

MAY 2023

Passionate Prayer Focus

Shared by the Discipleship Council

Writing to God

FOUNDATION

In times of war, soldiers stayed connected with their families by writing letters home. Troops could say, “I love you” and “I miss you” in those deeply personal notes. If you have read letters home from your family, you can see how they often become treasures. Writing to God is similar to those letters. Since the Lord is our true home, we continue saying, “I love you,” but we can also add our sincere cries for help when we write to God.

A UNIQUE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Writing to God enables us to draw near to the holy, just as families sought connection with one another through personal letters. Writing to God is a beautiful way to pray and one of the most researched spiritual disciplines. God desires communion with us, so we only turn toward home and decide what we want to tell or ask God. Listening for the Holy One may be the common theme in all religious humanity. God is not deaf, as one theologian points out. We must, therefore, keep writing.

WHY SHOULD I PRACTICE THIS STYLE OF PRAYER?

One of the most helpful books about writing to God comes from Rachel G. Hackenberg, a pastor in the United Church of Christ. She begins with this powerful story: “A teenager hands me a piece of folded notepaper, the outside of which simply says, ‘Pastor Rachel, can you give this to God?’ As I unfold her note, a handwritten prayer appears, the angst of an adolescent poured out to God in pen.” This image touches a deep longing in all of us while waiting to hear from God. Some of Hackenberg’s prayers are compelling, saying in one, “I pour out prayers for this day, O Spirit, like water from a pitcher.”

LETTING GO & GETTING STARTED

If you already use a prayer journal, this style of prayer may come easily to you. The focus of writing to God rises from our deepest thoughts and hopes. Often, our genuine desires are hidden deep in our hearts, and we never give voice to them. We can tell God what brings us to our knees when writing letters.

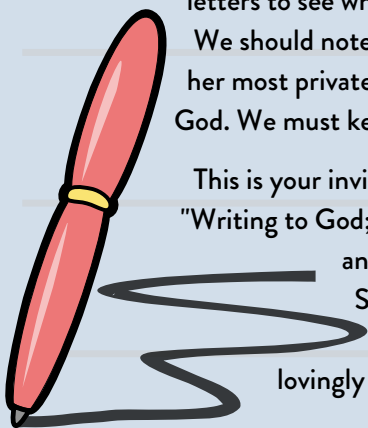
When you write to God, do not be concerned with spelling, grammar, or anything else; just write. Use any writing instrument you wish. If you need a place to begin, think of the powerful words of Meister Eckhart, “If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is thank you, it will be enough.” Gratitude should run through every prayer but especially so in this one. Face your fears and simply talk to God.

You may wish to throw the letters away. Please permit yourself to discard them when they are especially private. This conversation is between you and Yahweh, Jehovah, Lord Almighty, or any name you use for God. You may wish to keep some letters to see when and how prayers are answered. Never give up because you doubt that God will answer.

We should note here that Mother Teresa, who worked with the poorest and sickest of the poor, indicated in her most private journal entries that she spent almost fifty years in ministry without sensing the presence of God. We must keep praying.

This is your invitation to tell God about everything in your heart. Although Rachel G. Hackenberg’s book, “Writing to God; 40 Days of Praying with My Pen,” was written for Lent, this style of prayer can be a “personal an invitation and permission to enter the incarnational practice of writing [our] words to God.”

Some notes will come easily, but others may feel awkward or painful. The English words “to know” can be interpreted harshly. The Hebrew translation for yada, or “to know,” actually suggests lovingly holding a newborn baby. God longs to hear from us and is eager to embrace us as His children.



WANT TO LEARN MORE? Read “Writing to God: 40 Days of Praying with My Pen”

by Rachel G. Hackenberg: MA: Paraclete Press, 2011.