

## The Need, Purpose, and Practice of Prayer

### 1. What is prayer?

Prayer is a holy and familiar conversation with God in which the believer confides in Him, expressing to Him hearts desires, joys, gratitude, troubles, sins, and needs; and by which he takes hold of God and His promises and pleads and appeals to Him in His name.

### 2. Why do we pray?

- We are commanded to.
  - Third commandment
  - 1 Chronicles 16:8 (Psalm 105:1)
  - Psalm 14:4; 145:18
  - Isaiah 55:6
  - Matthew 5:44; 6:6-9
  - Luke 9:28; 18:1
  - Ephesians 6:18
  - 1 Thessalonians 5:25
  - 1 Timothy 2:8
  - James 5:13-18
- It is the means by which we take hold of God and His promises and His help.  
[We ought not to expect any change or growth if we are not praying for God's help.]
- It gives us opportunity to meditate upon His perfections and glory.
- It reminds us of His nearness to us, especially in times of trouble (Philippians 4:5-6).
- It cultivates a familiarity with God that will help us come to Him at all times but especially in times of great need. If we are not cultivating our relationship with Him when times are good, we will fight shame when we come to Him when times are bad. We will feel ourselves to be unworthy, not having cultivated our relationship with Him. It will be as though we are approaching a stranger, someone we do not know well.
- It prepares you for eternal communion and fellowship (1 John 1:3).
- It teaches us to seek and depend on Him. It reminds us that He is our first and best recourse.
- It reminds us that God is the source and supply and the fountain of all goodness. It prepares us to receive all things in thanksgiving.  
[Prayerlessness is a subtle form of idolatry. It reflects a belief in something or someone other than God. No person lives without need of sustenance no matter how well off, yet to go without prayer is to subtly communicate that it is not God that I need for the maintenance of my life.]
- It reminds us of His omnipresence and that nothing is hidden from His sight—no desire or longing or thought about which we would be ashamed if known.
- It fills us with anticipation in expectation of receiving the blessings for which we've prayed.
- It directs glory to Him when blessings or good come.
- It builds our faith and teaches us to plead and supplicate and to wait and persevere.

### 3. How do we pray:

- In Christ's name  
We come understanding that the way into the throne room is made for us by Christ alone and by way of His imputed righteousness and not in any way due to our own merit (Daniel 9:5, 18-19; Hebrews 10:20).
- Humbly  
When we come to the Lord in prayer, we must come in humility (James 4:10).

- Submissively  
When we come to the Lord in prayer, we must come with hearts ready to obey. It would be silly to approach the throne of grace while unwilling to submit to the authority of the throne (Proverbs 28:9; Isaiah 1:15; John 9:31).
- Obediently  
We should come with attitudes of ready obedience prepared to hear from our Lord that which makes a demand upon us or constrains us in some way and ready to heed what we hear
- Sincerely  
We come without hypocrisy, believing that we actually need that for which we pray.
- Expectantly  
We must pray in faith, believing that God hears and will answer. Petitioning God for something while not really believing that He will hear and answer is dishonoring to Him (Isaiah 49:15).
- In a manner conducive to praying in spirit and in truth
  - With a posture that aids our attentiveness and that directs our hearts.
  - Consider praying out loud.
- As Christ taught us:
  1. Our Father who is in heaven
  2. Hallowed be Your name
  3. Your kingdom come
  4. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven
  5. Give us this day our daily bread
  6. Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors
  7. Do not lead us into temptation
  8. Deliver us from evil
  9. Amen

#### 4. Where do we pray?

In private prayer, we pray “in the closet.” This does not mean that we must find a closet in which to pray but that we should seek to pray where we will not be tempted to use our prayer as a means of praise from others, where we will not be tempted to distraction, where it will be most conducive to focus of mind and heart.

#### 5. When do we pray?

- In the morning
- At bedtime
- At mealtime
- When needs arise
- When it is most conducive to prayer in spirit and in truth

#### 6. Reasons we do not pray:

- Some people do not pray because they have concluded that they are not yet worthy to be heard. Believing deeply in the soul that they must merit a hearing from God, they do not come because they do not feel as though they have yet gotten to the place where God will hear them.
- We live in comfort and do not feel the need to pray.
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