

The following is an excerpt from the article: "10 Ways to Improve Your Prayer Life" written by Susan Hogan at www.umc.org

"We forget to intentionally make space for prayer," said Betty Kay Hudson of First United Methodist Church in Lancaster, S.C.

That's not the way it's supposed to be. Souls, like vines, tend to grow wild and weak when untended.

No matter the season on the church calendar - Advent, Lent, Easter, Pentecost -- or all of the times in between, prayer is the gasoline that fuels Christians.

"Prayer is the catalyst," says the Rev. Jeffrey Kersey, a United Methodist minister in Lexington, S.C.

Prayer, like tennis, takes practice to become accomplished. Spiritual guides and sages, pastors and other church members are filled with advice and counsel.

Here's some of that wisdom condensed into 10 tips about prayer:

You are worthy.

Do not feel guilty about the quality of your prayer life, or fall victim to doubts and despair about your worthiness to talk to God. Each of us has a spiritual gift. So remember John Wesley's words: "In Christ we gain more than in Adam we lost."

The more you pray, the richer your prayers become.

To deepen your prayer life, don't be a slacker. Like anything in life, to become good at prayer you must be disciplined. Just as running is an exercise in physical fitness, prayer is a spiritual discipline.

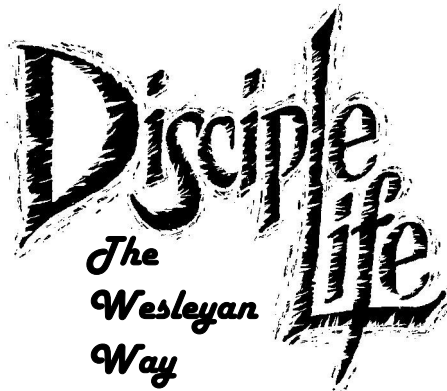
Prayer is active.

Prayer involves action; namely being attentive to God's voice in your life. Listening for God means stopping and sitting still. It means paying attention to what God may be saying to you at any point in your life.

Prayer should not be an afterthought.

Prayer was the backbone of Jesus' ministry. Often, he broke away from his disciples to spend time with God. In the same way, prayer is essential to individual lives and to the life of the church. Break away from your daily routine for quiet time in prayer.

Surround yourself with people who are seasoned at praying.



Week # 25



**Start the Conversation:
Provoke One Another in Love**

PROVOKING QUESTION:

This week, you are encouraged to ask a church member the following:

**What scares you most about prayer?
What hinders you from praying on a regular basis?**

People who've established prayer routines have much to teach those wanting to draw closer to God. Seek out those who can help guide and encourage your prayer life.

God doesn't require eloquence.

Don't worry if you fumble for words when you pray. God is not looking for Toastmaster's graduates, but sincerity (not that you can't have both at once). If the words won't come, God still knows what's in your heart. Lift up that desire.

Prayer need not involve words.

The great Christian saints all write of prayer as a time of sitting quietly with God. Jesus even went off for 40 days of prayerful solitude. Take a deep breath. Exhale. Follow the breath as it flows in and out of your body. Think of it as the spirit of God breathing life into you.

Prayer is a time for conversation with a friend: God.

Whether you see that friend routinely or just every once in awhile, know that whenever you turn to God, you're turning to someone who loves you.

Ask God for help if you get stuck.

Maybe you've hit a dry spell. There's no shame in asking God to guide you to pray in a new way.

The three Ls of prayer: Listen, listen, listen.

Listening for God is central to prayer, according to the great saints. It's so critical that St. Benedict began his famous Rule with this command for monks: "Listen with the ear of your heart."

And remember, prayer can happen anywhere -- it doesn't have to take place in a church."

Carry the cross  and follow me.
Luke 14:27, NRSV