

CHRYSTAL EVANS HURST

THE 28-DAY

Prayer

JOURNEY

ENJOYING DEEPER
CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD

STUDY GUIDE | FIVE SESSIONS

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28-Day Prayer Journey Study Guide

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A WORD FROM CHRYSTAL EVANS HURST

Have you ever wanted to deepen your prayer life and be more consistent in your conversation with God? I've been there too. A few years ago, I was really struggling with my prayer life. I felt guilty about a lack of consistent and fervent prayer. That's when I decided to challenge myself with 28-day prayer prompts for accountability. And then I opened the challenge to my closest friends as well as my online community. Much to my surprise, I actually finished the challenge and invigorated my prayer life in doing so. Those who joined me for that first 28-day challenge said the same thing. After doing this challenge a few times, I discovered that slow and steady wins the race when it comes to forming new habits, especially with prayer. I had to take it one day at a time to make prayer a consistent practice in my life.

We know from Scripture that prayer is essential to an intimate and thriving relationship with God, but often we simply don't know how or what to pray. Many of us feel inhibited with group prayer or praying aloud. But I've experienced both the freedom and literal blessing of establishing and growing my prayer life, and I want you to experience the freedom and blessing too. We all know how difficult it can be when prayer itself feels a bit foreign. But that's why we're here, *together*. This is my girlfriends' guide to praying together.

Over the course of five sessions of video teaching, group discussion, and personal study exercises, we're going to dive into the basic tenets of prayer practice and establish a realistic and doable pattern of prayer to be applied to our daily lives for at least 28 days. We will explore the four postures of prayer that can increase our

communication and relationship with God—why a practice of prayer is worth the effort, how to cultivate a heart of gratitude, what repentance offers us, how to ask God boldly and humbly, what it means to surrender to God, and knowing why surrender to God is satisfying.

After you have prayed weekly through one of these postures in your personal study time, we will break it down and walk through the biblical references that support the posture to draw the connections between your growing relationship with God and the practice of prayer in the video teaching.

My prayer for you throughout this study is that God will become more real to you than ever before as you spend time with Him in conversation. And my hope is that the *28-Day Prayer Journey* will have a deep and lasting impact over the course of your lifetime, because I'm living proof that the right priority of prayer in our lives can change *everything*.

A handwritten signature in a cursive script, reading "Crystal". The signature is written in a dark ink and is centered on the page.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The *28-Day Prayer Journey* video study is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or any small group gathering. Each session begins with a welcome and a few questions to review your personal prayer practice from the previous week. You will then watch the video teaching from Chrystal Evans Hurst and engage in small-group discussion and prayer.

Each person in the group should have his or her own copy of this study guide and a Bible. Multiple translations will be used throughout the study, so whatever translation you have is fine.

It is important to note that the Personal Study Exercises between each session are preparation for the *next* session and allow you to experience each posture of prayer *before* Chrystal breaks it down and shares her own experiences. This study guide is designed with intention to inspire personal prayer conversations with God driven by the Holy Spirit and is what makes this study so unique.

To get the most out of your group experience, keep the following points in mind. First, so much growth in this study will happen during your small-group time where you will process together your personal prayer experiences, the content of the teaching for the week, and learn from others as you hear what God is doing in their lives. For this reason, it is important for you to be fully committed to the group and attend each session so you can build trust and rapport with the other members. If you choose to only go through the motions, or if you refrain from participating, there is a lesser chance you will find what you're looking for during this study.

Second, remember the goal of your small group is to serve as a place where people can share, learn about God, build confidence, and grow deeper in their

conversations with God. For this reason, seek to make your group a safe place. This means being honest and listening carefully to everyone else's opinion. (If you are a group leader, there are additional instructions and resources in the back of the book for leading a productive discussion group.)

Third, be open to the working of the Holy Spirit and resist the temptation to challenge one another, but rather in love, be an example of love and encouragement in all ways. Also, keep everything your group shares confidential. This will foster a rewarding sense of community in your group and create a place where people can heal, be challenged, and grow spiritually.

As you go through this study, be open and listening to what God is saying to you as you discover various postures of prayer on your *28-Day Prayer Journey*.

Note: If you are a group leader, there are additional resources provided in the back of this guide to help you lead your group members through the study. Also, if some of your group members are reading the *28-Day Prayer Journey* book while doing this study, please explain to them that the book is about practicing multiple postures of prayer throughout the day, while the study focuses on just one posture each week for a more in-depth experience of each posture of prayer.

THE FULL PRAYER EXPERIENCE:

This is your suggested guide to using both the *28-Day Prayer Journey* book and video curriculum for an in-depth experience of the postures of prayer as they are introduced by Chrystal. You can read the book *before* or *after* the video Bible study. The choice is up to you or your group leader. They are designed to be done in succession rather than simultaneously for the greatest benefit. The full prayer experience is the most comprehensive way to make prayer a consistent practice and to solidify conversation with God in your daily life.

Pray without ceasing.

—1 THESSALONIANS 5:17 NASB

THE PRAYER EXPERIENCE	
28-Day Prayer Journey book	Read through the entire book, practicing the postures of prayer each day and taking notes as you go.
28-Day Prayer Journey video Bible study	Gather a group of friends and spend one week in each posture of personal prayer. After you complete the 5 week video Bible study, pray for someone you hope to experience the same renewal of conversation with God. (Send her the book if you are compelled and able.)
If you do the video Bible study first, read the book after!	

SESSION *One*

INTRODUCTION: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

They all joined together constantly in prayer.

—ACTS 1:14

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Before Session One Group Meeting	Spend some time considering where your prayer life is currently and what your prayer experiences have been.
In Your Group	Watch Video Session One: <i>Introduction: The Practice of Prayer</i> and take notes Complete Group Discussion Questions Pray Together
At Home	Personal Prep for Session Two: Day 1: Where You Are Now Day 2: Going to the Word Day 3: Journal It Out Day 4: Going with God Day 5: Act on It
Before Session Two Group Meeting	Answer the tracking chart questions about your experience in this week's posture.

Welcome

Have you ever felt nervous about praying out loud in front of a group of people? Believe it or not, me too. And I think those kind of nerves simply come from being human. But nerves also surface when we think prayer is more about a performance than a practice with God. Any athlete, musician, pastor, teacher, writer—anyone committed to their craft—will tell you it takes *practice* to do what they do so well. It takes practice until something becomes a skill; it takes practice until something becomes a habit, or a consistent rhythm. And the same goes for prayer. Prayer is a practice with God, not a performance. And the more we practice our prayer, the more natural our conversation with God will be. That's why I wrote the *28-Day Prayer Journey*, because I knew I wasn't the only one who needed the consistency and accountability of time in prayer with God. Over the course of the next few weeks, we're going to experience different practices of prayer as a way to deepen our relationship with God. Some practices will probably feel more comfortable than others, and that's okay. But the goal is to be consistent with prayer as you develop your own rhythm and routine—your own practice of prayer.

Share

If you or any of your group members are just getting to know one another, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves. Then, to kick things off, briefly discuss one of the following statements:

- Share *one* word you would use to describe your conversation with God right now.

—*or*—

- Where are you in your conversation with God?

Read

Invite someone to read aloud the following passage as “heart prep” for Chrystal’s teaching. Listen for fresh insights as you hear the verses being read, and then briefly discuss the questions that follow.

Mary’s Song

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!” And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

Introduction: The Practice of Prayer

Watch

Play the video segment for session one. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

Notes

Prayer as a Key

“Prayer is the key to conversation with the Creator of the Universe.”

“If prayer unlocks our intimacy with God, why don’t we use it more?”

The Relational Benefits of Prayer

- Prayer requires confidence in God.
- Prayer requires consistent discipline.
- Prayer is more than a practice.
- Prayer is to be a priority.
- Prayer includes breathing.

Scripture Used This Session:

*All Scripture is NIV unless
otherwise noted.*

- Genesis 1:27
- John 3:16
- 1 John 5:14
- Joshua 1:9
- 1 Thessalonians 5:17 NKJV
- Philippians 4:4–7

28-Day Prayer Journey

Biblical Examples of Prayer:

Abraham (Isaiah 51)

Moses (Exodus 34)

Hannah (1 Samuel)

David (Psalms)

Mary the Mother of Jesus
(Luke 1)

Jesus:

- prays at His baptism
(Luke 3:21–22)
- prays after healing the sick
(Mark 1:29–35;
Luke 5:15–16)
- before for His friends
(Luke 6:12–13)
- before the transfiguration
in the garden of
Gethsemane (Matthew
26:36–39)

The Four Basic Tenets of Prayer:

1. Prayers of Thanksgiving and Praise (Gratitude)
2. Prayers of Repentance
3. Prayers of Request (Asking)
4. Prayers of Yielding

Prayer is the way you communicate with God.

*“Prayer is the way you can plug into
the power, perception and purpose that
can only be found in God’s presence.”*

Prayer Is the Key that Unlocks:

- connection
- belonging
- wisdom
- counsel
- help

Discuss

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. What are some of the struggles or roadblocks we face when it comes to our prayer lives today?
2. Which struggle is most prominent in your life right now?
3. **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–17.** How would you rate yourself on practicing the kinds of prayer listed in this passage? What does it mean for you to *pray without ceasing or pray continually*, and how does praying constantly strengthen your relationship with God?
4. Is there someone in your life who genuinely models conversation and connection with God through prayer? If so, what do you admire most about this person's relationship with God and what have you learned from their example?

5. **Read Hannah’s story in 1 Samuel 1:1–20.** What does this passage tell us about Hannah’s prayer life? How can you identify with Hannah’s story or with God’s response to Hannah?

6. Chrystal said, *“Prayer is the key that unlocks connection, belonging, wisdom, counsel and help from God.”* Which one of these actions do you need most from God right now and why? How do you want your relationship with God to be strengthened and deepened through prayer?

Practice

Today we learned about **Breath Prayer** (or Prayer as Breathing). Breath Prayer is simply praying as we breathe in and out. Breath Prayer reminds us that God is the oxygen for our souls. Just as we can’t live on one single breath of air, we can’t live on one single breath of God. We need to breath God in all day long. This kind of prayer reminds us that God’s presence through the Holy Spirit is a gift in our lives.

Discussion Leader: Take a moment of silence with your group. Set a timer for 1 minute. Have everyone close their eyes and place their hands and feet in a comfortable, relaxed position. Begin timer and guide the group through the prayer using the following prompts.

0:00	Breathe in slowly for 5 seconds. Think of God's presence as you fill your lungs with air.
0:05	Breathe out slowly. Let your thoughts flow from your head to your heart as you breathe in and out.
0:15	If you're distracted by your own thoughts, then try repeating these words in your head as you breathe in, " <i>Lord Jesus</i> " and then breathe out, " <i>have mercy on me.</i> " Or these words in your head as you breathe in " <i>Jesus</i> " and breathe out, " <i>I am here.</i> "
0:30	Breathe in slowly "Lord Jesus." Breathe out slowly, "have mercy on me."
0:45	Breathe in slowly "Jesus." Breathe out slowly, "I am here."
1:00	Now just take a moment to listen.
1:15	Open your eyes.

- **Practice Question:** What was that experience like for you? How do you feel more connected to God through this time of prayer?

Pray

Pray as a group before you close your time together. Use this space to keep track of prayer requests and group updates.