

Prayer

The Purpose Of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. In August 2005, **Newsweek** and **Beliefnet** asked 1,004 Americans what they believe and how they practice their faith
2. One of the questions was this: **What do you think is the most important purpose of prayer?**
3. Here are their responses...
 - a. To seek God's guidance (**27%**)
 - b. To thank God (**23%**)
 - c. To be close to God or the divine (**19%**)
 - d. To help others (**13%**)
 - e. To improve a person's life (**9%**)
 - f. Other (**4%**)
 - g. Don't know (**5%**)

[What is the purpose of prayer? As the answers above suggest, there are many reasons to pray. One way to remember "**The Purpose Of Prayer**" is with the acronym **ACTS**, where "**A**" stands for...]

I. ADORATION

A. EXPRESSING ADORATION...

1. God is certainly worthy of our praise, our adoration
2. While we can praise God in song, we can also praise God in prayer

B. EXAMPLES OF ADORATION IN PRAYER...

1. When Paul prayed for the Ephesians, he took time to praise God - **Ep 3:14-21**
2. David provides an example of offering adoration and praise - **1 Chr 29:10-13**

[Expressing **adoration** was not one of the responses in the aforementioned survey, but it is certainly an important purpose of prayer. Continuing with our acronym **ACTS**, "**C**" stands for...]

II. CONFESSION

A. CONFESSING OUR SINS...

1. There is mercy to be found in confessing one's sins - **Pro 28:13**
2. The Christian enjoys cleansing of sin by the blood of Jesus - **1 Jn 1:7-10**

B. EXAMPLES OF CONFESSING SINS...

1. Jesus provided an example in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican - **Lk 18:10-14**
2. Again, David provides an example with his confession of sin - **Psa 51:1-13**

[Obtaining forgiveness by **confessing** sins is a blessing now enjoyed only through Christ (**Jn 14:6**). Once we have put on Christ (cf. **Ga 3:27**), prayer is crucial to remaining forgiven. “**T**” stands for...]

III. THANKSGIVING

A. OFFERING THANKSGIVING...

1. Being thankful is emphasized repeatedly in exhortations to pray - **Ep 5:20; Co 4:2; 1 Th 5:17-18**
2. The antidote to anxiety is to pray for everything, with thanksgiving - **Ph 4:6**

B. EXAMPLES OF OFFERING THANKSGIVING...

1. Christ set an example of thanksgiving - **Mt 11:25; 26:27; Jn 6:11; 11:41**
2. Daniel had the custom to thank God three times a day - **Dan 6:10**

[We cannot discount the importance of **thanksgiving** in our prayers. Especially if we expect God to answer us as we make requests for future blessings. This leads to the final letter, where “**S**” is for...]

IV. SUPPLICATION

A. MAKING SUPPLICATION...

1. We are encouraged to let our requests be known to God - **Ph 4:6**
2. We are commanded to make supplications for all men - **1 Ti 2:1-2**

B. EXAMPLES OF MAKING SUPPLICATION...

1. “Real widows” are known for their supplications night and day - **1 Ti 5:5**
2. Solomon made supplication at dedication of the temple - **1 Kin 8:28-29**
3. Jesus made supplication as He was crucified; Stephen also, as he was being stoned - **Lk 23:34; Ac 7:59-60**

CONCLUSION

1. With the aid of a simple acronym (**ACTS**), we should never forget “**The Purpose Of Prayer**”...
 - a. Adoration
 - b. Confession
 - c. Thanksgiving
 - d. Supplication
2. It is good to understand prayer’s **purpose**, but do we also...
 - a. Appreciate the **power** of prayer?
 - b. Even have the **privilege** of prayer?
 - c. Understand the **principles** of prayer?
 - d. Manifest the **persistence** of prayer?
 - e. Engage in the **practice** of prayer?

Succeeding lessons in this series will endeavor to ensure that we do...!

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The Power Of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus anticipated that people would become slack in their prayers...
 - * a. Telling the parable of the persistent widow, that people might always pray - **Lk 18:1-7**
 - * b. Wondering if He would find faith on earth (i.e., people praying) when He returned - **Lk 18:8**
2. Paul frequently exhorted Christians to be diligent in their prayers...
 - a. "praying always with all prayer and supplication..." - **Ep 6:18**
 - b. "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" - **Co 4:2**
 - c. "Pray without ceasing" - **1 Th 5:17**

[If we have become slack in our prayers, might that be an indication that we do not appreciate "The Power Of Prayer"? Have we forgotten what a privilege it is to pray? Consider then, some...]

I. EXAMPLES OF THE POWER OF PRAYER

A. THERE IS FORGIVENESS FROM GOD...

1. The Christian can find forgiveness through the blood of Christ - **1 Jn 1:7-10**
 2. Thus the erring Christian is told to repent and pray - **Ac 8:22**
- **Don't you want the assurance of knowing that your sins are forgiven?**

B. THERE IS PEACE FROM GOD...

1. The antidote to anxiety is to pray - **Ph 4:6**
 2. The Christian will find their hearts and minds guarded by the peace of God - **Ph 4:7**
- **Don't you want the peace of mind and heart that surpasses understanding?**

C. THERE IS STRENGTH FROM GOD...

1. Paul prayed that the Ephesians might be strengthened in the inner man - **Ep 3:14-16,20**
 2. When we need to be strong, Christians can likewise pray for themselves!
- **Don't you want the power that is beyond our comprehension?**

D. THERE IS OPPORTUNITY FROM GOD...

1. Paul realized that God provided him opportunity to teach others - **1 Co 3:5 (NASB)**
 2. He knew that the Lord often opened doors for such opportunities - **1 Co 16:9; 2 Co 2:12**
 3. He therefore requested prayer that such opportunities would continue - **Co 4:3**
- **Don't you want the Lord to give you opportunity to lead others to Christ?**

E. THERE IS BOLDNESS FROM GOD...

1. When the apostles needed boldness, they prayed and God delivered - **Ac 4:23-31**
 2. When Paul needed boldness, he asked for prayers in his behalf - **Ep 6:19-20**
- **Don't you want boldness when you speak to others about Christ?**

F. THERE IS WISDOM FROM GOD...

1. Wisdom is not knowledge, but insight that makes the best use of the knowledge one has
2. The Christian is promised wisdom through prayer without doubt - **Ja 1:5-8**
- **Don't you want the wisdom that comes from above?**

G. THERE IS HEALING FROM GOD...

1. Those who are sick should ask elders to pray for them - **Ja 5:14-15**
2. Those who have sinned should confess, and we should pray for one another - **Ja 5:16**
- **Don't you want the aid of God whenever in need of physical or spiritual healing?**

H. THERE IS TRANQUILITY FROM GOD...

1. The Scriptures proclaim God has ultimate control over the nations - **Dan 4:17; Ro 13:1-7**
2. Thus we are commanded to pray for our rulers, that we may lead a quiet (tranquil, ASV) and peaceable life - **1 Ti 2:1-4**
- **Don't you want to live in peace and tranquility, and for others to as well?**

CONCLUSION

1. The **power** of prayer can indeed be a blessing...
 - a. To the one who prays in faith
 - b. For those for whom prayers are offered

2. There is **help in time of need** from God...
 - a. We have a wonderful High Priest who understands our problems - **He 4:14-15**
 - b. Thus we can at anytime approach God boldly in prayer, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need - **He 4:16**
 - **Don't you want mercy and grace whenever needed, for yourself and for others?**

3. Indeed, the effective fervent prayer of a righteous man (cf. **Ja 5:16**)...
 - a. "avails much" (NKJV)
 - b. "can accomplish much (NASB)
 - c. "has great power" (ESV)
 - d. "is powerful and effective" (NIV)
 - **If such is true of one righteous man, how about the prayers of many righteous?**

4. Do we believe in the **power** of prayer...?
 - a. Then let us pray always
 - b. Let us continue earnestly in prayer
 - **Yes, let us "pray without ceasing" (1 Th 5:17)!**

But not all have the privilege of "The Power Of Prayer". In our next study, we will see why...

Prayer

The Privilege Of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. In **"The Power Of Prayer"** we saw where prayer can provide...
 - a. **Forgiveness** from God
 - b. **Peace** from God
 - c. **Strength** from God
 - d. **Wisdom** from God
 - e. **Boldness** from God
 - f. **Opportunity** from God
 - g. **Healing** from God
 - h. **Tranquility** from God

2. Yet **"The Privilege Of Prayer"** is not available to all who pray; for some...
 - a. Their prayers will be an abomination to God
 - b. Their prayers will fall on deaf ears
 - c. Their prayers will be hindered
 - d. Their prayers will not be answered favorably

[We might be praying people, even pray fervently; but do we have the right to pray, to expect God to heed us when we pray? Take note...]

I. FOR WHOM PRAYER IS NOT A PRIVILEGE

A. THOSE WHO WILL NOT HEED GOD'S WORD...

1. Those who turn their ears from the law, their prayers are an abomination - **Pro 28:9**
2. Such is the case of those who will not endure sound doctrine - cf. **2 Ti 4:3-4**
- **If we will not listen to God, why should He listen to us?**

B. THOSE WHOSE SINS SEPARATE THEM FROM GOD...

1. Sins can separate one from God so He will not hear - **Isa 59:1-2**
2. Such is the condition of those who will not seek God's forgiveness - **Ro 6:23**
- **If we reject God's forgiveness of sins, can we expect Him to listen to us?**

C. THOSE WHO FAIL TO TREAT OTHERS JUSTLY...

1. Who fail to consider the poor - **Psa 41:1-3**
2. Who fail to treat their wives as they should - **Mal 2:13-14; 1 Pe 3:7**
3. Who fail to make things right with those they have offended - **Mt 5:23-24**
3. Who fail to forgive those who sinned against them - **Mt 18:21-35**
- **If we will not treat others justly, how can we hope to receive God's mercy?**

D. THOSE WHO PRAY WITHOUT FAITH...

1. Without faith it is impossible to please God - **He 11:6**
2. Asking with doubt in our hearts ensures failure - **Ja 1:5-8**
- **If we doubt God's existence and ability to provide, why should God answer us?**

[Thus “**The Privilege Of Prayer**” is not extended to everyone. It is a blessing graciously bestowed on those whose hearts are in a proper condition. Consider, then...]

II. FOR WHOM PRAYER IS A PRIVILEGE

A. THE SINNER SEEKING TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS...

1. This we learn from the example of Cornelius
 - a. He was a good man, but still in need of salvation - **Ac 10:1-2**; cf. **11:14**
 - b. His prayers and alms had been noticed by God - **Ac 10:4,31**
 - c. Thus God saw to it that he had an opportunity to hear the words whereby he could be saved (i.e., the gospel of Christ) - **Ac 11:14**
 2. **Note well:** he was not saved by praying per se!
 - a. He needed to hear “words” by which he would be saved - **Ac 11:14**
 - b. I.e. the gospel of Christ, which is God’s power to salvation - **Ro 1:16**
 - c. Just as Saul of Tarsus was still in his sins, despite praying - cf. **Ac 9:11; 22:16**
 3. Yet God heard the prayer of a sinner like Cornelius
 - a. Who was hungering and thirsting for righteousness - cf. **Mt 5:6**
 - b. Who was asking, seeking, knocking - cf. **Mt 7:7-8**
 - c. Providing an opportunity to one day hear and obey the gospel of Christ
- **For a sinner seeking truth and righteousness, such prayers will be heard!**

B. THE CHRISTIAN WITH JESUS AS THEIR HIGH PRIEST...

1. **Jesus** has become our **High Priest**
 - a. He is now a merciful and faithful high priest, able to aid His brethren - **He 2:17-18**
 - b. Making it possible to approach God’s throne boldly - **He 4:14-16**
 - c. Able to save to the uttermost, since He ever lives to intercede - **He 7:25**
 2. **Jesus** has now become our **Advocate** and **Mediator**
 - a. Our advocate with the Father - **1 Jn 2:1**
 - b. The one mediator between God and man - **1 Ti 2:5**
 - c. Who makes intercession for us at the right hand of God - **Ro 8:34**
- **Such is the blessing of those who have put on Christ in baptism and become children of God through faith (cf. Ga 3:26-27)**

CONCLUSION

1. The ears of the Lord are open to the prayer of the righteous... - **1 Pe 3:12**
 - a. We must submit to the righteousness of God offering in Christ - cf. **Ro 10:1-4**
 - b. I.e., we must respond to the gospel of Christ - cf. **Ro 1:16-17**
2. If we desire “**The Privilege Of Prayer**”, then we must be either...
 - a. A faithful child of God through obedience to Jesus Christ
 - b. An sinner with a good and noble heart, seeking after truth and righteousness

The **sinner** hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be filled; how much more the **child of God** when he or she experiences “**The Privilege Of Prayer**” in all its fulness...!

Prayer

The Principles Of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. In “**The Privilege Of Prayer**” we saw that few truly benefited from prayer...
 - a. **Children of God**, who became such through obedience to Jesus Christ
 - b. **Sinners seeking after truth and righteousness**, who will be heard in that God will provide them opportunity to hear and obey the truth

2. The full benefit of prayer comes only as “**The Principles Of Prayer**” are observed...
 - a. Principles laid down by Jesus and His inspired apostles
 - b. Principles that determine the final outcome of our prayers

[What are “**The Principles Of Prayer**” that must govern our praying? First of all...]

I. WE MUST PRAY IN FAITH

A. PRAYER REQUIRES FAITH...

1. “And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” - **Mt 21:22**
2. Otherwise, prayer will not be answered - cf. **Ja 1:5-8**

B. FAITH IN GOD...

1. That He is, and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him - **He 11:6**
2. Such faith comes from the Word of God - **Ro 10:17**

[With the aid of His Word, we can have the kind of **faith** that pleases God, and ensures an answer to our prayers.]

II. WE MUST PRAY WITH HUMILITY

A. HUMILITY BEFORE GOD...

1. A virtue highly valued by God - **Isa 57:15; 66:1-2**
2. The Lord is near, and saves those with contrite spirits - **Psa 34:18**
3. He gives grace to the humble - **Pro 3:34**

B. HUMILITY IN PRAYER...

1. Exemplified in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector - **Lk 18:9-14**
2. Humility leads to exaltation by God - **Lk 18:14; Ja 4:10**

[With **faith** and **humility** before God, we are prepared to pray with the proper disposition...]

III. WE MUST PRAY IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S WILL

A. GOD'S WILL AND OUR PRAYERS...

1. Prayers are answered favorably if we ask "according to His will" - **1 Jn 5:14**
2. Prayers more concerned with our will than God's are turned down - **Ja 4:3**

B. HIS WILL BE DONE...

1. So Jesus taught us to pray - **Mt 6:9-10**
2. So He prayed in the garden at Gethsemane - **Lk 22:42**
3. Such praying made easier when our will is to do God's will - cf. **Jn 4:34**

[With **faith** in God and **humility** toward Him, we will gladly yield to **His will** for us. Note also...]

IV. WE MUST PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING**A. PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING...**

1. "giving thanks always for all things to God" - **Ep 5:20**
2. "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" - **Ph 4:6**
3. "...prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" - **Co 4:2**
4. "pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks" - **1 Th 5:17-18**

B. THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE...

1. God's people were always to be thankful - **Psa 100:4; Co 3:15**
2. Ingratitude an indication of apostasy - **Ro 1:21; 2 Ti 3:2**

[Do we seriously think God will help us with our **present burdens** if don't take the time to thank Him for **past blessings**? Finally, another principle of prayer is that...]

V. WE MUST PRAY IN THE NAME OF JESUS**A. PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS...**

1. Taught by Jesus Himself to His disciples - **Jn 14:13-14; 16:23**
2. Commanded by Paul to the Christians at Ephesus - **Ep 5:20**

B. THE NAME OF JESUS AND PRAYER...

1. Means more than simply adding "in Jesus' name" at the end of our prayers
2. We acknowledge Jesus as the only way by which we can approach God - **Jn 14:6**
3. We recognize Him as our "high priest" who intercedes for us - **He 7:24-25; Jn 14:13**

CONCLUSION

1. In summary, "**The Principles Of Prayer**" we have examined are these...
 - a. We must pray in faith
 - b. We must pray with humility
 - c. We must pray in harmony with the will of God
 - d. We must pray with thanksgiving
 - e. We must pray in the name of Jesus

2. We cannot overestimate **the value of the Word of God** in regards to these principles...
 - a. Faith comes from the Word of God
 - b. Humility is learned by reading the Word of God
 - c. Knowing the will of God is impossible without the Word of God
 - d. Thanksgiving is made easier when we read of our blessings in the Word of God
 - e. The importance of having Jesus as our High Priest is revealed in the Word of God

With the Word of God to guide and aid us in observing “**The Principles Of Prayer**”, we are better equipped to make prayer a truly meaningful and beneficial experience in our lives. But there is yet another principle of prayer (persistence) to which we shall give consideration in our next study...

Prayer

The Persistence Of Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study on “**The Principles Of Prayer**”, we surveyed several essential principles...
 - a. We must pray in faith
 - b. We must pray with humility
 - c. We must pray in harmony with the will of God
 - d. We must pray with thanksgiving
 - e. We must pray in the name of Jesus
2. There is another principle of prayer worthy of careful consideration...
 - a. We must pray with **persistence**
 - b. A principle of prayer that was very important to Jesus

[The importance of “**The Persistence Of Prayer**” can be gleaned from the attention given to it in the Scriptures. Note first of all...]

I. TEACHINGS OF PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

A. THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT FRIEND...

1. Told in connection with a request for teaching on prayer - **Lk 11:1**
 2. Following instruction providing a model for prayer - **Lk 11:2-4**
 3. The parable itself, easy enough to understand - **Lk 11:5-8**
 4. Followed with an emphasis on being persistent in asking, seeking, knocking - **Lk 11:9-10**
- **Note how persistence is connected to learning how to pray!**

B. THE PARABLE OF THE PERSISTENT WIDOW...

1. Told that men always ought to pray and not lose heart - **Lk 18:1**
 2. The parable itself, illustrating the value of persistent requests - **Lk 18:2-5**
 3. Adding that God will certainly heed His chosen who cry out day and night - **Lk 18:6-8a**
 4. Followed by concern for whether such faith will be found when He returns - **Lk 18:8b**
- **Note how persistence is related to having faith in the Lord!**

C. THE TEACHING OF PAUL...

1. “... continuing steadfastly in prayer” - **Ro 12:12**
 2. “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” - **Ep 6:18**
 3. “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;” - **Co 4:2**
 4. “pray without ceasing” - **1 Th 5:17**
- **Note how often persistence is mentioned in exhortations to pray!**

[Persistence in prayer must be very important to be stressed so often. Yet we find more than simply **teaching** on persistence, we also find...]

II. EXAMPLES OF PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

A. JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE...

1. When deeply distressed over His impending suffering - **Mt 26:36-39**
 2. While His closest disciples slept, he prayed three times - **Mt 26:40-44**
 3. In which He received the necessary help to face what lay ahead - **Mt 26:45-47**
 - a. Strengthened by an angel; cf. **Lk 22:41-44**
 - b. Heard by God, though His actual request was not answered - cf. **He 5:7**
- **If the Son of God needed persistence in prayer, do not we?**

B. PAUL AND HIS THORN IN THE FLESH...

1. Paul endured the infirmity of persecution - **2 Co 11:30-33; 12:7,10**; cf. **Judg 2:3**
 2. He prayed three times that it might be removed - **2 Co 12:8**
 3. It was not, but the Lord provided what he needed
 - a. Sufficient grace and the strength of Christ to endure - **2 Co 12:9**
 - b. Enabling him to even take pleasure in his infirmities - **2 Co 12:10**
- **If the apostle of Christ needed persistence in prayer, do not we?**

C. THE PRAYERS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS...

1. The church in Jerusalem continued steadfastly in prayer - **Ac 2:42**
 2. When Peter was imprisoned, constant prayer was offered for him - **Ac 12:5,12**
 3. Epaphras labored fervently in prayer for his brethren at Colosse - **Co 4:12**
 4. Widows were assumed to be devoted to prayer - **1 Ti 5:5** (like Anna, cf. **Lk 2:36-37**)
- **If the early church needed persistence in prayer, do not we?**

CONCLUSION

1. With such **examples** and **teaching** on persistence in prayer...
 - a. The importance of persistence cannot be overemphasized
 - b. Persistence in general (**keep praying!**); persistence in particular (**don't ask just once!**)
2. **Note well:** persistence does not ensure God **answers we may desire ...**
 - a. Jesus still had to drink the cup of suffering by going to the cross
 - b. Paul still had to bear his thorn in the flesh by enduring persecution for Christ
3. Yet persistence in prayer is key to receiving **answers we need..**
 - a. **Grace** and **mercy** to help in time of need
 - b. **Strength** to endure whatever it is we must face

And so, through **persistence in prayer**, let us "ask, seek, knock" (cf. **Mt 7:7-8**), until God provides the answer to our prayers, giving whatever He graciously determines we really need...!

Prayer

The Practice Of Prayer - I

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study on prayer, we have examined...
 - a. The purpose of prayer
 - b. The power of prayer
 - c. The privilege of prayer
 - d. The principles of prayer
 - e. The persistence of prayer
2. Hopefully this study has increased our desire to pray...
 - a. To pray more fervently, with more consistency
 - b. To benefit from all that prayer has to offer
3. To encourage us even more to pray, let's look closer at "**The Practice Of Prayer**" ...
 - a. How should we pray?
 - b. When should we pray?
 - c. With whom should we pray?
 - d. For what should we pray?

[Even if we have been praying all our lives, it never hurts to ask "**Lord, teach us to pray...**"]

I. HOW TO PRAY

A. THE MODEL PRAYER...

1. Jesus was asked by His disciples how to pray - **Lk 11:1**
 - a. They had just witnessed Jesus praying
 - b. They knew John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray
 - c. While they had prayed as Jews, they recognized a need to learn more
 2. In response, Jesus offered a model, a guide for learning to pray - **Lk 11:2-4**
 - a. Commonly called "**The Lord's Prayer**", also found in **Mt 6:9-13**
 - b. It was intended to serve as a **model** ("In this manner...") - **Mt 6:9**
- **The Lord's prayer serves as an example of how to pray, not a liturgical exercise**

B. THE PROPER PRAYER...

1. Addresses God the Father ("**Our Father in heaven**") - **Mt 6:9**
2. Expresses reverence toward God ("**Hallowed be Your Name**") - **Mt 6:9**
3. Includes supplication for such things as:
 - a. God's purposes ("**Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**") - **Mt 6:10**
 - b. Our physical needs ("**Give us this day our daily bread.**") - **Mt 6:11**
 - c. Our spiritual needs ("**And forgive us our debts...**") - **Mt 6:12**
 - d. The spiritual needs of others ("**...as we forgive our debtors.**") - **Mt 6:12**
 - e. Guidance and help in our struggle against sin and Satan ("**And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.**") - **Mt 6:13**
4. Praises God ("**For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.**")

Amen.”) - Mt 6:13

5. In teaching on prayer, Jesus stressed the importance of:
 - a. Simplicity in prayers - Mt 6:7-8
 - b. Forgiving others - Mt 6:14-15
 - c. Persistence in prayers - Lk 12:5-10
- **Memorize the Lord’s prayer and it can serve to remind you how to pray**

[Another common concern in “The Practice Of Prayer” is...]

II. WHEN TO PRAY

A. SCHEDULED PRAYERS...

1. Having set times to pray can help develop a **habit** of prayer
2. Consider the practice of two great men of God
 - a. **David**, whom God described as “a man after My own heart” - Psa 55:17
 - b. **Daniel**, whom the angel of God described as “O man greatly beloved” - Dan 6:10
3. They made it a habit to pray at set times during the day
 - a. It would not hurt to imitate them
 - b. Praying three times daily: morning, noon, and evening
- **At the very least, make time each day to spend time in prayer**

B. SPONTANEOUS PRAYERS...

1. Prayers should not be limited to set times
2. Jesus spent all night in prayer before selecting His apostles - Lk 6:12-13
3. Paul and Silas prayed when faced with trying circumstances - Ac 16:25
4. Nehemiah prayed silently on the spur of the moment - Neh 2:4-5
5. The Israelites prayed to God in the heat of battle - 1 Chr 5:20
- **We should pray whenever and however the occasion calls for it**

C. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

1. The goal is to “pray without ceasing” - 1 Th 5:17
2. Having **scheduled times** to pray will develop experience in prayer
3. Praying **spontaneously** will develop a disposition to pray in every circumstance
- **Together, they help us reach the goal of praying without ceasing**

CONCLUSION

1. In regards to “The Practice Of Prayer”, we have considered...
 - a. **How to pray**, with the aid of the Lord’s prayer
 - b. **When to pray**, suggesting both set times and spontaneous prayers
2. As we develop both the experience and disposition to pray, we should also consider...
 - a. **With whom to pray**, alone or with others
 - b. **For what to pray**, besides what has already been suggested

This we will do in the second part of our study on “The Practice Of Prayer”...

Prayer

The Practice Of Prayer - II

INTRODUCTION

1. In part one of “**The Practice Of Prayer**”, we considered...
 - a. **How to pray**, with the aid of the Lord’s prayer
 - b. **When to pray**, suggesting both set times and spontaneous prayers
2. In part two of “**The Practice Of Prayer**”, we shall now consider...
 - a. **With whom to pray**, alone or with others?
 - b. **For what to pray**, besides what has already been suggested

[Again we turn to Jesus the master teacher, especially with regards to prayer, as we consider...]

III. WITH WHOM TO PRAY

A. PRAYING ALONE...

1. Jesus encouraged the practice of praying in secret - **Mt 6:5-6**
 2. Private prayer cultivates our spiritual nature through regular exercise
 - a. “Prayer is the spiritual gymnasium in which we exercise and practice godliness.” - **V. L. Crawford**
 - b. “...Prayer is educative. The man who prays grows; and the muscles of the soul swell from this whipcord to iron bands.” - **Frederick B. Meyer**
 - c. The opposite is also true: “Seven days without prayer makes one weak.” - **Allan E. Bartlette**
 3. Private prayer forms a close union and fellowship with our Heavenly Father
 - a. It is just you and Him
 - b. Time spent together strengthens the bond of fellowship
 4. Private prayer is a true test of your sincerity and devotion
 - a. You certainly are not doing it to please men (they cannot see you)
 - b. You can’t be trying to falsely impress God (He will see right through you)
 5. Private prayer will be rewarded “openly” - **Mt 6:6**
 - a. The answers to our prayer will be seen by others
 - b. Both here and in the hereafter
- **Private prayer should be a priority in the practice of praying**

B. PRAYING WITH OTHERS...

1. Jesus also spoke of praying with others - **Mt 18:19-20**
 - a. Where the requests of two or three are answered by our Father in heaven
 - b. For in their midst is Jesus Himself, who also intercedes for them - cf. **Ro 8:34**
2. Early Christians prayed together often...
 - a. In times of trouble - **Ac 4:23-24; 12:5,12; 16:25**
 - b. In times of departure - **Ac 20:36; 21:5**

3. Immediate blessings when God's people pray together
 - a. A sweetness of fellowship
 - b. A sense of strength
- **Praying with others should be done whenever possible**

[In the "Lord's Prayer" (Mt 6:9-14) we find what sort of things we should pray about. Elsewhere in the Scriptures, we find there are many things for which we can pray as we consider...]

IV. FOR WHAT TO PRAY

A. AS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE...

1. **Self**
 - a. For physical daily needs - **Mt 6:11**
 - b. For personal growth in Christ-likeness and devotion to God - **Co 1:9-12**
2. **Family**
 - a. For spouse, children, parents, siblings, etc.
 - b. For their nurture and growth in the teaching of the Lord - **Ep 6:4**
3. **Community**
 - a. For peace to prevail
 - b. E.g., **Jer 29:7**
4. **Church**
 - a. For love and unity to prevail - **Jn 13:35; 17:20-21**
 - b. For the spiritual growth of each member - **Ph 1:9-11**
 - c. For the gospel to have free course - **2 Th 3:1**
5. **Nation**
 - a. For national repentance and consciousness of who God is - **Psa 33:12; Pro 14:34**
 - b. For leaders to rule wisely - **1 Ti 2:2**
6. **Nonbelievers**
 - a. For their salvation - **Ro 10:1**
 - b. For the effort of those involved in teaching them - **Ep 6:18-20**
7. **The sick**
 - a. For their restoration to health - **Ja 5:14-15**
 - b. For spiritual strength and peace of mind - **Ja 5:16**
8. **The poor and oppressed**
 - a. Such as the homeless, fatherless, unborn children - **Pro 29:7**
 - b. Those in other nations oppressed by their own rulers or outside influences
- **There is certainly much for which we ought to pray!**

B. USING A PRAYER STRATEGY...

1. **On Monday - Family**
 - a. Pray for both immediate and extended family members
 - b. For both their physical and spiritual well-being
2. **On Tuesday - Church**
 - a. For members in the local congregation
 - b. For Christians and congregations throughout the world
3. **On Wednesday - Community**

- a. For community leaders
 - b. For your neighbors
 - 4. **On Thursday - Nation**
 - a. For elected officials
 - b. For efforts to bring peace and righteousness
 - 5. **On Friday - World**
 - a. For world peace
 - b. For nations that are "closed" to the gospel
 - 6. **On Saturday - Afflicted**
 - a. For the poor, homeless, jobless
 - b. For those in prison
 - c. For those who are sick
 - d. For widows, single mothers, fatherless children
- **A simpler prayer strategy: morning-family; noon-church; evening-community**

CONCLUSION

1. Such strategies are simply suggestions to provide some direction in prayer...
 - a. Develop one that suits you
 - b. One might also keep a list or journal of those for whom you are praying
2. The important thing is to PRAY, and to do so:
 - a. "always"
 - b. "in everything"
 - c. "earnestly"
 - d. "being vigilant"
 - e. "without ceasing"

I pray this study on prayer will encourage us to be more diligent in utilizing this wonderful privilege of prayer...!

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;"

- Co 4:2

Prayer

How God Answers Prayer

INTRODUCTION

1. In our study on prayer, we have examined...
 - a. The purpose of prayer
 - b. The power of prayer
 - c. The privilege of prayer
 - d. The principles of prayer
 - e. The persistence of prayer
 - f. The practice of prayer
2. Why don't people pray more often...?
 - a. Perhaps they don't believe their prayers are being answered
 - b. Not knowing how God answers, they may have lost faith in prayer

[Lest we begin to think that God does not hear us when we pray, we should remember that there are **at least four ways** that God answers prayer, beginning with...]

I. REQUEST GRANTED

A. GOD MAY ANSWER "YES"...

1. God often grants the petitions we ask of Him - **Psa 118:5; 138:3**
2. Especially when we put Him first in our lives - **Mt 6:33; cf. Pro 3:5-10**

B. FOR GOD TO ANSWER "YES"...

1. We must ask according to His will - **1 Jn 5:14**
2. We must be doing His will in our lives - **1 Jn 3:22**

[Naturally we rejoice when God grants our request. But sometimes we may receive the answer...]

II. REQUEST GRANTED, BUT NOT YET

A. GOD MAY ANSWER "YES, BUT WAIT..."

1. God may grant our request, but in time and according to His purpose - cf. **Ecc 3:1,11**
2. So we may think God is saying "No", when He is really saying "Yes, but wait" - **Lk 18:7**

B. WHEN THE ANSWER SEEMS TO BE "WAIT"...

1. We need to have patience - **He 6:10-12**
2. We need to keep asking, seeking, knocking - **Lk 11:8-10**
3. We need to remember God's promise - **Ro 8:24**

[When God seems to be saying "yes, but wait", it is a time for patience and trust in His providence. We need similar trust should it become apparent that God's answer is...]

III. REQUEST GRANTED, BUT NOT AS EXPECTED

A. GOD MAY ANSWER “YES, BUT NOT AS YOU THINK...”

1. Sometimes God answers in a way differently than we may anticipate
2. Remember, His thoughts and methods are much different than ours - **Isa 55:8,9**
3. For example, asking God for strength and perseverance...
 - a. He may give us trials to bear - e.g., **Ph 1:29-30**
 - b. Which in turn develops the virtues we prayed for! - cf. **Ro 5:3-4**

B. WE MUST NOT LIMIT GOD’S OPTIONS...

1. We should be careful and not dictate to God **how** to answer our prayers
 - a. There are forces at work beyond what we can imagine - cf. **Ep 3:20**
 - b. Plus, we do not always know what to pray for as we ought - cf. **Ro 8:26**
2. Limit the **how** and we might limit the **result**; e.g., when praying for the sick...
 - a. Do we pray simply that God bless the use of natural means (doctors, medicine, etc.)?
 - b. If so, might we limit God as to how He might restore them? (in ways beyond what we are able to imagine)?
 - c. Is it not better to simply ask God to restore the sick, and leave the methods to Him?

[As we pray, our trust in God should **allow Him latitude to answer** however He deems best. We especially need trust in God should it become apparent that the answer to prayer is...]

IV. REQUEST DENIED

A. GOD MAY ANSWER “NO”...

1. There may be times when God denies our requests - cf. **Ja 4:3**
2. We must trust that God, who knows what is best, would do so only if granting our request might not be for our good - cf. **He 12:5-11**

B. WHEN GOD SEEMS TO SAY “NO”...

1. We may not fully understand, but we can still fully trust Him! - cf. **Hab 3:17-19**
2. Especially in light of the promise in **1 Co 10:13**
3. God will provide the grace and mercy to do without - e.g., **2 Co 12:7-9**

CONCLUSION

1. In at least four ways, then, God answers our prayers...
 - a. Request granted
 - b. Request granted, but not yet
 - c. Request granted, but not as expected
 - d. Request denied
2. However God may choose to answer our prayers...
 - a. We can have confidence that it will be for our good
 - b. We should never grow weary in praying to God

“The Lord has heard my supplication; The Lord will receive my prayer.” - Psalms 6:9