

Pray Without Filler

“And Father, we, um, just want to thank You for Your blessings. And, uh, we just, Lord, want to, uh, just thank You, Lord, for just, really just being so good to us, Father. And Father, we just ask that You just forgive us of our sins, Father. And, um, just bless us now, Father, and just lead, guide, and direct us, Lord. And we just ask all this in Jesus’ name, Father, amen.”

Although there are several problems with praying such soul-deadening prayers, I want to point out two. Both have to do with using words purposelessly.

First, recall that in the Third Commandment, God tells us, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). The original Hebrew here means that we should not use the Lord’s name emptily or without purpose. When we use God’s name like filler for our prayers, or when we address Him again and again without any real purpose in doing so, we take His name in vain.

Second, repeatedly using the name of the Lord or “um,” “uh,” “just,” and the like, typically reflects thoughtless prayer. The person launches out into prayer, but drifts aimlessly from one random thought to another. He’s “just praying,” and not praying about much of anything in particular. This pattern tends toward heartless prayer as well. The words sound hollow. They convey no sense of urgency or importance about the prayer. And if our prayers do not even move us, how do we expect them to move God? None of the prayers in the Bible sound so pointless or flat. Instead we read of men like Elijah who “prayed earnestly” (James 5:17).

Removing needless and meaningless verbal filler makes our prayers clearer, stronger, and more like a purposeful conversation with God.

Excerpted from Donald S. Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 2003).

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