



Spiritual Tip

How to Pray Every Day

By Dean Ridings

Here's a creative, helpful way to have a place for each prayer request so you can be sure to pray every day.

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel!" Ephesians 6:18-19

We love people. We want God's best for them. We so quickly say, "I'll pray for you" to those going through tough times — but do we? Here's a creative, helpful way to have a "place" for every prayer request so you can be sure to pray. Think of it as a way to pray every day.

Monday: Pray for Your Family

Take time to pray for each member of your family. Include extended family members. Entrust each one to the Lord. Wherever they are in their relationship with God, pray that He draws them "ever one step closer." Be as specific as you can as you pray that He will meet them at their point of need.

Tuesday: Pray for God's Family

Pray for the church, starting with your local church. Pray for your pastor(s), ministry leaders (e.g., elders, deacons, missionaries, teachers, nursery workers) and their families. Who else in the church needs prayer? Now think of the church around the world. Pray that the Gospel would be preached "as of first importance" (1 Corinthians 15:1-11).

Wednesday: Pray for Your Community

Think about the groups where you are an "insider" and pray for the people you see regularly — those you live near, work with, bump into at school or the store, and so forth. How have they asked you to pray for them? Pray that the Lord will meet each one at his or her point of need, both physically and spiritually, according to His will.

Thursday: Pray for the Nation

Pray for the revival of God's people, and that we'll be "Jesus in jeans" as we truly love and serve those around us. Pray for those in authority. Ask God to bring to mind local and national spiritual and political leaders, and pray for each. Pray about national issues and challenges, such as the economy and its impact on everyday families.

Friday: Pray for the World

Pray that God will use His people to help others "to know Christ and to make Him known." Pray that revived Christ followers would respond with Jesus' love, grace, compassion and wisdom to social struggles — add to your prayer list specific needs you are aware of. Pray for the persecuted church. Finally, pray for the advance of the Gospel everywhere, toward Matthew 24:14.

Saturday: Pray for the Helpless, Hopeless, Hurting and Lost

As part of a regular Pray Every Day strategy, on Saturdays take time to pray for the down-and-out. Start with the world, draw closer to your nation, closer to your state, and closer still to your own community. List the names of and pray for the physically and spiritually afflicted. Pray specifically for ministries that are reaching out to the helpless, hopeless, hurting and lost.

Sunday: Pray for Personal Guidance

Finally, take time to pray for your own personal needs. Sometimes we pray for everything and everyone else but forget to pray for ourselves. On Sundays, pull away and pray for yourself. Walk with God through every aspect of your life — your personal, family, work, community, and church aspects of your life. Say, "Speak whatever to me, Lord, I'm listening!"

Indeed, prayer is the most important conversation of the day — with the Creator of the universe who is there, who cares, and who listens with an ear to respond both for His glory and for the good of people!

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Marriage Tip

Steps To Change Your Annoying Habits

By Willard F. Harley, Jr.

You can turn your annoying habits into pleasing ones if you decide to be thoughtful. Remember most habits are not meant to be annoying, and they're not right or wrong. They simply inhibit the potential of deeper intimacy.

Most of what you do affects your husband or wife, so take your annoying habits seriously. When you learn to overcome them, you'll have eliminated one of the most common ways that spouses lose their love for each other. And you'll find that it's just as easy to make your spouse happy as it is to make your spouse frustrated.

Here are some helpful steps.

1. Identify and rate annoying habits. Begin by making a list of your annoying habits. Beside each annoying habit, enter a number between 1 and 10, indicating how intensely your spouse is annoyed (1-barely annoying, 10-extremely annoying). The numbers help identify the behavior that could do the most damage. You may need your spouse's input.

Warning: This exercise runs a high risk for hurt feelings, so don't attempt it if you're not ready to hear your spouse's thoughts on your habits. Beware, it's easy to conclude that a long list of annoying habits reflects incurable incompatibility, but that's not correct. However, this first step is essential in improving compatibility.

If you and your spouse do this exercise together, be respectful. Describe gently why the habits are annoying.

2. Eliminate the easy ones first. A few habits can be overcome with a simple decision to stop doing them. They aren't hard-wired into your brain and don't provide much gratification. Try to check off one or more annoying habits you can easily overcome, like picking up your dirty clothes or putting the cap on the toothpaste. Most habits, however, take some time to change. You'll have to practice and fight not to do them.

3. Select the three most annoying habits to overcome. Begin with those that have been rated as most annoying. If more than three have the highest rating, ask your spouse to choose the first three.

4. Determine how you got them. Think how each habit formed and why you keep doing it. This will help you create a plan to change. Consider these questions:

- * When you do this habit, how do you feel?
- * Have you ever tried to avoid this habit? If so, how did you do it?
- * What would make the elimination of this habit more likely?

You may simply be used to doing it that way. But with a little practice, you can get used to doing it another way.

5. Create a plan. Replace each annoying habit with a pleasing habit. Repeat the new behavior often. At first, you must think before you act, but eventually you'll do it without much thought.

6. Measure your progress by checking with your spouse. Honesty is essential. Too often, the annoyed spouse underreports annoying incidents. This gives a false impression of success, which can undermine the process.

Remember, annoying habits are not inevitable. Making a different habit is worthwhile.

Willard Harley is the author of **Love Busters** and other books.

11 Things I Wish Every Parent Knew - Part 2

By Dr. Stephen Cowan

After 25 years practicing pediatrics, and caring for thousands of children, I've noticed some patterns that offer me a deeper vision of health. Here are some of those invaluable lessons:

(continued from last week)

7. Be prepared.

The one phrase from the Eagle Scout motto that stuck with me since I was a boy was "Be prepared." This is a state of readiness that can be fueled by confidence or fear.

These days I practice what I call "preparatory medicine" rather than preventive medicine, so that getting sick is not seen as a failure. Being healthy does not mean never getting sick. Life is a journey of ups and downs and the growing child lives in a constant state of flux. A resilient immune system is one that learns how to get sick and get better. Living too clean a life robs us of the information necessary to be fully prepared to recover.

Rather than living in fear of illness, there are natural ways we can support our children to recovery from illness quickly and efficiently: good nutrition, hydration, probiotics, rest, and exercise. But the most important? Rather than focusing on how often your child gets sick, celebrate how often she gets better.

8. Healing takes time.

The most alternative medicine I practice these days is taking time. As a society, we're addicted to quick fixes because we have no time to be sick anymore. As a doctor, I was trained as a kind of glorified fireman, looking to put out emergencies quickly and efficiently.

In emergencies, strong medicine is often necessary to save lives but most health problems in childhood are not emergencies. In those instances it takes more than strong medicine to get better; it takes time. I realize that taking another day off from work because a child has been sent home from school with a runny nose can add real stress to our already stressful lives. But children have taught me that healing is a kind of developmental process that has its own stages too.

When we don't take time to recover, we rob our children of the necessary stages they need to learn from if they are to develop long-lasting health. When we take time to recover, illness becomes a journey of discovery, not just a destination; we begin to see our health and illness as two sides of the same coin.

9. The secret of life is letting go.

Life is a process of constantly giving way. Things pushed past their prime transform into something else. Just as spring gives way to summer, so is each stage of development a process of letting go. Crawling gives way to walking. Babbling gives way to speaking. Childhood gives way to

adolescence. By breathing in, you breathe out. By eating, you poop.

Each season, each stage, each little rhythm of our life is a matter of letting go. This allows us to get rid of what we don't need to make room in our lives for new information. Learning to let go is not always easy and each child has his own adaptive style and timing. Nature favors diversity. Remember to honor your child's unique nature. This is what my book **Fire Child Water Child** is all about.

Perhaps the most important way children teach me how to let go is in the way they play. Playing means letting go of our inhibitions; it frees us up and allows us not to take ourselves too seriously.

10. Trust yourself: You're the expert on your child.

One of the most important things I teach new parents is how to trust themselves. Nowhere is this more daunting than when a new baby comes into our life. We're expected to know everything and yet we feel like we know nothing. But children have taught me that this knowing-nothing can be a real opportunity to open our powers of intuition.

Mindful parenting begins by listening with an open heart to your child's life without fear or panic.

Studies have shown that a mother's intuition is more powerful than any lab test in picking up problems. Unfortunately today we are flooded with so much scary information that it interferes with our ability to listen to our own intuition. (Just think of the arrogance of a doctor who acts

like he knows your child better than you do!)

Take a tip from your baby. Look into your baby's eyes. Imagine what it feels like to be conscious of the world before you have language, before all those labels that scare us and divide things into good and bad, right and wrong. Babies have no enemies. This is seeing from the source. It is what Zen Buddhists call "beginner's mind." Watch closely how your baby breathes with his belly. This is Qigong breathing. Stop thinking for a moment and try breathing this way. You may just find the answers you need waiting for you there.

11. Take the long view. (Because it's easy to get caught in the immediacy of a problem, especially at 2am.)

Having watched thousands of children grow into adulthood, what sometimes seems like a big deal at four-months old or 14-years old may be no more than a small bump in the road. Children have taught me how to take the long view of life. When we step back and see the big picture of our lives, we discover wisdom and compassion.

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