

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Have you ever wished you could pray like one of the psalmists or could form the words like some of the Bible greats? You can! When a portion of scripture captures your attention you can take the verses of scripture, personalize it, and form prayer that is God-honoring and edifying to your soul.

Praying scripture is not new. St. Augustine of Hippo (354 –430) was an early Christian theologian and philosopher from North Africa whose writings influenced the development of Western Christianity and Western philosophy. Many of his writings are prayers developed from scripture. In fact, Augustine meditated on and prayed with scripture to such an extent that even his own writings took on a scriptural style.

Here are some simple steps to help you get started in your journey to pray the scriptures:

- ❖ Read the verse to God – God doesn't need a reminder of what His Word says, but He loves the fact that we are reading it, saying it, and learning His Word.
- ❖ Rephrase the verse using your own words – Sometimes changing a word or two to help make it easier for you to understand and remember. This gives a sense of ownership to our prayers.
- ❖ As you meditate and pray, focus on and further define a broad term in a personal way. (Change “he” or “who” to “I” or insert your name, for example.)
- ❖ Substitute synonyms in place of one word of a verse as you pray – **“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”** (Galatians 5:6) You could choose any one word in this phrase to substitute like words and meditate on the meaning. So what word would you substitute for “counts”? Here's an example, **“The only thing that matters is faith expressing itself through love.”**

Praying the Scripture

“Praying the Scripture” is a unique way of dealing with the Scripture; it involves both reading and prayer. Turn to the Scripture; choose some passage that is simple and fairly practical. Next, come to the Lord. Come quietly and humbly. There, before Him, read a small portion of the passage of Scripture you have opened to.

Be careful as you read. Take in fully, gently and carefully what you are reading. Taste it and digest it as you read. In the past it may have been your habit, while reading, to move very quickly from one verse of Scripture to another until you have read the whole passage. Perhaps you were seeking to find the main point of the passage.

But in coming to the Lord by means of “praying the Scripture,” you do not read quickly; you have read very slowly. You do not move from one passage to another, not until you have sensed the very heart of what you have read. You may then want to take that portion of Scripture that has touched you and turn it into prayer.

After you have sensed something of the passage, and after you know that the essence of that portion has been extracted and all the deeper sense of it is gone, then, very slowly, gently, and in a calm manner begin to read the next portion of that passage. You will be surprised to find that when your time with the Lord has ended, you will have read very little, probably no more than half a page.

“Praying the Scripture” is not judged by *how much* you read but the *way* you read. If you read quickly, it will benefit you little. You will be like a bee that merely skims the surface of a flower.

Instead, in this new way of reading with prayer, you become as the bee who penetrates into the *depths* of the flower.

Plunge into the very depths of the words you read until revelation, like a sweet aroma, breaks out upon you. I am quite sure that if you will follow this course, little by little you will come to experience a very rich prayer that flows from your inward being.

Four simple steps to praying the scriptures:

- ***Choose a simple passage.***
- ***Read it slowly.***
- ***Try to sense the heart of each verse and/or phrase before moving on.***
- ***When something strikes you as particularly meaningful, turn it into a prayer and journal your prayer***

Selected scripture on **Praying Scripture:** Mark 12:28-34, Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Psalm 119:9-24.