

Prayer

magazines, books, television, movies, music, and the Internet. It is as harmful to the spirit as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs are to the body. Using pornographic material in any way is a violation of a commandment of God: "Thou shalt not . . . commit adultery . . . nor do anything like unto it" (D&C 59:6). It can lead to other serious sins. Members of the Church should avoid pornography in any form and should oppose its production, distribution, and use.

Pornography is tragically addictive. Like other addictions, it leads people to experiment and to seek more powerful stimulations. If you experiment with it and allow yourself to remain caught in its trap, it will destroy you, degrading your mind, heart, and spirit. It will rob you of self-respect and of your sense of the beauties of life. It will tear you down and lead you to evil thoughts and possibly evil actions. It will cause terrible damage to your family relationships.

Because of the addictive nature of pornography and the harm it can cause to body and spirit, servants of God have repeatedly warned us to shun it. If you are caught in the trap of pornography, stop immediately and seek help. Through repentance, you can receive forgiveness and find hope in the gospel. Go to your bishop or branch president for counsel on how to overcome your problem, and seek healing through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Ask the Lord to give you the strength to overcome this terrible addiction.

Additional references: Matthew 5:27–28; Romans 6:12; Alma 39:9; D&C 42:23

See also Chastity; Temptation

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You are a child of God. Your Heavenly Father loves you and knows your needs, and He wants you to communicate with Him through prayer. Pray to Him and no one else. The Lord Jesus Christ commanded, "Ye must always pray unto the Father in my name" (3 Nephi 18:19).

As you make a habit of approaching God in prayer, you will come to know Him and draw ever nearer to Him. Your desires will become more like His. You will be able to secure for yourself and for others blessings that He is ready to give if you will but ask in faith.

Principles of Prayer

Your Heavenly Father is always ready to hear and answer your prayers. The power of your prayers depends on you. As you strive to make prayer a part of your life, remember this counsel:

Make your prayers meaningful. The prophet Mormon warned that if anyone “shall pray and not with real intent of heart . . . it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such” (Moroni 7:9). To make your prayers meaningful, you must pray with sincerity and “with all the energy of heart” (Moroni 7:48). Be careful to avoid “vain repetitions” when you pray (see Matthew 6:7). Give serious thought to your attitude and to the words you use.

Use language that shows love, respect, reverence, and closeness. The application of this principle will vary according to the language you speak. If you pray in English, for example, you should use the pronouns of the scriptures when you address God—*Thee, Thou, Thy, and Thine*, rather than the more common pronouns *you, your, and yours*. Regardless of the language, the principle remains the same: When you pray, you should use words that appropriately convey a loving, worshipful relationship with God. You may have some difficulty learning the language of prayer, but you will gradually become more comfortable with it as you pray and read the scriptures.

Always give thanks to your Heavenly Father. You should “live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you” (Alma 34:38). As you

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take time to remember your blessings, you will recognize how much your Heavenly Father has done for you. Express your thanks to Him.

Seek Heavenly Father's guidance and strength in all you do. Alma counseled his son Helaman: "Cry unto God for all thy support; yea, let all thy doings be unto the Lord, and whithersoever thou goest let it be in the Lord; yea, let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever. Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day" (Alma 37:36–37; see also Alma 34:17–26).

Remember the needs of others as you pray. Offer prayers "for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you" (Alma 34:27). Ask your Heavenly Father to bless and comfort those in need. Ask Him to inspire and strengthen the President of the Church, other General Authorities, and your local Church leaders. Pray for the welfare of family members and friends. Pray for government leaders. Ask the Lord to inspire and protect the missionaries and the people they are teaching.

Seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost so you will know what to include in your prayers. The Holy Ghost can teach you to pray and guide you in the things you say (see Romans 8:26; 2 Nephi 32:8). He can help you pray "according to the will of God" (D&C 46:30).

When you make a request through prayer, do all you can to assist in its being granted. Heavenly Father expects you to do more than merely ask Him for blessings. When you have an important decision to make, He often will require that you "study it out in your mind" before He will give you an answer (see D&C 9:7–8). Your prayers for guidance will

be only as effective as your efforts to be receptive to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Your prayers for your own welfare and for the welfare of others will be in vain if you “turn away the needy, and the naked, and visit not the sick and afflicted, and impart of your substance, if ye have, to those who stand in need” (Alma 34:28).

If you have a difficult task before you, Heavenly Father is pleased when you get on your knees and ask for help and then get on your feet and go to work. He will help you in all your righteous pursuits, but He seldom will do something for you that you can do yourself.

Personal Prayer

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ counseled: “Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:6). Personal, private prayer is an essential part of your spiritual development.

At least every morning and every night, find a place that is free from distractions. Kneel in humility and commune with your Heavenly Father. Although sometimes you may need to pray silently, make an extra effort at times to pray vocally (see D&C 19:28; 20:51).

Remember that prayer is two-way communication. As you close your prayers, take time to pause and listen. At times, Heavenly Father will counsel, guide, or comfort you while you are on your knees.

Never give in to the idea that you are not worthy to pray. This idea comes from Satan, who wants to convince you that you must not pray (see 2 Nephi 32:8). If you do not feel like praying, pray until you do feel like praying.

The Savior has commanded, “Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and

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that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work" (D&C 10:5). Although you cannot be continuously on your knees, always offering a personal, private prayer, you can let your heart be "full, drawn out in prayer unto [God] continually" (Alma 34:27; see also 3 Nephi 20:1). Throughout each day, you can maintain a constant feeling of love for your Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. You can silently express gratitude to your Father and ask Him to strengthen you in your responsibilities. In times of temptation or physical danger, you can silently ask for His help.

Family Prayer

In addition to commanding us to pray in private, the Savior has exhorted us to pray with our families. He said, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21).

If you are married, make family prayer a consistent part of your family's life. Every morning and every evening, kneel together in humility. Give each family member frequent opportunities to say the prayer. Unite in gratitude for the blessings Heavenly Father has given you. Unite in faith to plead for the blessings you need and to pray for others.

Through regular family prayer, you and your family members will draw nearer to God and to each other. Your children will learn to communicate with their Father in Heaven. You will all be better prepared to serve others and withstand temptations. Your home will be a place of spiritual strength, a refuge from the evil influences of the world.

Public Prayer

At times you may be asked to offer a public prayer, perhaps in a Church meeting or class. When you receive this opportunity, remember that you are communicating with

Heavenly Father, not giving a public sermon. Do not worry about what others may think of what you say. Instead, offer a simple, heartfelt prayer.

Receiving Answers to Prayer

The Savior taught, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7–8). To the Nephites He said, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you” (3 Nephi 18:20).

Heavenly Father hears your prayers. He may not always answer as you expect, but He does answer—in His own time and according to His will. Because He knows what is best for you, He may sometimes answer *no*, even when your petitions are sincere.

Answers to prayer come in many ways. They often come through the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost (see “Revelation,” pages 140–44). They may come in the circumstances of your life or through the kind acts of those around you. As you continue to draw near to your Heavenly Father through prayer, you will recognize more readily His merciful and wise answers to your pleadings. You will find that He is your “refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

Additional references: Matthew 6:5–15; James 1:5–6; Enos 1:1–17; Mosiah 4:11–12; 3 Nephi 13:6–7; 14:7–8; D&C 19:38; 88:63–65; Joseph Smith—History 1:9–19

See also Faith; Fasting and Fast Offerings; Worship

Premortal Existence (See Plan of Salvation)

Priest (See Aaronic Priesthood; Church Administration; Priesthood)