever it will take to make it happen. Paul didn’t suggest how God should go about it, he left that to Him.

Father, what can I learn from Paul’s prayers?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

COUNTED WORTHY OF GOD'S CALLING

“...we pray for you all the time...that our God will make you fit for what he's called you to be, pray that he'll fill your good ideas and acts of faith with his own energy so that it all amounts to something.”
(2 Thessalonians 1:11–12, *Msg.*)

In Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians he prays first that God will make them fit for what He's called them to *be*. Only then does he pray about the things they *do*. We must never lose sight of the fact that the call on our lives is to God through Christ, to live in fellowship with Him (John 17:3), and to live as citizens of His kingdom (Ephesians 2:19). As servants of our King, we may be given many different assignments over a lifetime—but our irrevocable call (Romans 11:29) is to Him.

We mustn't get so busy serving that we have no time for the spiritual disciplines to maintain our relationship with Him, and to develop our character and prepare for the assignments He may have in mind. First, we're to *be*.

Father, am I more focused on being?... Or, doing?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

GLORIFYING THE NAME OF JESUS

“We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
(2 Thessalonians 1:12)

We read this verse and can't help holding our lives up to its light. Is the Lord Jesus' name glorified—honored—in our lives? Paul has just asked God to make us fit for what He has called us to be, and this verse gives us a standard against which to measure how far we've come.

Paul wants everything we do—living for Christ, working for Him—to glorify His name. We are His, and we represent Him; apart from the Bible, Christ in us is the only Christ anyone sees. When unbelievers look at us, Paul wants them to see Christ and the difference He is making in our lives, how His life and character are being revealed. This is equally true for us today—His name, His reputation, depend upon us. What do others see?

Father, what do You see? Is Christ evident in my life?...

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

DOING WHAT IS RIGHT

“We pray to God that you will not do anything wrong.
We pray this, not to show that our ministry to you has been successful,
but because we want you to do right....”
(2 Corinthians 13:7, *NLT*)

Paul’s other prayers have all been for spiritual growth and maturity, but in this prayer we see that *not doing anything wrong* is essential to our maturing in Christ. Paul doesn’t belabor the point, listing all the wrong things he wants God to protect them from or keep them from doing. He simply says keep them from doing anything wrong and help them to do what is right. Brief and direct, yet this is a prayer which is essential for maintaining a personal relationship with God. The person who is repeatedly doing something wrong is unable to live in the close, *koinonia* fellowship with God that Paul wants for us.

This prayer, in its simplicity, is one that can be easily taught to the youngest children to pray every day. Perhaps we should pray it, too.

Father, show me where I need such a prayer for my life....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

ACTIVELY SHARING OUR FAITH

“I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith....”
(Philemon 6)

This prayer the Apostle prayed for Philemon is surely his prayer for all of us—we must be active in sharing our faith, as Paul explained in Romans:

For “anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?...” (Romans 10:13–14, *NLT*)

We’re not only to share the Good News of the Gospel; we are to pray for the lost, for God wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:1–6). If you pray, God will provide the opportunity for you to share, simply and effectively. Your most powerful witness is simply to tell them about your new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)—before, I was...and now...!

Father, what are the most important things that I should share?...

And with whom?

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

FILLING UP OUR FAITH

“Night and day we pray earnestly for you, asking God to let us see you again to fill up anything that may still be missing in your faith.”
(1 Thessalonians 3:10, *NLT*)

Paul’s passion for discipleship is evident throughout his letters, and he prayed much that believers would grow in the Lord. In fact, prayer was very much a part of Paul’s life. When he taught that we should pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and pray always for all of the saints (Ephesians 6:18) he was teaching from his own experience.

We find many descriptions of Paul’s prayer life in his letters in addition to this one, such as “in all my prayers for all of you” (Philippians 1:4), “we constantly pray for you” (2 Thessalonians 1:11), “we have not stopped praying for you” (Colossians 1:9), “we thank God continually” (1 Thessalonians 2:12). And every example of what Paul prayed had to do with being “filled up,” reaching the highest levels of spiritual growth and maturity. “Imitate me,” he said (1 Corinthians 4:16). And so we should.

Where do you need God’s help most with your prayer life?...

Ask Him for it....

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

My prayer response:

My impression of what God wants me to do:

A Prayer, from the Prayers of Paul

Father,

May the Spirit of wisdom and revelation help us to know You in a deeply personal way. Enlighten our hearts so that we can understand the hope to which You have called us, the amazing riches of our inheritance in Christ. Help us to experience the tremendous power that is available to each of us, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. (Ephesians 1:17–19)

May Your Spirit give us inner strength to live with clean hearts so that Christ will be at home in our hearts. Keep us rooted and grounded in His love that’s truly beyond our understanding. Fill us to the measure with Your fullness! (Ephesians 3:16–19, *TLB*)

May we overflow with love for one another, and keep us growing in spiritual knowledge and insight. Help us to live pure and blameless lives, filled with the fruit of righteousness and the knowledge of Your will, that we may live worthy of the Lord, pleasing Him in every way. (Philippians 1:9–11; Colossians 1:10b–12)

Help us to bear fruit in every good work, and keep growing in our knowledge of You. Strengthen us with Your power for endurance and patience, and help us to always give thanks to You for everything, especially the spiritual blessings that are ours. (Colossians 1:10b–12)

May we always do what is right; keep us from doing anything wrong. Give us the courage and opportunity to share our faith. (2 Corinthians 13:7; Philemon 6)

May the love we have for each other—and everyone else—keep increasing. Strengthen our hearts so we’ll be holy and blameless in Your presence, living so that You may count us worthy of our calling. Fulfill every good purpose of ours and every act prompted by our faith—that we may glorify the Lord in all that we are and all that we do. (1 Thessalonians 1:12–13; 2 Thessalonians 2:11–12)

May knowing Him be the passion of our lives. (Philippians 3:10)

In Jesus’ name, amen.

Journaling for a Lifetime

Once you have completed this Prayer Journal, *That I May Know Him*, our prayer is that you will want to continue journaling with this format, or another that may work better for you. The important thing is not which format you follow, but that you find a way to note what you feel God is impressing on your heart so that you can keep it and refer to it in the future.

You don't have to journal every day—

Simply journal when you have sensed a clear impression from the Lord. You may find yourself journaling several days in a row, and then perhaps only once or twice a week for a period of time. The important thing is not to give it up!

This format works in any kind of notebook or journal—

You can use a simple spiral notebook, limiting each day's comments to one page, following the same pattern we've used in this journal: record the verse of Scripture, then answer the three prompts used in this journal. Remember that you can keep an effective record with very few words.

Sample Journaling Page

Date: (today's date)

Scripture or quote (Record the Scripture verse that impressed you from your daily Bible reading):

God is faithful! (1 Cor. 1:9)

What do I sense God has spoken (silently) to my heart?

He wants me to let go of my fears. He is not going to let me down!

My prayer response:

*It's true, Lord, I've been really worried.
Forgive me for my lack of faith.*

My impression of what God wants me to do:

Trust Him. Really trust Him. Know that He loves me.

Are You a Child of God?

This is a question that is easy to answer—if you aren't sure—by Scriptures that reveal this truth:

- Have you believed in Christ, trusting Him, relying on Him for everything? Have you received Christ into Your heart and life? (John 1:12)
- Have you become a new creation in Christ? Have you changed—desiring to turn away from sin, to spend time in God's Word, to live the life His children are called to live? (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Do you know Christ through personal experience? (Matthew 7:21–23)
- Have you believed in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and spoken with your mouth that Jesus is Lord? (Romans 10:9)
- Have you repented—turning away from sin, desiring to live an obedient life? (Luke 13:3, 5)

If these things don't seem real in your life, and you want them to be, speak to a pastor or godly friend—or pray a prayer like this:

“God, I believe Jesus is Your Son, and I now receive Him into my heart, my life. I believe that He died for my sins, that He was buried and raised again to new life. I confess that I have sinned against You, and I'm sorry. Forgive me, and help me to turn away from sin in Your strength. I acknowledge Jesus as my Savior and my Lord, and I pray in His name—amen.”





Prestonwood

Prestonwood Baptist Church | Dr. Jack Graham, Pastor
6801 W. Park Blvd. | Plano, Texas 75093