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## SUMMARY

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# I HEARD GOD LAUGH

*A Practical Guide to Life's Essential Daily Habit*

New York *Times* bestselling author Matthew Kelly, in this extraordinary book, powerfully demonstrates that we cannot live the life we have imagined, or experience the joy we yearn for, unless we learn to tend the soul and the baseline tool we use is *PRAYER*.

*"Prayer helps us make the journey from the head to the heart, and it is prayer that allows us to balance the heart and head so that we can live in wisdom."*




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*“Nothing will change your life so completely, absolutely, and forever like really learning how to pray.”*

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Week 1: The *Unexpected* Life (Pgs. 1 – 16)

Simple questions.

Q: How is *your life* working out for you?

Q: If isn't working, what are *you* willing to do about it?

Q: What are *you* missing in the puzzle called *YOU*?



There are four aspects of human *being*:

Body, Will, Intellect and Soul

Generally, we *feed* or are obsessed by three (Body, Will, Intellect) but neglect *SOUL*.

While the Body, the Will and the Intellect are constantly *barking* orders, the *SOUL* is quiet and faithful.

Q: Have you been taking care of *your Soul*? Rate yourself between one and ten.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	GOOD				BETTER				BEST <sup>1</sup>

There are unlimited ways to feed your soul but prayer, **PRAYER** is the best place to start and for many, they only learned *THE PRAYERS* to say as children. Few have experienced PRAYER as a whole new, amazing, spiritual life where we discover *the-best-version-of-ourselves*, where we can sink deep roots to prepare ourselves for the *unexpected* and live our lives to the fullest.

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*“PRAYER is life's essential daily habit.”*

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Q: Why should I pray?

The answer is between you and God and is the work of the SOUL. (Pg. 9)

Matthew Kelly's personal experience

1. My day seems to go better than when I did not pray
2. I had more *clarity*
3. I experienced peace I had never know until I started praying ever day
4. I pray because I cannot thrive without it
5. I pray because I want to live life *deliberately* (Henry David Thoreau)
6. I pray because I do not wish to live without it

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*“The essential practical virtue of PRAYER is PATIENCE.”*

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Prayer teaches us how to live and love, how to be patient, direct connection between our capacity to love and our capacity for patience. (See 1 Cor 13...*“Love is patient...”*)

**Q: Why form *new habits*?** You may look different, be more productive and efficient, accomplish more. Prayer provides peach with helps achieve all of this indirectly.

Habits are incredibly powerful and touch every part of our lives. It takes 21 days to establish a new habit and make strong, deep roots to weather any storm. Just 10 minutes a day in prayer can change your life!

**Q: What do you have to lose? What do you have to gain?** (*Dare to Dream!*)

Everything that exists is a *being*. (Birds, fish, angels, God, us). However, there are different types of *beings*. You are a *human being*. You are *changeable*. You are who you are, but you are also who you are capable of becoming...you have *amazing potential*. Our potential is *unleashed with new habits!*

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*“Our lives change when our habits change.”*

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Week 1: Reflection and practice

- **Begin by making a commitment, a *MEMO to SELF*, to pray every day for 10 minutes.**
- Use a notebook with at least 22 pages and mark each page with numbers 1 – 21.
- On page 1, write the change you would like to see in your life over the next 21 days then everyday record how you experience any of these changes.
  1. Have a better mood/outlook on life
  2. Be a better husband, wife, mother, father, son, daughter, sister, friend, colleague, neighbor
  3. Be more patient.
  4. Spend more time learning about God and reflecting on His plan for my life.
  5. Learn to prioritize my time to include daily prayer
  6. OTHER:
- At the top of each page, write **10 MINUTES** and record every day the time you spend in prayer.

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**Dear SOUL of Mine,**

*You have the heart of a lion, strong and courageous; let nothing distract you, let nobody discourage you from your daily communion with the one who created you.”*

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<sup>1</sup> *Never let it rest until your GOOD is BETTER and your BETTER is BEST.* St Jerome

## Week 2: My Spiritual Journey (Pgs. 19 – 33)

### Conversion<sup>2</sup> experience vs Conversion transformation

A *Conversion experience* is a single decision or event.

A *Conversion transformation* is the beginning of a life-long process, a journey walking daily with God

#### Q: Got 10 minutes?

Beginning at 15 years old, Matthew Kelly details his *conversion experience* and then outlines his *conversion transformation*. He had a good life for a teenager, but he was restless, something was missing. A family friend (John) suggested spending 10 minutes a day in prayer. Kelly immediately dismissed everything the friend said. Six weeks later, Kelly found himself in such despair and emptiness that he crept quietly into a church and began planning his day. Briefly, a peace settled over him and he liked it and wanted more. He added prayer to his planner and then asked the **BIG QUESTION**:

***“God, what do YOU think I should do?”***

This was the question that changed his life forever and continues to transform his life on a *daily basis*. With this as his daily prayer, Kelly describes the peace that comes from *elevating the only opinion that truly matter: God’s*.

#### Q: When was the last time you invited God into the decisions of your life?

Obstacles:

1. Distractions of the world
2. I forget to ask
3. I just don’t want to listen to Him
4. Other:

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*“To think we can find happiness without asking the  
BIG QUESTION is one of our grandest delusions.”*

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#### Q: Has anyone ever taught you *how* to pray?

We are taught as children to *say* prayers.

We are *encouraged* to pray.

We have heard people *talk* about the importance of prayer.

#### Q: But *HOW* do you pray?

Kelly describes his family friend (John), teaching him *HOW* to pray using this simple way. It is sometime referred to as *mental* or *contemplative prayer*. Kelly calls it the *prayer of the heart* – your heart speaking with God about whatever emerges in your *soul*.

### Mental/Contemplative Prayer

1 min: Say a *brief* opening prayer. (See below)

2 mins: Read a short passage from the Bible (Matthew 5: 1-12)

3 mins: Reflect on the passage

2 mins: Read a short passage from the Bible (Matthew 5: 13 – 16)

3 mins: Reflect on the short passage

2 mins: Read a short passage from the Bible (Matthew 6: 25 – 34)

3 mins: Reflect on the short passage

2 mins: Read a short passage from the Bible (Matthew 7: 1 – 5)

3 mins: Reflect on the short passage

2 mins: Read a short passage from the Bible (Matthew 7: 7 – 12)

3 mins: Reflect on the short passage

2 mins: Read a short passage from the Bible

3 mins: Reflect on the short passage

1 min: Say a brief prayer of thanksgiving

Suggested brief prayer: Beginning of Prayer time

*“My Lord and my God, we thank you for all the ways you have blessed us in the past, all the ways you are blessing us today, and all the ways you plan to bless us in the future. Open our hearts and minds to the wisdom you desire to share with us during this time of prayer.  
Amen.”*

Suggested brief prayer: End of Prayer time

*“My Lord and my God, we thank you for these moments of prayer and for all the inspirations and resolutions you have placed in our hearts. Give us the courage to live them in our lives.  
Amen.”*

Kelly states that day was one of the best days of his life. When we have a spiritual awakening, it is as if the sky seems bluer, water tastes fresher, all of life appears in high definition, and every sight, sound, touch, and taste is richer and fuller. And it all begins with PRAYER. (Pg. 32)

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### Dear Soul of Mine,

*Set the worries of this world aside,  
and allow yourself to soar like a bird on the wind.  
Listen to the whispers of your Creator calling gently to you,  
inviting you to remember that just as the body needs food,  
so too your soul needs to be nourished.”*

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<sup>2</sup> *Conversion*: word used to describe when someone changes from one religion to another

Week 3: Life's *Essential Habit* (Pgs. 35 – 63)

*“Our lives change when our habits change. They change for the better with good habits and for the worse with self-destructive habits. Daily prayer is life’s essential habit, laying a foundation upon which many great practical and spiritual habits can spring from.”*

Matthew Kelly, *I Heard God Laugh* (Pg. 35)

**Q: If you could ask God for anything, what would you choose?**

Wisdom like Solomon at age 12 when he became King of Israel?

Teach me to pray like Jesus’ disciples?

Other?

Jesus practiced the *Essential Habit*; He prayed often. He would go to quiet places and pray. The need for prayer is universal and ***prayer is the pathway to wisdom.***

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*“Teach us to pray is the spoken and unspoken desire of every person, in every place and time. It reflects a desire for wisdom, which in turn reflects a desire to learn how to love and discover the-best-way-to- live.”* *I Heard God Laugh* (Pg. 36 – 37)

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**The Prayer Process:** A simple method of prayer that teaches people to pray as they pray.

Matthew Kelly (dynamiccatholic.com)

- Does not require a mentor, guide, or instructions
- Has *prompts* that lead into powerful experience of pray AND teaches HOW TO PRAY
- Anyone can do, anytime, anywhere; just need to get started now
- It expands or contracts to meet us where we are with what we need
- Can be done in one minute or ten or a whole day
- Teaches us to pray deeper and deeper just by practicing it anytime, anywhere
- It is a game changer, a life changer for both inner and outer lives
- It is a guide for daily prayer
- Goal is to have *intimate conversations* with God
- Provides blueprint for creating and sustaining a dynamic habit of daily prayer throughout life
- Impacts a person’s life, relationships, work, health, decisions, every aspect of your life
- One of the highest *spiritual gifts*

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*“There is NOTHING more important of fulfilling than developing a friendship with God.”*

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## One Minute Prayer Process

1. Gratitude: Thank God for whatever you are most grateful for today
2. Awareness: Talk to God about any situation where you were not the-best-version-of-yourself and what you learned from them
3. Significant Moments: Think about your day. Was God trying to say something to you in an event of person"
4. Peace: Ask for God's forgiveness and His deep, abiding peace
5. Freedom: Speak WITH God about what He wants for you to become the best-version-of-yourself
6. Others: Pray for others
7. Finish: Pray the prayer Jesus taught us to pray: The Our Father

To learn more, read *I Heard God Laugh* (Pages 41 – 45)

While there are thousands of ways to pray, the *PRAYER PROCESS* offers an *increased awareness* of who we are and what is happening *within* and *around* us AND how God is at work in everything we do. We learn to live CONSCIOUSLY. (Pg.42 – 43). We become aware of the miracles that are happening within and around us *every day!*

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*"A life with prayer is better than a life without prayer."*

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One day at a time sweet Jesus  
That's all I'm asking from you.  
Just give me the strength  
To do every day what I have to do.  
(Christy Lane)

**Q: How was your day today?**

- The Best!
- Great
- Average
- Not so good
- Horrible!

**Q: Why?**

- Was it something in your control or something within your influence?
- What made the difference?
- How do your best days begin?

Most people never think about this. If you begin your day with PRAYER (even if only 30 seconds), you may discover that everything you experience in that day, changes for the better. Try this for 21 days. After that time, if you don't follow your *prayer routine*, you may feel...

- Less joyful
- Unfocused
- Stressed
- Less conscious of what is happening inside and around you
- Less capable of giving those you care about the love and attention they deserve
- Disconnected from God
- Disconnected from yourself

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*“Success at almost anything rests upon this single principle: Do the basics, do them well, and do them every day, especially when you don’t feel like doing them.”*

*I Heard God Laugh (Pg. 48)*

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The basics of a vibrant daily prayer life... (Pg. 49 – 51)

- What: 10 minutes a day in *conversational prayer*
- When: Pick a specific *non-negotiable* time
- Where: Find a place of few or no distractions that is available every day
- How: Prayer Process
- Why: Explore your motive and be crystal clear about your why; prevents temptation to *skip it*

**Q: What is your image of God? How do you envision God?**

Our Goal: To discover how each of us connects to God

**Do you imagine God as a loving father or as a wrathful father?**

**Do you see Jesus as a teacher, brother, friend, Savior?**

**Do you envision the Holy Spirit as close and personal or distant and impersonal?**

**So, what is God *really* like?** Matthew Kelly selected: Loving, Patient and Faithful (Pg. 53)

Select three attributes of God that helps you connect with Him today.

- |                   |                |                |                      |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| • Infinite        | • Loving       | • Transcendent | • Compassionate      |
| • Eternal         | • Wise         | • Truthful     | • Beautiful          |
| • Good            | • Mysterious   | • Eternal      | • Praise-worthy      |
| • Self-sufficient | • All Powerful | • Patient      | • Faithful           |
| • Ever present    | • One          | • Free         | • All-knowing        |
| • Generous        | • Providential | • Immutable    | • Graceful           |
| • Holy            | • Righteous    | • Approachable | • Merciful           |
| • Personal        | • Just         | • Peaceful     | • Deeply Interest in |
| • Gracious        | • Fascinating  | • Perfect      | all His creations    |
| • Attentive       |                |                |                      |

**Q: Why is the *image* we hold of God so important?**

1. It affects the image you hold of yourself
2. Impacts every relationship in your life
3. Impacts your relationship with God more than how you imagine God to be

Through the *daily habit of prayer* (and other spiritual experiences and practices) our image of God gets *adjusted!* Our image of God impacts *everything!*

**Q: How well do YOU know God?**

Kelly’s response: “Better than I did last year, but not as well as I would like to know Him.” (Pg. 55)

Ask God to reveal Himself to you, to re-align how you perceive Him with who He *really* is.

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*“There is a difference between knowing about someone and actually knowing that person.”*

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**Q: What is your name for God?**

Another way we connect in relationships and conversation is through names. (Pg. 56) The name you use for God helps you connect *with* God and is essential to *how* to pray. Names also signal levels of *intimacy*. Conversation is a path to that *intimacy* and prayer is a conversation.

To have a better understanding of how to have a conversation with God, consider the *qualities* of God in relation to the three persons of God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

God as Father: adviser, guide, wise counsel

God as Son: teacher, friend

God as Spirit: great encourager, inspiring us and transforming every minute into a mini-Pentecost

Our relationship with God should be very *nature dynamic*; positive, full of life and energy, changing and growing, a force that stimulates change and progress. How we address God is important. Talking to Him should be beautiful and intimate. (Read Exodus 33)

Q: Have you started your *Daily Prayer Time* yet?

If not, do it now! The sooner you begin the habit, the deeper the habit will take root in your life. Never miss your *Daily Prayer Time*! If you find that you don't have one minute or ten minutes to pray, then it will be easy to exclude Him from the other parts of your day and your life and you will notice the difference.

Children thrive on routine. Adults thrive on routine, too. Let the habit of *Daily Prayer Time* be the beginning of many powerful new routines in your life, so you may flourish like never before.

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**Dear Soul of Mine,**

*come to the silence and learn what it is that you need to thrive.  
Embrace what it is that makes you dance for joy and share with  
everyone you meet the love that Love Himself has filled you with.*

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## Week 4: Six Powerful Spiritual Lessons (Pgs. 65 - 87)

*“Are you living your life from the heart? Are you living your life from the mind? OR, have you found the delicate balance between the heart and the mind that allows you to live in growing wisdom?”*

The Sioux Indians believe that the longest journey we can make in this life is from the head to the heart. Our pilgrimage of prayer could be considered our longest spiritual journey. The heart can be emotional, but it is also deeply spiritual.

Prayer helps us make that journey AND allows us to balance the heart and the mind so that we can live in wisdom. It is a series of ordinary moments<sup>3</sup>.

**Q: Will you choose to make this journey by adopting a *Daily Prayer Time*?**

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*“Never let what you can’t do interfere with what you can do!”*

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If your answer is NO, stop here and go on with your life.

If your answer is YES, there are six key *SHIFTS* or *moments* you will encounter on your journey and they are *seismic!* (“...of enormous proportions or effect.”) Pray for grace, wisdom and courage to embrace them.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Key Shift/Moment: *Begin the Conversation* (Pgs.68 – 69)

PRAYER is a conversation and requires us to journey from the HEAD to the HEART. That requires you to *think differently*; to shift from *thinking* type of prayer to a *relationship* style of prayer. Use the *PRAYER PROCESS* to get the conversation started.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Key Shift/Moment: *Ask God what HE WANTS* (Pgs. 69 -71)

When we stop asking God what we want and start asking Him what **He** wants; we ask the BIG QUESTIONS such as ...

“God, what do you think I should do?”

“God, what do you think I should focus on in my relationship with my children?”

“God, what area of my marriage should I work on growing?”

“God, what do you think I should do with the rest of my life?”

This is *seismic!* When we begin asking God for advice, direction, inspiration and guidance...that is a significant moment; a shift in our spiritual growth. We open ourselves to *His wisdom!*

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Key Shift/Moment: *Give Yourself to Prayer* (Pgs. 71 – 72)

STOP *doing* prayer and START *giving* yourself to prayer! It’s about letting God do what He wants to do with you during the time of prayer. We learn *carefree timelessness*<sup>4</sup>. This is when there is no agenda; it is not focused on doing or accomplishing something, only letting go and focus on *being*. It is simply enjoying *carefree timelessness* with God.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Key Shift/Moment: *Transform Everything into Prayer* (73 – 77)

*“The daily habit of prayer leads us to recognize God’s presence in every aspect and moment of our lives. Not that He is in OUR presence but that we are continually in HIS presence. To pray is to live in the presence of God at our side throughout our day.”*

God is with when we discover that every activity can be transformed into prayer by offering it to God... whenever we are washing dishes, changing a diaper, mowing the lawn, commuting to work, having dinner with your family, taking care of a sick relative, paying the bills and working on your budget, talking to your children, holding hands and making love with your spouse. Learning to transform daily activities into prayer can be as simple as:

- Offering the next hour of your work for a friend who is sick
- Offer the task you are least looking forward to today to God as a prayer for the person you know who is suffering most today and do the task with great love and better than you have ever done before
- Pray for others as they come to mind during the day

Prayer is ongoing and constant. The most mundane task becomes abundantly meaningful when we include God.

**Ways is to Guide God around our life!** *“Lord, we are going to have lunch with my friend Anthony today. He has had a hard time in his marriage lately; please encourage him.” OR “Lord, it has been a stressful day and I am worn out. Please help me enter my home with patience and calm, and to love my wife and children as if it were the last time I was ever going to see them.”*

**Q: Is there beauty in the way you are living your life?**

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*“This daily habit of prayer teaches us to recognize God’s presence throughout the day and transform each part of our day into prayer. This is a beautiful way to live.”*

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#### 5<sup>th</sup> Key Shift/Moment: *Make Yourself Available* (Pgs. 77 – 82)

**Q: Want to know the secret to supreme happiness?**

A: Strip away everything in your heart and set aside all in your life that makes you less available to God... (*Easier said than done?*) How? ...and then surrender yourself to His loving plans and care.

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*“The JOY we experience (when we do this) is proportional to how available we make ourselves to God.”*

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We never realize how little we really need, these are things that *rent space in our minds*, and cloud our heart and minds and prevents us from making ourselves available to God.

**Q: Is your life focused on the things that matter most?**

Make space for God in your life; 100% availability. This is called *spiritual availability*.

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**Q: How available are you to God? Are you ready to surrender and make yourself completely available to Him?**

Matthew Kelly's Prayer of Surrender to God (Pg. 82)

Lord, here I am.  
 I trust that you have an incredible plan for me.  
 Today I surrender my whole being to your care.  
 I surrender my live, my plans and my very self to you.  
 I make myself 100 percent available to you today.  
 Transform me. Transform my life.  
 Everything is on the table. Take what you want to take and give what you want to give.  
 Transform me into the person you created me to be, so I can live the life you envisioned  
 for me at the beginning of time.  
 'I hold nothing back.  
 I am 100 percent available.  
 Lead me, challenge me, encourage me, and open my eyes to all your amazing possibilities.  
 Show me what it is YOU want me to do, and I will do it.  
 Amen.

**6<sup>th</sup> Key Shift/Moment: *Just Keep Showing UP!* (Pgs. 83 – 85))**

**Q: What is the most practical wisdom you have ever received about prayer?**

*Just keep showing up!*

Some days prayer will be

- easy, sometimes difficult
- like an *epic mountaintop* experience, other times like a deep, dark, fearful valley
- filled with hope or lack enthusiasm
- abundantly fruitful or total wondering if He is even listening

Prayer isn't about feelings...

*"When prayer doesn't feel good, our natural and very human reaction is to wonder what we are doing wrong."*

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*"Prayer is about what God is doing IN us, and WITH us...  
 when we show up."*

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Summary (Pgs. 85 -87)

*"Remember God does all the heavy lifting."*

While Kelly list 6 significant moments, marker, shifts, lessons in your journey, there are many more we take on the *journey of the soul*. There are no rules, or age, education, requirements, or worldly conditions that prevent you from embracing these spiritual lessons right now. You only need *listen* and respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Guard your hearts and remain vigilant.

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*“Place the daily habit of prayer at the center of your life. Make it a  
NON-NEGOTIABLE, sacred daily commitment. Do it today.”*

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First: Begin the Conversation

Second: Ask God What HE Wants

Third: Give Yourself to Prayer

Fourth: Transform Everything into Prayer

Fifth: Make Yourself Available

Sixth: Just Keep Showing UP!

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***Dear Soul of Mine,***

*as you stumble and fumble toward ecstasy,  
learn to listen to the voice of the one who created you.  
He speaks gently to you throughout the day,  
and delights in those moments  
when you sit with Him in solitude.”*

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<sup>3</sup> *Ordinary Moments*: Matthew Kelly often refers to these as Holy Moments. He states that it was not that the saints were any holier than the rest of us only that they had more Holy Moments. A **Holy Moment** is a **moment** when you open yourself to God. You make yourself available to Him. You set aside what you feel like doing in that **moment**, and you set aside self-interest, and for one **moment** you simply do what you prayerfully believe God is calling you to do in that **moment**. That is a **Holy Moment**.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Careless Timelessness: From *The Seven Levels of Intimacy* by Matthew Kelly. It is time together without an agenda.

## Week 5: The God Who Gave us LAUGHTER (Pgs. 89 - 109)

The genius of God is evident in laughter. Laughter is medicine for the body, mind and soul. Its benefits are endless:

- Strengthens immune system
- Improves mood
- Diminishes pain
- Decreases stress
- Natural antidepressant
- Relaxes the body
- Eases tension
- Leaves muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes
- Increases oxygen-rich air into lungs
- Reduces blood pressure
- Increases blood flow
- Can help reduce risk of heart attack
- Increases happiness
- Reduces anger and other negative emotions
- Increases resilience in face of obstacles and other unpleasant events
- Increases energy and enthusiasm for life
- Makes people more joyful results in healthier heart
- Increases endorphins in brain and creates sense of well-being
- Improves personal satisfaction
- Strengthens relationships
- Helps defuse conflict
- Shifts our perspective
- Attracts other people to us
- Connects us with others
- Makes our burdens seem lighter
- Can reduce anger and conflict
- Can create a sense of belonging
- Bonds people together
- Enhances teamwork
- Improves productivity
- Builds trust
- Encourages collaboration
- Increases likability
- Draws people in to listen
- Improves memory and retention
- Makes arguments more persuasive
- Increases learning by reducing classroom anxiety
- Releases serotonin which improves focus, decision making, problem solving, objectivity, openness to new ideas and overall brainpower.

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*“Humor is essential to the human experience!”*

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Q: Where is the humor in our experience of God, religion, and spirituality?

Q: Do you believe He *didn't* have a sense of humor?

Q: Wouldn't you love to hear Jesus laugh?

Q: Wouldn't you love to know what made Him laugh and how He made others laugh?

God, our Father, delights in his children especially when we open our hearts and minds to Him and He hugs us, He talks to us, He cries with us and yes, He laughs with us.

Q: Does the God who gave us laughter not laugh at Himself? Does He not have a sense of humor? Kelly states, *“I yearn to know more and more the God who gave us laughter.”*

The more we get to *know* God, the more we *desire* to know Him. Never underestimate how impactful some of the small things God calls you to do may end up being.

Matthew Kelly shares his experience on the day he heard God laugh and what he heard and felt and experienced on that day. Because it is so beautiful and relatable, I have chosen not to summarize. I believe it is something each person must read slowly and several times.

**Q: Want to change your life?**

A: Read pages 93 – 97 to change your life.

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*“Be still and know that I am God.”*

*Psalm 46:10*

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The spiritual life is a constant invitation to go beyond the shallow and superficial offerings of this world and seek out the deep places to access the most wonderful and amazing *spiritual* experiences in this life. You can't catch tons of fish in shallow water. (Read Luke 5: 1 – 11)

**Q: What is the one thing that God delights in above all else?**

Kelly tells the story of his 8 yr. old daughter Isabel who comes to his office and wants to talk about something. He witnesses his daughter “growing into her soul, embracing who she truly is and warding off the temptation to be *less than who she was created to be.*” As he shares their conversation, he notes how much God *delights* in sharing time with His sons and daughters, just casually talking about the day, the dreams, the things that weigh heavy on our hearts – the wordless togetherness happens at the height of intimacy. No ego, no persona, no need to explain ourselves, no need to understand or to be understood – only acceptance and love.

**Q: Is your life working? Do you lead a very busy life?**

Busy is not your friend. Busy leads to overwhelmed, wear, tired, burned out, worn out, discouraged, anxious and stressed.

**Q: What one word would you use to describe how you feel on a daily basis?**

Overwhelmed?

**Q: How often do you feel *overwhelmed*?**

**Q: Do you feel like there is more to do than hours in the day?**

**Q: Are you overwhelmed with really important matters or things that are shallow and insignificant?**

Busyness may be the main obstacle between God and His people in the modern world. The devil likes it this way. Prayer is the antidote for the *poison of busyness*!

Disease:	Busyness
Symptoms:	Overwhelmed → Weary, Exhaustion → Discouraged
Cure:	Sitting with God in <u><i>Classroom of Silence</i></u>

Busy leads to overwhelmed and overwhelmed leads to weariness and weariness to frustration and frustration to discouragement. All sure signs that God is far from our plans.

Only in the **classroom of silence** can we gain the calm and clarity that allow us to know when to wait patiently and when to push forward impatiently, when to plan diligently and when to live spontaneously. It is in the quiet of our own hearts that we learn how to calmly manage the present and passionately create the future. It is this calmness and clarity that will allow us to realize what we are called to and what matters most. Finding our place in the world and beginning to fulfill our mission is then nothing more than a matter of time. A man or woman who takes time in quiet reflection sincerely seeking to find his or her place in the world will not be ignored. First will come the inner calm, then will come the desire to serve, and then will come a wonderful clarity of purpose. Guided by that calm and clarity, we begin to affect what we can affect, and only then do we truly begin to have an effect.”

— **Matthew Kelly, Perfectly Yourself: 9 Lessons for Enduring Happiness**

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*“Prayer teaches us how to live by showing us what matters most and what matters least. Daily prayer is a great opportunity to decide what commitments to agree to and which ones we are going to graciously decline.”*

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Two techniques Kelly uses to gain clarity on what is the best use of his time. What matters most, what matters least:

1. Do I feel free to say *no*?
2. Reviewing what that commitment calls me to do and determining how I really feel about doing it as I am driving to fulfill it. (*What was I THINKING* when I agreed to do this?!) and then, how might I feel as I am leaving... good use or waste of my time? Satisfied and fulfilled OR total waste of time?

Find time to sit with God and go through your current commitments and ask these questions.

**Q: Which commitments are life-giving to you and others? Are they essential? Are they self-imposed? When you agreed to them did you feel free to say no? If not, why not?**

**Dear Soul of Mine,**

*Until you discover God’s playfulness,  
You will not enter into the depths of the spiritual life.  
Until you discover the playfulness of the child within,  
You will not discover the playfulness of God.  
Dance in the rain, play in the mud, lose track of time,  
And maybe then you will find yourself lost in God,  
And found once and for all.”*

To live deeply and deliberately with *focused attention*, ask yourself these questions.

**Q: In your life, what is helping? What is hurting? Who is helping? Who is hurting? Does your life make sense to you? Is this the life you want?**

The life-changing habit of daily prayer helps us to make these assessments and so much more. Prayer inspires us to live with great intention and avoid wasting our lives. Busy drags our lives out of focus. Prayer brings our lives into focus. You are where you are right now for a reason.

**Q: Have you ever really tried prayer as a central component of your life?**



Q: Are you willing to take it to the next level?

Q: Are you willing to try placing prayer at the center of your days?

Choose carefully. It is one of the biggest decisions you will ever make.  
Listen carefully to life and closely to your heart, and you will hear God laugh.  
Sing with Him, dance with Him, laugh with Him, cry with Him, and love Him.  
Everything is better with Him!



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“Being willing to go to the deep places is not about the amount of time we spend set apart from daily activity in prayer. Going to the deep places with God is about trusting Him, making ourselves available to Him, committing to a habit of daily prayer, and being mindful of His presence in each moment throughout the day. He wants to laugh with you and cry with you, listen to you and speak to you.

Ask God to draw you deeper into the mysteries of the spiritual life. It is a request He will not refuse, and the wonders He will reveal to you will leave you *awestruck* – AND change your life forever.”

Matthew Kelly

*I Heard God Laugh (Pg. 97)*

