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with new perspectives on old traditions

# Christian Prayer

## FOR DUMMIES®



**Richard Wagner**

*Evangelical Christian, teacher, and author*

**A Reference for the Rest of Us!™**



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***Christian Prayer For  
Dummies<sup>®</sup>***

**by Richard Wagner**



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“We have a God who engineers circumstances.” (Chapter 1)

“If you ever prayed in the dawn, you will ask yourself why you were so foolish has to not do it always: it is difficult to get into communion with God in the midst of the hurly-burly of the day.” (Chapter 4)

“Specific times and places and communion with God go together. It is by no haphazard chance that in every age men have risen early to pray. The first thing that marks decline in spiritual life is our relationship to the early morning.” (Chapter 4)

“Watch the difference between confession and admitting; the majority of us are quite ready to admit, it is the rarest thing to get to the place where we will confess. . . . It is much more difficult to confess to God than we are apt to think. It is not confessing in order to be forgiven; confession is the evidence that I am forgiven.” (Chapter 6)

From *The Love of God*. Copyright © 1938 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn. Ltd.:

“Fasting means concentration in order that the purpose of God may be developed in our lives.” (Chapter 10)

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“Whether our work is a success or a failure has nothing to do with us. Our call is not to successful service, but to faithfulness.” (Chapter 12)

“When we hear a thing is not necessarily when it is spoken, but when we are in a state to listen to it and to understand. Our Lord's statements seem to be so simple and gentle, and they slip unobserved into the subconscious mind. Then something happens in our circumstances; up comes one of these words into our consciousness and we hear it for the first time and it makes us reel with amazement.” (Chapter 19)

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“Don't say thy will be done, but see it is done.” (Chapter 16)

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“Some prayers are followed by silence because they are wrong, others because they are bigger than we can understand.” (Chapter 18)

From *Our Brilliant Heritage*. Copyright © 1929 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn. Ltd.:

“Before we can hear, we must be trained.” (Chapter 19)

From *The Philosophy of Sin*. Copyright © 1937 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn. Ltd.:

“These are cases recorded in the Bible, and in our own day, of people who have been marvelously healed, for what purpose? For us to imitate them? Never, but in order that we might discern what lies behind, namely, the individual relationship to a personal God.” (Chapter 20)

From *Not Knowing Where* . Copyright © 1934 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn. Ltd.:

“If it was God's will to bruise his own Son, why should it not be his will to bruise you?” (Chapter 20)

From *The Shade of His Hand*. Copyright © 1924, 1936 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn. Ltd.:

“Prayer is not a preparation for work, it is work. Prayer is not a preparation for the battle, it is the battle. Prayer is two-fold: definite asking and definite waiting to receive.” (Chapter 4)

“There will come one day a personal and direct touch from God when every tear and perplexity, every oppression and distress, every suffering and pain, and

wrong and injustice will have a complete and ample and overwhelming explanation.” (Chapter 18)

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# About the Author

Richard Wagner is founder and writer of Digitalwalk.net ([www.digitalwalk.net](http://www.digitalwalk.net)), a Web-based commentary with the purpose of challenging and encouraging Christians to earnestly live out their faith in a digital, postmodern world. Richard has served in church leadership and teaching roles for more than a dozen years. He lives in Princeton, Massachusetts, with his wife and three boys. You can e-mail Richard at [rich@digitalwalk.net](mailto:rich@digitalwalk.net).

For a study guide and discussion questions for *Christian Prayer For Dummies*, visit [www.digitalwalk.net/prayerdummy](http://www.digitalwalk.net/prayerdummy).

# Dedication

To Lori and Aaron: The present mystery of lost prayers will someday be answered by your smiles.

# Author's Acknowledgments

When John Donne penned “No man is an island,” I am convinced that he had to be speaking of an author. There are so many people I’d like to acknowledge who helped shape and guide this book and make it possible.

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# Contents

## [Title](#)

## [Introduction](#)

[How This Book Is Organized](#)

[Assumptions Made in the Book](#)

[Conventions Used in This Book](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

## [Part I: Signing Up for Basic Training](#)

### [Chapter 1: Discovering the Real X-Factor](#)

[Having a Chat with God](#)

[Realizing What's So Good about Prayer Anyway](#)

[Seeing How Prayer Works: Past, Present, and Future](#)

[Transforming Your ABC's into the X](#)

### [Chapter 2: Prayers: We Don't Need No Stinkin' Prayers](#)

[Debunking the Top Excuses](#)

[Correcting Eight Really Bad Ideas about Prayer](#)

### [Chapter 3: Relating to God: More than the Sum of All Prayers](#)

[Naming the Elephant in the Room: Sin](#)

[Viewing God: Taskmaster or Loving Father?](#)

[Talking to God: Dear \(fill-in-the-blank\)](#)

[Deciding Between “Heavenly Father” or “Daddy”](#)

[After Your Prayer Leaves Your Lips: A Behind-The-Scenes Guide](#)

## [Chapter 4: Taking a 24/7 Prayer Adventure](#)

[Praying Around the Clock](#)

[Packing Your Own Prayer Saber](#)

[Knowing When You’re at Your Best](#)

[Pray@Work](#)

[Penciling in Some Prayer Time](#)

[Sailing through the Sand](#)

## [Chapter 5: The Original Christian Prayer For Dummies: The Lord’s Prayer](#)

[Viewing the Lord’s Prayer as a Model, Not a Carbon Copy](#)

[Getting the Big Picture](#)

## [Chapter 6: Revealing Prayer’s Secret Recipe](#)

[Responding in a Most \(Un\)Natural Way: Adoration](#)

[Honesty Required: Improving Your Confession](#)

[Making Every Day Turkey Day: Thanksgiving](#)

[Going to the Rug for Others: Intercessory](#)

[Asking for Yourself: Petitionary](#)

## [Part II: Turbocharging Your Prayers](#)

### [Chapter 7: Ready-Made or Do-It-Yourself?](#)

[Whipping Up a Batch from Scratch](#)

[Breaking Open the Ready-Made Variety](#)

[Navigating the High Seas: Combining the Two Types of Prayer](#)

## [Chapter 8: Looking to the Scriptures for Help](#)

[Pairing the Ultimate Couple: Bible and Prayer](#)

[Psalms: The Heart of Prayer](#)

[Epistles: The Mind of Prayer](#)

[The Bible's Ten Best Prayers](#)

## [Chapter 9: Journaling the Write Stuff](#)

[Journaling: Don't Let Hand Cramps Stop You](#)

[Getting Past the Cool New Notebook: Journal Content and Style](#)

[Choosing Between a Pen or a PC](#)

[More than Just Bean Counting](#)

## [Chapter 10: Thinking Fast](#)

[Why Fast? It Only Makes Me Hungry](#)

[Fasting in the Crossfire](#)

[When Good Fasts Go Bad](#)

[Getting Fast Answers to Practical Questions](#)

## [Chapter 11: Helping You Out: Prayer Enhancers](#)

[Singing Your Prayers . . . Even If You Can't Hold a Tune](#)

[Freeing Your Mind](#)

[Accessorizing Doesn't Only Make the Outfit](#)

[Attending Special Prayer Events: Kneeling Room Only](#)

## Chapter 12: Avoiding the Potholes to Prayer

[Reducing Distractions to Your Prayer Life](#)

[Clearing the Mental Cobwebs](#)

[Overcoming Emotional Roadblocks](#)

## Part III: Praying Well with Others

### Chapter 13: Going Nuclear (Family, That Is)

[Talking to God as a Family](#)

[Fitting It in Between Soccer and Dessert](#)

[Teaching Junior How to Pray](#)

[Blessing Your Children](#)

[Es-spousing Prayer](#)

### Chapter 14: Praying in Small Groups

[The Small Group That Prays Together Stays Together](#)

[Seeking All Prayer Requests](#)

[Steering Clear of Small Group Pitfalls](#)

[E-Prayer: Praying in the Internet Age](#)

### Chapter 15: Overcoming the Yadda Yadda Yadda: Effective Public Prayer

[Praying in Public versus Speaking in Solitude](#)

[Keeping the Z's to a Minimum](#)

## Part IV: Tackling Some Tough Issues

### Chapter 16: Thy Will Be Done

[Wanting Your Will Won't Get It Done](#)

[Knowing God's Will](#)

[Exposing an Age-Old Struggle](#)

[Discovering the Purpose of Praying According to God's Will](#)

[Striking a Balance between Asking and Surrendering](#)

## [Chapter 17: Ask and It Shall Be Given](#)

[I'd Like A Porsche, Please](#)

[Staying within the Lines: Sticking to God's Will](#)

## [Chapter 18: Lost Prayers](#)

[Considering Prayers That Looked Misplaced and Forgotten](#)

[Cornering Confusion, Ousting Doubt](#)

[Yanking Your Chain? No Way](#)

[I Can't Believe He Said No](#)

[Seeing Eye to Eye Isn't Always Possible](#)

[Finding Your Lost Prayer](#)

[Revisiting the Lost Prayers: The Rest of the Story](#)

## [Chapter 19: Hearing That Voice in the Cornfield](#)

[Suffering from the "God Told Me" Syndrome](#)

[Waiting for God to Speak: Expect a Peep, Not a Roar](#)

[Fine-Tuning Your Ears](#)

[Questioning That Inner Voice: God or My Empty Stomach?](#)

[Identifying False Voices](#)

[Testing What You Hear](#)

## Chapter 20: Healing in a Modern World

When God Heals

Just the (Healing) Facts, Ma'am

Applying the Techniques of Healing Prayer

When God Doesn't Heal

## Chapter 21: Getting Tongue-Tied

Unwrapping Spiritual Gifts: "Whatchoo Talkin' about, Willis?"

Tongues Spoken in the Bible: News at 11

Practicing Tongues Today . . . or Not

Keeping Your Tongue to Yourself

Balancing Perspective

## Part V: The Part of Tens

### Chapter 22: Prayers for Ten Occasions When You Need It Most

Fear

Anger

Despair and Suffering

Decision Making

Wasted Time

Guilt

Stressed Family Relationships

In Need of Healing

Approaching Death

Surrender

## Chapter 23: Ten or So Prayers to Teach Children

[Bedtime Prayers](#)

[Morning Prayers](#)

[Mealtime Prayers](#)

[Prayers for Any Time of Day](#)

## Chapter 24: Ten Retreats and Ten Pilgrimages

[Ten Prayer Retreat Centers](#)

[Prayer Pilgrimages](#)

## Chapter 25: Ten-Plus Recommended Web Sites

[Sacred Space](#)

[Prayer Central](#)

[Prayer Today Online](#)

[The Book of Common Prayer](#)

[Pray! Magazine Online](#)

[Bible Gateway Audio Bible](#)

[ePrayer.org](#)

[International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church](#)

[Presidential Prayer Team](#)

[National Children's Prayer Network](#)

[America Praying On-Line](#)

# Introduction

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I' ll pray for you.”

Have you ever said those words to a friend or loved one after hearing of a tragedy, sickness, or job loss? I often say that phrase as I talk with others about what's going on their lives. Indeed, this expression is a common, second-nature response to a need that is shared. Yet, do you always follow up on your promise to pray? I confess that too many times I've said those words and failed to do so.

“I'll pray for you” is a phrase packed solid with good intentions. However, sorry to say, prayer requests can often go in one ear and out the other, given the frantic, fast-paced lifestyles of today's world. Following through on that pledge to pray has become too much like that to-do list of handyman jobs I keep promising my wife I'll do.

However, I think a reason other than busyness keeps people from praying diligently. People tend to exchange lip service for genuine prayer when they forget the true power that prayer holds. Prayer becomes a nice thing to do rather than something you feel compelled to do for a friend.

In reading this book, you discover that “I'll pray for you” is one of the most significant expressions you can utter. Contained inside this deceptively simple phrase is a



direct line to an all-knowing, all-powerful God, who invites Christians to participate in his work in the world through prayer. Therefore, by following through on that promise to your friend, God can use your earnest and diligent prayers to effect real and lasting change. However, you also discover while reading this book that prayer is more than a one-sided conversation of endless prayer requests. Instead, as a natural part of the relationship you have with a personal God, prayer involves actively listening to him and letting him move freely in your life.

*Christian Prayer For Dummies* equips you with the know-how you need to deepen and enrich your prayer life. It also helps you know why you're praying, whom you're praying to, what prayer can do, and how to pray effectively. I avoid the two extremes—"touchy-feely" spiritualism and heavy theological prose—that you can so often encounter when reading books on prayer. My aim is to touch a middle ground that is highly practical yet life changing.

# How This Book Is Organized

*Christian Prayer For Dummies* is your practical guide to prayer that helps you wrap your arms around this often misunderstood topic. I divide the book into five parts, each of which builds upon the previous ones.

# **Part I: Signing Up for Basic Training**

As you kick off your journey of prayer, Part I helps you discover the essential aspects of prayer, what prayer is not, and why prayer is central to how God works in the world. You then explore when and how to pray, whether you're at home, on the road, at work, or at play. Before leaving, you study the Lord's Prayer, the most famous prayer of all time, and find out how you can use it as a model for your own prayers.

# **Part II: Turbocharging Your Prayers**

In Part II, it's time to get practical. You begin by exploring how to pray on your own and how to best organize your prayers. From there, you start looking at how to use written prayers and Scripture to keep your prayers on track and prevent them from becoming stale. You also discover several proven prayer techniques and aids, including journaling, meditating, fasting, and singing. Furthermore, because wandering thoughts and emotional blocks can kill your prayer life before it ever gets off the ground, you explore how to overcome these and other common hindrances to prayer.

# **Part III: Praying Well with Others**

In Part III, you find out to pray more effectively with others, starting with the most important place of all—your home. You see how prayer can transform your family relationships and how you can create a legacy of prayer for your children. You also discover how to pray in small, informal groups and get an insight into the hodgepodge of issues to think about when praying in formal occasions, such as church services and graduation ceremonies.

# **Part IV: Tackling Some Tough Issues**

Part IV tackles the most difficult and thorny issues associated with prayer. You find out why God sometimes wants you to wait for answers despite your objections, how you can pray according to God's will and not your own, how to listen to God speak, how God heals in today's world, and what praying in tongues means. Chapters 16, 17, and 18 are the heart of the book.