



FEBRUARY 2025

**Worship Service in our Sanctuary at 10:30am
or watch our worship service LIVE! at:
www.fpcpunta.org and click on the logo "YouTube"**

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www.fpcpunta.org



Why Is Prayer Important? (Kelly O'Dell Stanley (Christianity.com))

Scriptures tell us several reasons to pray. Let's take a look at why it's important to pray and the benefits of prayer that you can begin to experience today. Prayer is important because it makes us more like Jesus and because it reveals to us the heart and mind of God.

When we look at the spiritual powerhouses of the past, we know that prayer was immensely important to them. C.S. Lewis stated: "I pray because I can't help myself. ... I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me." And Martin Luther: "I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." How do ordinary people live up to that, and why should we? Ordinary people can't be expected to drop everything to pray, right? Actually, ordinary people can't afford not to pray. Prayer is a gift given to us—and an activity expected of us—by the Lord. The Bible often says, "when you pray," not "if you pray," because prayer seems to be assumed of God's followers.

Let's take a look at what Scripture says about prayer:

- "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." ([Ephesians 6:18](#))
- "Pray continually." ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#))
- "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray." ([James 5:13](#))
- "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." ([Romans 12:12](#))
- "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." ([Philippians 4:6](#))
- "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." ([James 4:8](#))

Praying because we're "supposed to" isn't always enough to motivate us, but the truth is that prayer is much more than a rule.

The Importance of Prayer

1. Prayer makes us more like Jesus.

If we look at the life of Jesus, we see that he prayed—with others ([Luke 9:28](#)), for others ([Matthew 19:13-14](#)), and on his own ([Luke 5:16](#), [Luke 6:12](#)). It was a fundamental part of how he approached each day and every decision, retreating faithfully to spend time with his Father. Clearly prayer was important to Jesus—it was his lifeline and his connection to the Heavenly Father. It equipped him for the battles he was about to face. It kept alive the intimate relationship that sustained him. And it revealed to him God's desires and direction. If the goal of a Christian is to become more like Jesus, that process should include imitating his actions and living out his words. As we pray, we will become more like Jesus, and we will find that prayer changes us.

2. Prayer shows us the heart of God.

When Jesus prayed for his disciples in [John 17](#), he prayed for those who would believe in him, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" ([John 17:21](#)).

Prayer helps us become one with the Father and have the kind of relationship Jesus had with him. The Bible is filled with stories illustrating God's desire to have an intimate relationship with his people, and any close relationship involves communication. When two people have no contact with each other, their relationship will never advance. And since prayer is, quite simply, a conversation with God, it is how we get to know him.

When we come into his presence, all pretense is gone—there is no longer anything to hide because he sees all and knows all. Prayer humbles us because as we spend time with him, we realize how powerful and able and good God is and how much we need him. And yet, God accepts us as we are—not because he wants us to stay that way, but because he knows that the relationship comes first. As we grow to love him, we will want to become more like him. When we find forgiveness through prayer, God softens our heart and allows us to forgive others. When we experience God's compassion and mercy, we will share that with others. When we understand that God's grace is freely given, we recognize that no one is any more or less deserving of God's love than we are, and it transforms our hearts and our actions, helping us reveal God's generous love to others.

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WORSHIP MINISTRY



*Worship
Schedule*

*Sunday Mornings - 10:30am Worship Service (Also Online)
Sunday Evenings - 6:00pm Prayer Meeting (On Facebook)*



Fellowship Time

*Join us for beverages, cookies and treats
after Sunday's Worship Service*



Choral Ensemble

*You are invited to join with others in singing a song in Worship on
February 16th and March 16th as part of our music ministry.
We will rehearse on Thursdays, February 6th and 13th at 3:30pm.
Come join in the fun shared through music*



Sermon on the SAND

*Every Sunday at 8:00am - 8:30am at Fishermen's Village
Pastor Barksdale will deliver the Message on
February 2nd and March 9th*

Why is Prayer Important? *(continued from Page 1)*

3. Prayer reveals the wisdom of God.

The best part about prayer is that it's a conversation that goes both directions. Yes, we will talk to God, but when we spend time with him and are willing to receive, we will also hear from him. [James 1:5](#) says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

Jesus prayed all night before selecting the 12 apostles ([Luke 6:12-16](#)), and he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane to try to ascertain God's will regarding what God was asking him to do. His time in prayer helped align his will with that of the Father, just as our time with God will do for us. After getting in touch with the heart of God and realizing how much he loves us, we will learn to trust him and value his insight and guidance.

As we spend time talking to God, he aligns our will with his, changing the way we experience a situation and respond to a problem. Sometimes we miss his answers (because we're not listening or we're expecting a different answer so we don't recognize it when it comes), and other times the answer comes through reading the Bible or talking to others, but God will answer. His wisdom far exceeds our own because he sees farther and loves deeper and has his sights set on an eternity with those he loves, not just gratification in the immediate moment. There is no one else who can see and know what he does, and he delights to share his wisdom with us in prayer.

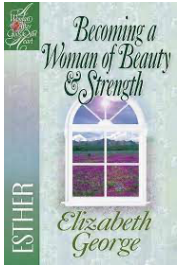


Church Membership CLASS

Next class will be Sunday, April 6th at 9:30am

*If you are interested in joining the church,
or just finding out more information about FPC,
please join us for a one class introduction to FPC.
(For Seasonal Residents, we have an Affiliate Membership,
so you can maintain your Membership back home.)
Sign up in the church foyer.*

DISCIPLESHIP 2025



WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

February 4th and 18th

We meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall

February 4th - Lesson 22 - Esther 9:16-19 "Celebrating God's Goodness"

February 18th - Lesson 23 - Esther 9:20-28 "Remembering to Remember"

Call Kathy Belville at 508-733-0546 for more information - All are welcome!



DONUTS & DOCTRINE BIBLE STUDY

February 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th

Wednesdays at 10:00am

"A Resilient Faith" - Studies in II Timothy

All are welcome!

MILITARY PRAYER LIST

Prayer

O Prince of Peace, we humbly ask Your protection for all our men and women in military service. Give them unflinching courage to defend with honor, dignity and devotion the rights of all who are imperiled by injustice and evil. Guard our churches, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our factories, our buildings, and all those within from harm and peril. Protect our land and its people from enemies within and without. Grant an early peace with victory founded upon justice. Instill in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere a firm purpose to live forever in peace and good will towards all. Amen.

- * Major John McPherson, Air Force, great nephew of Marguerite O'Brien, stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas
- * Major Ryan Swisher, Army Ranger, grandson of Rachel Pfaender, stationed in North Carolina
- * Major Eric Engstrom, Army Intel., son of Alan Engstrom, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
- * Lt. Col. David Sifferd, Jr., Army Reserve, son of David Sifferd, stationed in Ft. Knox, KY
- * Pvt. Michael Robert Wagner, U.S. Marine Corp., great-grandson of Robert and Jean Humphreys, stationed in Hawaii
- * Second Lieutenant, JTAC, Alexander Kingsbury, Air Force, great-grandson of Tim Ronan, stationed in New York
- * Major Christina West, Army, granddaughter of William Dossé, stationed at Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg, NC) and her husband Major Matt Walter, Army, currently deployed in the Middle East

Do you have a family member serving in the military?

If so, we'd like to add them to the newsletter prayer list. Fill out the form that's on the sign-up table in the church foyer and place it in the HELMET or let the church office know.

DISCIPLESHIP WISDOM

Two Disciplemaking Roads (Justin Gravitt.com/blog)

Eventually every category comes down to two. Even though there are thousands of options, the choice typically narrows to just two. Sound reductionist? It's not. Think about it. It's Coke and Pepsi, Crest and Colgate, Android and iPhone, Lowe's and Home Depot, Ford and Chevy, chocolate and vanilla, the list could go on and on. Over time categories come down to two. Of course other options still exist. Strawberry ice cream is an option, as is Subaru, but the vast majority of each category is represented by just two choices.

The same is true with discipling. Can you guess what they are? It's not obvious, in part, because most people never choose how they will make a disciple, and in part, because the discipling conversation just hasn't gotten here yet. But if you had to come up with the two main choices in how to make a disciple what would they be?

Engaging the question is both important and helpful, because if you can't even see another way to make a disciple then you're inevitably blind to the strengths and weaknesses of your approach. It's the equivalent of only being exposed to vanilla and then being asked to compare and contrast it to other flavors. So even if you never even try another discipling approach, the awareness is valuable.

So what are the two main discipling options?

1. Standardized Discipling

The first and most popular way to make disciples is what I call the Standardized Discipling. It could also be called proficient discipling or wholesale disciple making. It's so popular that many disciple making experts don't believe effective disciple making happens any other way. Standardized discipling emphasizes simplicity, ease of use, and broad accessibility (scale). Product discipling means you need some thing to carry the weight of disciple making. That thing is always *in addition* to the Bible. Typically, it's a book or curriculum written by a pastor or faith hero. Standardized practitioners persuasively speak of the need for "tracks to run on" and a "basic skeleton that the disciple can flesh out." Additionally they emphasize the need for the disciple making process to be made so simple that anyone can do it.

Practically, standardized disciple making happens most often in groups of four or more (but can happen in both smaller and bigger spaces). Disciples are invited to move through the curriculum, book, Bible study, or app for a specific amount of time. Once they have completed the thing, they are asked/expected to lead a new group through the same.

There are clear advantages to standardized disciple making. It quickly engages participants with key discipleship concepts in a familiar setting. The setting is similar to small groups, so it feels comfortable to most of them. As a result, participants are able to absorb the information quickly and personally. The early results of standardized disciple making are broad enrollment and fast-formed disciples and disciple makers. There are certainly downsides too, but we'll save those for a future blog.

2. Tool-Based Disciple Making

The second, much lesser known way of discipling is Tool-based discipling. Tool-based discipling can also be called customized disciple making or creative disciple making. Customized discipling requires the disciple maker to be equipped and skilled in using different disciple making tools. The tools include things like illustrations, acronyms, or other "pass-on-ables" intended to both impact and equip the disciple. Tool-based disciplers emphasize the relational nature of disciple making, tailoring the approach to the individual, and helping the disciple become holistically like Jesus. Creative disciple makers speak persuasively about the need to equip and develop the disciple into a mature version of themselves, not a copy of the disciple maker. The tools used along the way function as a place to hang Biblical truths, not as the primary focus or instrument of the training. In other words, the tool isn't the point, but rather a way to remember and to pass on the point.

Tool-based practitioners work tirelessly to equip disciples to disciple others out of their individual gifting and design, while maintaining the Bible as their primary resource. Practically, tool-based disciple making happens most often in one-to-one or one-to-two contexts and, when they are ready, they go out and do the same.

Tool-based disciple making has its advantages. Participants quickly feel equipped with a multitude of tools they can pass on to others. The relational experience of moving tools out from their meetings and into the lives of others sets them up to disciple others with both confidence and competence. The customized approach enables a tight focus right where the disciple needs it most. It connects their personal growth to their fruitfulness with others. This provides a unified field in which they can run on for the rest of their lives. There are certainly downsides too, but we'll save those for a future blog.

Naming these two disciple-making choices can help us consider the path that best fits the principles Jesus modeled in His disciple making ministry. Let's end with some poetry (hat tip to Robert Frost):

*Two discipling roads diverged in your 'hood And sorry you cannot travel both at once
Stand and look down each as far as one can To where your sight grows dim.*

I challenge you to stand at this discipling making fork in the road and look down each one as far as you can.
Soon we'll do that together.

MISSIONS MINISTRY



First Presbyterian Church proudly supports
Missions from our church budget.
If you would personally like to make additional
donations, please make checks payable to FPC
and indicate the mission on the memo line.



CHRISTMAS OFFERING - \$1,866.00

Veterans Village - \$622.00 (Gift Cards)

Ground Up Ministry - \$622.00 (New House)

Immokalee Farm Workers - \$622.00 (Hats, etc.)

Thank you for your generosity

STAND IN THE GAP FUND

*The purpose of this fund is to assist
supported missionaries and
ministries of our church when they
face unexpected financial burdens*

*To donate to this fund,
please mark your gift as SITG*



Monthly Mission Support

CROSSROADS HOPE ACADEMY (PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA)

Crossroadspg.org



JESUS LOVES YOU MINISTRY (PORT CHARLOTTE, FLORIDA)

Jesuslovesyouministryinc.com

**Shower & Lunch
Ministry**



MISIÓN PENIEL (IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA)

Misionpeniel.com

ANTIOCH PARTNERS MISSIONARIES

Eric and Debbie Stone, Guatemala

Lisa Alfonsi, Lima, Peru

theantiochpartners.org



MISSIONARY VENTURES INTERNATIONAL

Chasen and Katie Brokaw

Nicaragua

mvi.org

breakingborders.org



FPC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH



PRAYER SHAWL GATHERING
Monday, February 10th at 10:00am



GAME FELLOWSHIP

Thursday mornings at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall *All are welcome!*



LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

1st and 3rd Friday of each month

Sign up in the church foyer

Friday, February 7th
12:00pm
Skillet's Restaurant
Port Charlotte

Friday, February 21st
12:00pm
Donato's Restaurant
Port Charlotte



On ***Sunday, February 9th***, we will have our ***Congregational/Corporation Annual Meeting*** at 11:30am. Please plan on attending.
Annual Reports are available on the table in the back of the sanctuary.



Our ***Annual Valentine Memorial Service*** will be held on
Sunday, February 16th at 11:30am

This is a short service of remembrance for those who passed away in 2024 from our church family and in memory of other loved ones. We will begin in the Sanctuary and move to the Lowell Kvam Memorial Garden.



PULLEN UP A CHAIR

Barksdale and Bo will host get-together dinners for groups of eight at their home

Wednesday, February 5th at 5:00pm

Sign up in the church foyer or call/email the church office

There is no agenda, lesson, or study, just a time to get together for fellowship



VALENTINES DAY POTLUCK AND MOVIE

Wednesday, February 12th 5:00pm

Movie after Dinner

Sign up in the church foyer



Wednesday, February 26th- 12:00pm
Lunch 'n' Learn - "End of Life Preparations"
Sign up in the church foyer



MISIÓN PENIEL (IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA)

Join us on Friday, February 28th for the afternoon session
We will meet at the church at 12:15pm

We need 12 people to sign up in the church foyer

MEMBER CARE



Prayer Requests and Hospital / Rehab Information
Address, Phone, Email changes
Birthdays and Anniversaries
Email to first@fpcpunta.org



First Pres is on Facebook!

Go to:

facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-Punta Gorda



To watch the current Service:

- 1) Follow the link: <https://www.youtube.com/@FPCPG>
(This link is also on our website in the top right corner, simply press the YouTube button.)
- 2) When you land on the FPC YouTube page you will see a small screen with the word LIVE, click it and it will fill up your screen.
The Service will begin at approximately 10:30am (Pre-Service at 10:15am).
(If you don't see a small screen with the word LIVE, we have not started streaming.)



Giving to FPC - In person
Mail to the church office: 25250 Airport Rd; PG, FL 33950
Online Giving through our website: fpcpunta.org, click Donate



FEBRUARY 2025

CHURCH PRAYER CALENDAR AND CELEBRATIONS

Prayer is the place where burdens change shoulders - We pray for....
*The elderly, the infirm, the hospitalized, those in nursing homes, the homebound and lonely,
 and all those who have requested our prayerful support.*

Each month we remember church members and friends on a rotating basis...



1	Linda Potthoff	11	Dave & Sharon Sifferd	21	Donald & Susan Willecke
2	Barksdale & Bo Pullen	12	Ron & Billie Sixt	22	Teri York
3	Bill & Pauli Purcell	13	Andy & Nancy Smith	23	Charles & Evelyn Zietsma
4	Barbara Reynolds	14	Margie Smith	24	George Albright
5	Tim Ronan	15	Bo & Karen Sostar	25	Jay Aldridge
6	Pete & Debbie Rostad	16	Gail Thornton	26	Rex Anderson
7	Barbara Ryan	17	Larrie & Marjorie Tisdale	27	Laurel Aumend
8	Andy & Katie Schulte	18	Richard & Linda Wagar	28	Denny & Minty Ausman
9	Elaine Schultz	19	Don & Mary Anne Washabaugh		
10	Jene Shafer	20	Sharon Weed		



2—Debbie Rostad	17—Margie Smith
8—Gene McPherson	23—William Purcell
8—Doris Costa	28—Roy Belville
15—Jene Shafer	



9—Denny & Minty Ausman 16 yrs.



FEBRUARY 2025



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Church Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
9:00am to 1:00pm

March 2025

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

2 **Communion Sunday**

8:00am Sermon on the Sand
10:30am Worship Service
11:30am Fellowship Time
6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB

3 1:00pm Worship Team

4 10:00am Women's Bible Study
1:00pm Fellowship Team

5 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry
5:00pm Pullen Up a Chair

6 10:00am Game Fellowship
3:30pm Choral Ensemble Rehearsal

7 12:00pm Ladies Lunch Bunch at Skillet's Restaurant in PC

9 10:30am Worship Service
11:30am Congregation/ Corporation Meeting
11:30am Fellowship Time
6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB

10 10:00am Prayer Shawl Gathering

11 10:00am Mission Team

12 **Valentine's Day**
10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry
5:00pm Valentine's Day Dinner and Movie

13 10:00am Game Fellowship
3:30pm Choral Ensemble Rehearsal

14 12:00pm Ladies Lunch Bunch at Donato's Restaurant in PC

16 **Deacon's Fund**
10:30am Worship Service
11:30am Valentine Memorial Service
11:30am Fellowship Time
6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB

17 1:00pm Session

18 10:00am Women's Bible Study

19 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry

20 10:00am Game Fellowship

21 12:00pm Ladies Lunch Bunch at Donato's Restaurant in PC

23 10:15am Hymn Sing
10:30am Worship Service
11:30am Fellowship Time
6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB

24

25

26 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine
10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry
12:00pm Lunch 'n' Learn "End of Life Preparations"

27 10:00am Game Fellowship

28 12:15pm Mission Trip to Immokalee

22

15

8

1