

Appendix

Getting Started with Your Prayer Cards

ARE YOU READY to get practical? Are you ready to put the Word to work?

Let's start with you, your life, and your circumstances. But first, a rule of thumb:

Keep it simple. Don't overthink it.

Prayer cards act as individual snapshots that offer a practical way to remember what you are asking of God and what Scriptures you are applying to particular people, circumstances, or concerns. Prayer does not exist in a vacuum; it weaves throughout the nitty-gritty of life. From the prayer cards, stories will begin to emerge. Each prayer story will begin to shape how you observe life and how the Holy Spirit leads you toward loving, repenting, believing, obeying, and living. It is not a bad idea to simply ask the Spirit to train your spiritual eye and help you see his hand in your stories.

In our video course *Launch Into Prayer Cards* (available in DVD and online at www.seeJesus.net), Bob Allums and I share over fifty of our real prayer cards. You will notice they are smudged and worn from our holding them, and the ink is from different, random pens. This simply shows that cards develop over time. That's life.

Here are the key steps for getting started using prayer cards to organize and focus your prayer life.

Start with Three to Four Cards

Begin by simply creating three to four prayer cards that you pray through every day. This will keep you from getting overwhelmed with too many cards. By starting simply, you will begin to develop your prayer habit.

Depending on your life situation, these cards might be for a spouse, a child, or a health need. One might be for a project at work that is causing you anxiety, or anything in life that is always on your mind. I call these *daily cards*, because I pray the same cards every day. I suggest praying about a minute over each card.

Again, I'm disciplined with prayer cards because I don't like what happens in my life when I'm not praying. Life gets weird. I wasn't made to interact with people unless I'm interacting with my heavenly Father on their behalf.

Spread It Out—Weekly Cards

Once praying a few cards has become a regular habit (say, after a month), then look through the categories that follow, and slowly add two to three *weekly cards* to each day of the week. For example, Monday you might pray for family members. Tuesday you might pray for people in suffering, Wednesday you might pray for your friends, and so on. Take this slow. Just add a card or two a week at the most. Don't overwhelm yourself by creating a huge system that you aren't using.

Here are some suggested categories; you should feel free to use or create any that you want.

- *Family prayer cards.* One for each person in your family that you do not already have in your daily cards.
- *People in suffering prayer card.* Keep it general, even just their name on the card with "People in Suffering" at the top. It's easy to get bogged down in medical details when you have many to pray for. The closer you are to the person or the situation, however, the more specifically you may want to pray.

- *Friends prayer card.* List friends on one card, or create a card for each close friend.
- *Non-Christians prayer card.* Again, feel free to list them unless something is happening in such a way that you want to create a card for just one person.
- *Church leadership prayer card.* Your pastors, elders, deacons, staff, lay leaders, and so on. Feel free to list them by name.
- *Small group prayer card.* Friends in your small group at church, if you are part of one.
- *Missionaries prayer card.* Missionaries' names, where they are serving, and what they are facing.
- *World issues prayer card.* Terrorism, abortion, military conflicts, your country and its leaders—anything that burdens you.
- *Coworkers prayer card.* People you work with but are not necessarily close friends outside of your office.
- *Work prayer card.* Projects, tricky procedures, major decisions, or key problems you are working on.
- *Repentance prayer card.* Sins that keep cropping up in your mind and life that you want help with.
- *Stewardship prayer card.* Use of time, talent, and treasure.
- *Thanking God prayer card.* Blessings you notice that you do not want to forget.
- *Worship prayer card.* Scriptures or quotes that help you honor your Father.

Creating a Weekly Schedule

Once you begin to accumulate prayer cards, it is helpful to sort them by day to avoid being overwhelmed. A week might look like this:

- Monday: Church leadership, small group, and missionaries prayer cards
- Tuesday: Friends and stewardship prayer cards

- Wednesday: People in suffering prayer cards
- Thursday: Non-Christians and world issues prayer cards
- Friday: Work and coworkers prayer cards
- Saturday: Family and repentance prayer cards
- Sunday: Thanking God and worship prayer cards

I begin a prayer time with my daily cards, and then I add to those a few weekly cards—cards that I pray once a week. This way, you will only have a few cards on any given day to help you pray. (If you find a schedule too rigid, then just pray through two to three weekly prayer cards each day.)

As tempted as you will be to have a big stack of cards, it is important to instead become consistent with a few. One to two minutes on each card means you are up and running. You will be surprised how fast time goes as you develop this pattern of prayer.

A Sample Introduction to Creating a Card

Here's a brief overview of one possible way to create a prayer card.

Step one: Label the card with the person's name. Take a moment to see that person in your mind's eye and think about the various areas in that person's life. Sometimes I go for a month or two with just a person's name on the card as I think about how to pray for him or her.

Step two: Jot down key words or phrases that capture what you are concerned about or what you want to ask for in that person's life. Don't just think about the person's immediate need (such as that a surgery would go well), but think about the big picture of that person's influence, character, calling, heart, faith, and so on. Remember, you have the privilege of praying big prayers of hope and specific situational prayers in their life.

The order is not important. Be specific about what you want to see in their lives. I like to write down the month/year (8/16 means August 2016) so I know when I started praying about a specific item. I seldom

write down answers, because I know the prayers so well, I know what God does. Some helpful questions to ask yourself might be:

- What are they facing?
- What is it like to be them?
- How do I feel about them in general and in this particular situation?
- What would I like to see the Spirit do in their heart and character?

By asking these kinds of questions, you are slowing your life down to actually look at the person you are praying for in your mind's eye. Like Jesus, you are incarnating into their world.

Step three: Now put the Word to work by asking what particular Scripture you want to see working in that person's life. (For a sample compilation of Scripture by category and topic, go to www.seeJesus.net/prayercards.)

Step four: Slip into prayer for the person while jotting down a few words or short phrases that will help you remember what you are asking. Be concise: Keep it to one or two lines.

That's it! It doesn't have to be complicated. Watch what the Father does in the person's life over time. You can make a note on the card if something else strikes you, but you don't really have to. (For example, you may think of a neat, practical way to love that person, or you may see something that spawns a prayer card for a need in yourself.) The card will help you focus.

Praying for Myself

Many of my prayer cards for myself come out of my failures or weaknesses. That's when I get desperate and ask God for help! I call these *my repentance cards*. I keep adding new ones as time goes on. As God helps me, I retire them.

Sometimes, you will be reading a Bible passage, and something in you leaps for more. For example, you might think, *I really want that character quality in my life*. For example, you are reading Matthew 17, and you come to the account of a little boy with a demon, whose father begs Jesus for help. Jesus loves the man by delivering his son. The disciples wonder and privately inquire of Jesus why they could not deliver and help the boy. Jesus says, “Because of your little faith” (verse 20). He then goes on to say that with greater faith they will be able to do seemingly impossible things, such as moving mountains.

A prayer card might be labeled “Myself—the need for mountain-moving faith.” The Scripture for your card is the passage right in front of you. Date the card and ask for that kind of faith. Then, watch and wait. Almost always, I see God weave a prayer story.

Feel the Freedom

Remember, the whole idea of cards is for you to recall, watch for, and track what God is doing in each of your prayer stories. Don’t worry that you might be “doing it wrong.” Feel free to modify the system in any way that suits you.

As you create these cards, you may experience feelings of unbelief. Don’t be surprised. You are seizing the corner of his garment. Don’t let go.

The real you is meeting the real God with honest needs, fears, dreams, and stories of your life. You do not need to do this perfectly. You are his child. He welcomes you and enjoys hearing from you.

As you live into your Father’s story, you are looking for his hand in each of your own prayer stories—which, in turn, become a thread of the tapestry your Father is weaving.

For more resources, see www.seeJesus.net/prayercards.