

# With Sighs Too Deep for Words

## Romans 8:26-27

Week of February 14 - 21

Throughout the Bible, an astonishing truth is revealed. The Creator of the world, the God of the universe, not only allows us to speak to him, but in fact *desires* that we speak to him! What an amazing gift it is to express our thoughts, feelings, and emotions to God, to be given the opportunity to build a relationship with Him. However, many people seem to be almost afraid of prayer. “I don’t know what to say,” or “I don’t know how to pray” or “Oh, I can’t pray out loud” are statements I frequently hear. It is our hope that over the course of this study you will “just do it” and just experience prayer – an open communication with God, who loves you very much.

**Key Point:** Prayer is not about eloquent words. Prayer is about honesty and openness with God.

**Key Verse:** ...for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. **Romans 8:26**

### Segment 1 - Warm-Up

**Open your time of study with prayer:**

Father, as I begin this study of prayer, please lead me to know you better. I want to know how to talk to you. Please help me to learn more and more. Amen.

1. What uncertainties or fears do you have about prayer?
2. How would you describe your prayer life currently? How do you feel about that description?
3. What joys or successes have you experienced in your prayer life? What failures?
4. What do you hope to learn, or gain through this study on prayer? Are there any specific ways you would like to grow in prayer?



**Pray:**

Spend some time in prayer now. Express your thoughts and feelings about prayer to God. Lift up any hopes or fears you have. Then be silent and listen. What might God have to say to you?

5. What thoughts/feelings/ideas/impressions do you have from this time of prayer?



**Pray:**

Spend some time in prayer now, focusing on Romans 8:26-27. The Bible, the Word of God, is “living and active” (Heb. 4:12), not just words on a page. Reading the Bible can be a type of prayer, a way for God to communicate personally with us. If this is new for you, try praying with the following pattern:

- Invite God to be with you. Ask him to reveal what he would like for you to know in these verses.
- Read the verses (Romans 8:26-27) completely through at least twice, out loud if possible.
- What word or phrase stands out to you?

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- Hold this word or phrase in your mind. Think about the words. Listen for what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase of the Bible. Record your thoughts/feelings/impressions:

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- Repeat this process: Read the verses completely through at least twice, out loud if possible.
- Does a different word or phrase stand out to you?

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- Hold this word or phrase in your mind. Think about the words. Listen for what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase of the Bible. Record your thoughts/feelings/impressions:

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9. How did you encounter God through this prayer? What did you learn?

### **Segment 3 – Hannah’s Prayer**

#### **Open your time of study with prayer:**

Heavenly Father, I long to be able to pour out my heart to you, to share my deepest hurts, longings, and joys. Yet I am hesitant as well. Please help me to trust you enough to express whatever I think or feel. Amen.

Hannah has been unable to have a child. In her society – where honor was gained by bearing children – being childless was a terrible social stigma. This passage begins just as Hannah is preparing to go to the Temple to pray.

**Read 1 Samuel 1:9-18** (begin reading at 1:1 if you would like the full context)

10. What does the text tell you about the attitude, behavior and actions of Hannah as she prays? Why might Eli (the priest) think Hannah is drunk?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What attitude, behaviors, or actions do you usually have as you approach God in prayer? Are these working for you? What might you learn or try in your own prayers based on this example of Hannah’s prayer?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. How is Hannah changed after pouring out her heart to the Lord?

#### **Pray:**

There is no set formula for prayer. Different things are helpful to different people. As we experience change in our lives and in our journey of faith, things that may have been helpful to us in the past may no longer be helpful now. We are free to try different things in prayer, trusting that the Holy Spirit will lead us and teach us to pray. Below are examples of things some people find helpful as they pray:

- Speak your prayers out loud
- Kneel as you pray
- Sing your prayers
- Pray before bed
- Avoid prayer lists, and pray for things/people/situations as they come to mind
- Allow yourself to cry
- Pray silently, but mouth the words
- Stand to pray

- Use a book or devotional with pre-written prayers
- Pray with your eyes open
- Read a Psalm as a model for prayer
- Journal/write as you pray
- Pray early in the morning
- Write out your prayers
- Light a candle
- Allow yourself to sing and praise
- Keep a list or notebook of prayer requests
- Walk as you pray
- Pray with your eyes closed
- Use familiar prayers. For example: “Now I lay me down to sleep...”
- Have hymns or praise music playing in the background
- Draw, paint, or sketch your prayers
- Pray during your lunch break

In this time of prayer – and throughout the rest of this study – feel free to experiment with these suggestions, or anything else you’d like to try.

Hannah was deeply upset as she poured out her heart to God. But her prayer can remind us that no matter what we feel – strong emotion or apathy – God is ready to hear anything from our heart and soul.

Enter a time of prayer, and tell God about the emotions and thoughts you are experiencing right now, whatever they are. Joy? Don’t feel like praying? Frustration? Angry? Apathy? Stress? Contentment? Wondering what to make for dinner? Wondering how to invest your retirement? Struggling with a situation at work? Excited about an upcoming event? Whatever it is, take time to just talk with God now about whatever is on your mind.

13. What did you find yourself expressing to God? Did God give you any new insights into your situation?

14. What did you feel after talking to God about the things that were on your mind?