

I AM SECOND[®]

5 STEPS

Toward a Better Prayer Life



CONTENTS



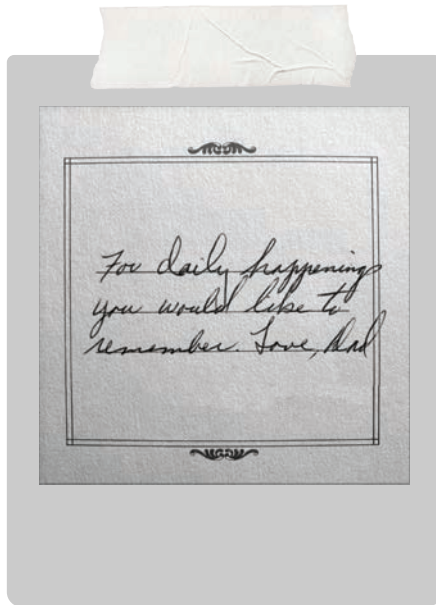
5-6	Step 1: Write It Down
7-8	Step 2: Pray Scripture
9-14	Step 3: Pray Like Jesus
15-16	Step 4: Listen for God's Voice
17-18	Step 5: Commit to a Time and Place
19	Contact Info & Resources

*Notes from the prayer journey of Mike Jorgensen
(Executive Director of I Am Second)*

“What in the world am I going to do with a book with no words in it?”



It was years ago, and I had just unwrapped a Christmas present from my Dad. It was my first time to hold a journal – a book with no words on the pages. Inscribed on the inside cover was, **“For daily happenings you would like to remember. Love, Dad.”**



It may have been the first present just from Dad. Usually gifts came from both Mom and Dad. Out of love and respect for him and gratefulness for his special gift, I wanted to use it wisely. After a few days of mulling it over, I decided to write prayers in it.

As I began to write, immediately and unexpectedly my prayer life improved. For one, I didn't want to commit to paper anything trite or trivial. Even though I figured no one would read it, I still wanted to write big things.

Second, writing corralled my wandering thoughts. I often got distracted as I prayed. A prayer for my wife would fizzle into wondering about my to-do list. A prayer for our kids would evaporate as I started thinking about getting them a haircut. But writing kept my mind focused. This was a big first step in my prayer journey that helped me connect with God in a more meaningful way.

Over the years, there have been five such steps that have had a big impact on my personal journey with God. I pray that some of these suggestions will be a blessing to your own journey with him.

I AM SECOND®

STEP 1:

Write It Down

A busy hand focuses the heart.

Getting that journal from Dad has changed my prayer life every day since that Christmas years ago. God used that one small gift to nudge me closer and closer to him as I prayed. For years, I journaled my prayers in paper journals. But after filling many journals, I realized I could type faster than I could put pen to paper. So now I do my prayer journaling on my laptop.*

***But your laptop is full of distractions, so guard your mind and time. Turn off your email, discontinue notifications, close your web browser – do whatever it takes to stay focused on God and his word.**

But neither the paper nor digital journals were well suited to praying consistently for people and their needs. So somewhere along the way I added another prayer tool – a three-ring binder. Each page had someone's name on it, for example, my wife, our kids, a neighbor, co-workers, even projects I had worked on. So the notebook ended up being a multi-page prayer book. As I pray through my prayer list notebook,

each day that I pray for someone or something, I note the date and a few words about what I pray.

Those pages led to more unexpected blessings. After I filled up those first pages, I thought, "what do I do with them now?" They were dear to me, because they represented a labor of love toward the people for whom I had prayed. So I decided to give them to each person. As I filled up a page, I sent my prayer "targets" their prayer page.

This "gift" was totally unexpected, which was part of the joy for me. As they looked at that dog-eared notebook page, each recipient saw their name at the top, then a line-by-line list of dates and the things prayed for them on that date. I still receive thanks from time to time from people who received their prayer page 15 or 20 years ago. It is fun praying diligently for my family, friends and co-workers, fun sending them this unusual gift, and fun seeing how God answers prayer!

I continue to use these two primary prayer tools – my prayer journal on my laptop and my three-ring prayer binder with individual prayer pages.

- 4/17 Ps 17:5 Stick to God's path
- 12/1 Ps 1 Spiritually prosperous + protected, Sided smooth pregnancy + delivery, wisdom of parents
- 12/8 Ps 8 Praise warriors
- 5/24/20 Matt 25 Enable them to multiply their talents.
- 5/24 Jn 16:13 Spirit → truth + what is to come
- 6/22 1 Pet 3:15 Ready to defend faith
- 7/11 Eph 3:19 Filled with fullness of God
- 7/30 Acts 19:10 Give astounding ministry
- 9/1 1 Jn 2:15-17 Love God + not world
- 9/6 Mal 3:10 Pour out windows of blessings
- 9/7 Dan 9:10 Hear voice of God clearly
- 10/15 Ps 15 Blameless walk
- 11/11 Rom 2:4 Lord, lavish rich kindness on
- 11/12 1 Pet 1 Abundant grace + peace to us
- 11/22 1 Pet 3:22 fully worship victorious Jesus
- 12/23 Luke 2 Exuberant worship
- 12/29 Pour out abundant blessings on them
- 1/3/2021 Mk 4:34 Lord, explain everything ^{to us}
- 1/5 Ps 9:10 Seek Lord more + more
- 2/17 Num 22 Hear God clearly

STEP 2:

Pray Scripture

An open Bible aligns the heart.

God only answers prayer according to his will, right? Somewhere somebody mentioned praying Scripture. Again, God put the right person in my path with a next step for me to take to grow in my prayers. In the right context, praying God's words back to him assures we are asking him for his will. As I saw verses that said what I wanted for people I loved, I would pray those words for them.

LIKE THIS...

Scripture:

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."
– Ephesians 2:10

Prayer:

Lord, our kids are your workmanship, your works of art. Give them hearts to be on your path. Prepare them for that path. Give them the education, the schools, the friends . . . everything they will need for that path. Protect them on that path. Protect them from being tempted to leave your path. All for your glory, Lord.

Scripture:

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."
– Luke 2:52

Prayer:

Father, just as Jesus did, I pray that you will grow our kids in wisdom and stature and favor with you and man.

Scripture:

"And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and

understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy..." – Colossians 1:9-11

Prayer:

Father in heaven, fill _____ with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that he may have a walk worthy of you, that he may be fully pleasing to you, that he may bear fruit in every good work, may he increase in the knowledge of you, may he be strengthened with your power, so that he will have endurance, patience and joy.

^ This prayer in Colossians 1 is a good example of how you can get started praying Scripture – pray other prayers that are in the Bible!

Here are a few more prayers from the Bible to get you started:

- Ephesians 1:15-23
- Philippians 1:9-11
- 1 Timothy 2:1-7
- Psalm 96

Implementing this new discipline was like riding up a spiritual elevator 50 stories to an observation deck. It gave me a wider-scope view of God and his will and ways relative to my prayer requests.

Remember how I mentioned I had transitioned from paper journals to journaling on my laptop? That really helped as I began to pray through Scripture on a daily basis, because it was easy to copy and paste passages from an online Bible into my journal.

Praying the words of the Bible paved the way for praying one of the key prayers in the Bible, the Lord’s Prayer. Here’s how that happened.

STEP 3:

Pray Like Jesus

An open hand guides the heart.

After writing out my prayers for several years, a new challenge popped up. I was leading mission trips with e3 Partners to several different countries and many people were deciding to follow Jesus. We needed an easy way to help them learn how to talk with God, and we needed to teach them in different languages and different cultures. We knew we wanted to follow Jesus' model prayer in Matthew 6, but how could we do that if these new believers had never heard the Lord's Prayer, let alone memorized it?

Kaye and Vicky, some friends who loved to pray and teach others to pray, showed me a simple way to use my hand as a guide to remember how Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:9-13.

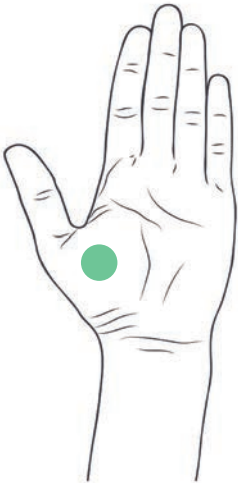
1. Palm = Relationship

"Our Father in heaven..." (Matthew 6:9)

Example Prayer: *Father, thanks for adopting us into your family, even though you know everything about us.*

As the palm is the foundation for our fingers and thumb, our relationship with God is the foundation for our prayers. Jesus taught us to start praying like this, so start your prayers by acknowledging God as Your Father.

I don't usually use Jesus' exact words, but I use his prayer as an outline of topics to pray. One of the main reasons for this is that if I simply repeat his words each time, there is a high risk my mind will not be engaged... it will become mindless repetition.

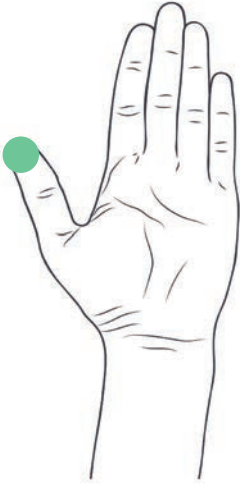


2. Thumb = Worship

“...may your name be holy.” (Matthew 6:9)

Example Prayer: *Father, you spoke the universe into existence, yet you know how many hairs are on our head. I worship you as the all-powerful one and also the all-knowing one.*

Our thumb reminds us that we must worship God before we ask for anything. Giving a “thumbs up to God,” in other words. This could be worshipping him for some of his character traits (love, wisdom, all powerful, full of grace, giver of mercy, to name a few). By recounting some of these names, and what they represent - like Jehovah Jireh (God our Provider), Jehovah Rapha (God our Healer), Prince of Peace, or worshipping him for what he has done, like speaking the stars into existence, dying on the cross for your sins, or restoring your marriage.



3. Pointer Finger = Surrender

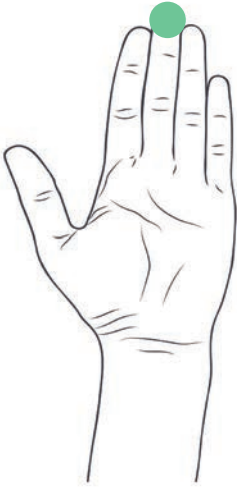
“May your kingdom come, your will be done...” (Matthew 6:10)

Example Prayer: *Lord, I surrender this eBook to you. May it be what you want it to be in order to accomplish what you want it to accomplish in people’s lives.*

Next we surrender to God our lives, plans, family, finances, work, future, everything. We turn it over to him. Then we pause and listen for his voice, which might be correction, or direction, or encouragement, or whatever he wants to tell us. More on that later.

The young son of a co-worker made a funny but insightful comment when his dad was teaching him this method of praying – “Dad, it’s like playing cops and robbers. You stick out your finger like a gun, then the bad guy says ‘I surrender.’” That young guy totally understood the point!





4. Middle Finger = Ask

**“Give us this day our daily bread.”
(Matthew 6:11)**

Example Prayer: *Father, you are Jehovah Jireh, the God Who Provides. Please provide these things that we need today...*

This is the part of prayer we usually are good at! But as Jesus modeled prayer for us, it was not the first thing.

Let’s do a review to keep things in perspective. First, Jesus taught us to focus on Relationship (**palm**) by acknowledging God as Father. Then second, to Worship (**thumbs up**) by focusing on his character, his power, and great things he has done. Then third, to Surrender (**pointer finger**) by turning things over to him, and expressing our desire that things go like he wants them to go.

Starting with these parts of prayer often changes what we ask! It gives us his perspective. We are more in tune with God, more on his track.

Let’s do a quick exercise to see the importance of doing things like Jesus taught. Make a fist around your palm (**Relationship**). Then give a thumbs up (Worship). Add a pointer finger (**Surrender**). Then a middle finger (**Ask**). That’s the way Jesus said to pray.

Now let’s look at the way we often pray, unfortunately. Fold back your thumb to mimic neglecting to worship. Then fold down your pointer finger to represent forgetting to surrender as Jesus modeled. What are you left with? Only a middle finger! Is rushing to **Ask** before acknowledging **Relationship**, **Worship** and **Surrender** a way of inadvertently giving God the finger when we pray?

Sobering thought.



5. Ring Finger = Forgive

**“Forgive us as we forgive others.”
(Matthew 6:12)**

Example Prayer: *Father, please forgive me for the bad attitude I had about _____ .*

Now we ask God to forgive our sins, and we must forgive others. Our ring finger is all about relationships, and forgiveness also is tied up in our relationships.

Asking God to forgive us of our sins is a key part of prayer, and unlocks other parts of prayer. The Bible says that “If we claim we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:8, 9)

I think of repentance – asking God to forgive us – like teaching my son to play catch in our front yard. If I tell him not to go into the street, even if the ball goes in the street, I can continue to teach and guide him as long as he obeys. But if he disobeys and runs into the street, for his own good I have to stop playing baseball with him and discipline him. I always want to confess sin and be cleansed by our loving Father so I can clearly hear from him.



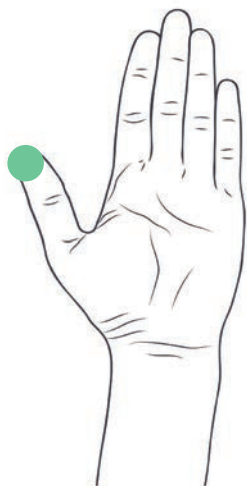
6. Little Finger = Protect

“Let us not yield to temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:13)

Example Prayer: Lord, I am being tempted by _____, please give me strength to resist. Protect my relationship with _____ from the influence of the enemy, Satan, who wants to disrupt and destroy.

Our weakest finger reminds us that we need God’s protection. Protection from our own sinful desires - protection from giving in to temptation. And also protection from Satan, the evil one, who is God’s enemy and ours.

Oh, no, we’ve run out of fingers! But in some translations there’s still one last part of Jesus’ model prayer. From your pinkie, trace around your palm, down your hand and wrist and back around to your thumb. We are back about where we started – our thumb, which is Worship!



7. Thumb (again) = Worship

“Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” (Matthew 6:13)

Example Prayer: *You are a good and glorious God. May you receive glory and honor as you answer these prayers. Amen.*

So we end just as we began – we worship God.

Learning this discipline was freeing. It was as if I could loosen my white-knuckled grip on my wants and replace them with a peaceful trust in the one who answers prayers. My prayer life lifted to new levels as I consistently prayed as Jesus prayed. My prayers used to consist mostly of “gimmie this, gimmie that, give him or her that, too” type of thing. Praying this way changed my prayer focal point to a relationship with God, a conversation with God, not just a wish list of requests. Now, things are in better balance. My focus and attention shifted to God’s character and will, and only then on asking. I felt my heart and mind day by day being molded more into the likeness of Jesus as I prayed as he did.



WATCH THIS:

Doug Bender has done a great job describing this “hand prayer guide” in this I Am Second film.

STEP 4:

Listen for God's Voice

An open ear trains the heart.

I yearn to hear from God. I long to be in his will, doing things in his way, in his timing, propelled by his power. Sometimes it has been obvious that is the case, and other times it feels like I'm sloshing through mud, wondering if I'm headed the right way. But I ask and listen anyway, trusting that God will hone my listening skills so I can hear him better, and discern better which voice is his, which is mine, and which are other voices of distraction.

Before I begin to pray, I often wait for God to bring an image, a memory or a Scripture verse to mind to prompt my worship. My heart soars when God directs my worship of him in one of those ways.

When the surrender part of prayer comes, I definitely want to wait on God to hear what he is saying. Surrender is not only acknowledging that his ways and purposes are best, but also actively listening for direction about what those ways and purposes are. If we have decided to follow Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit inside us. I have a strong desire to hear clearly from him.

When it is time to ask, I want to ask within his will. Sometimes that is obvious from

the Bible, but sometimes it is more like, "Lord, which of these good options is best?" So I often ask God questions, then wait in silence and listen for him to speak to my heart. Many times that is during prayer. Sometimes I hear an answer right then. Other times I think I may be hearing an answer, while also often wondering, "is that coming from my own mind or is that thought from God?"

But God is wild, and he chooses when and how he speaks. Many of the times when I have been most certain that God was speaking was when a thought came out of the blue. When I wasn't praying about that topic, when I wasn't expecting it, many times when I wasn't even praying. God simply interrupted what I was doing, like an Amber alert coming in on your phone when doing something else.

One time I was on an early morning walk when God clearly said, "Change roles at your job." So I immediately called my boss to tell him. His response was confirming—"I believe you heard from God. If you say 'no,' you're in trouble [with God]. If I say 'no,' I guess we're all in trouble." This is a good test – do godly people confirm what you believe God said?

So we reorganized our team responsibilities and I moved to that new role, which was a demotion. With several years of hindsight, that crazy-looking move turned out to be divinely strategic. God knew what was coming. Through that move, strategies and tools we were using in one area of ministry were leveraged for an unexpected new area of ministry.

Another time while singing at church God whispered inaudibly, "You're done in three years." As I leaned over to my wife to relay that dramatic directive, her concerned reply was, "How done is done?" As we prayed about it, it became clear that I was to leave the role I was then in, but this time the change was not immediate but after three more years. The next step was not immediately apparent and took three years of praying to figure it out. Again, with several years of hindsight, we saw blessings upon blessings unfold as we obeyed his still, small voice. Those blessings were not foreseeable at the time of the change, but only cropped up after the change.

Has something like that happened to you? Has an idea come to mind when you least expected it? I must admit that sometimes when this happens I argue with the idea. A discussion breaks out

in my mind about the reasons not to go with the idea. It is then that I am most careful. Why? Because my experience has been that often the idea is from the Holy Spirit, and the "discussion" is my human nature arguing away what God is saying.

God spoke in many different ways and times and places in the Bible. He whispered. He thundered. He spoke in dreams. He spoke out of a burning bush. He spoke through a donkey. He spoke through angelic messengers, to name just a few.

A mountain of material has been written about hearing the voice of God. I highly recommend getting other books and teachings on this important topic.

What I am sharing is only my experience. I believe it lines up with Scripture. But God speaks to different people in different ways at different times. How he speaks to you is up to him. So please take this as only one person's experience, not a recipe for anyone else.

STEP 5:

Commit to a Time and Place

A recurring appointment disciplines the heart.

The first four steps assume that you are praying consistently. So Step 5, which may be the first one you should implement, is to commit to a particular time and place to pray. Make it a habit. To get you started, connect it with an existing habit. What do you do every single day no matter what day of the week or season? Brush your teeth? Wake up? Go to bed? Take a shower? Have breakfast? Find a habit you already are doing, and connect your prayer time to it.

For me, it is first thing in the morning. If I let it slip, there are always distractions and obligations that crowd it out. I have a comfortable chair where I always sit. My prayer tools are there – my laptop and my prayer notebook. I would have my Bible there, too, if I was not now in the habit of using online Bibles on either my laptop or phone.



The theology of prayer is deep. The Bible says much about prayer. Many powerful prayer warriors have written much about this important discipline. As you move forward in your prayer journey, seek out others who can add to your understanding of the mystery of prayer.

Hopefully, something in these simple steps will help you. Wherever you are in your prayer journey, take the next step. I encourage you now to commit to a simple plan to intentionally improve your prayer life. Choose just one of the steps and implement it for at least three weeks, or until you are consistent. After the new discipline becomes a habit, pick another suggestion to fold into your routine. No need to go in order.

Above all, ask God which step he wants you to use. It may be something not even in this eBook. Then ask him to help you develop consistency in it.

You are not on your own! In fact, if you try to do this on your own, you probably will fail. But God can give you self-control, which is not “self controlling self,” but rather a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which means “Spirit controlling self.” (Galatians 5:23)

Here they are again:

Step 1: Write It Down

Step 2: Pray Scripture

Step 3: Pray Like Jesus

Step 4: Listen for God’s Voice

Step 5: Commit to a Time and Place

My prayer for you as you strive to climb to higher heights of prayer:

May the Lord bless you
and keep you, and
make his face shine upon you,
and be gracious to you,
and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)

Thoughts? We'd love to hear from you.
contact us at prayer@iamsecond.com

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

There are many excellent prayer guides based on scripture and helpful training on all aspects of prayer at tandemprayer.org.

Spirit Walk by Steve Smith

Just Say the Word by Sam Ingrassia

I AM SECOND®

iamsecond.com

© 2021 e3 Partners Ministry