

WHAT IS PRAYER?
Prayer and Intercession
Resource Ministries
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Introduction:

Prayer is the most universally practiced yet least understood of human experiences. It is one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith. Its simplest definition is communication / talking with God. Yet so often we approach prayer like a one-way telephone conversation, forgetting that God also wants to speak to us. And how do we pray --- on our knees or standing; silently or out loud; alone or with others; by rote or spontaneously? And does prayer really induce God to manipulate events or otherwise act on our behalf? Although the Bible does not take up these and other questions directly, prayer appears on nearly every page as the very essence of a faith relationship with the living God. Simple enough for a child to understand and yet so profound we spend a lifetime plumbing its depths, prayer assumes that it is possible for us to have an intimate relationship with a God who hears, cares, and is able to act.

I. What is prayer?:

- A. Prayer is giving God access to our needs and the needs of others through conversations with God including petition and supplication.
- B. To petition is to ask God for something or to make a request to Him for our own needs.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

- C. Supplication means to strongly ask or entreat God for something in prayer. Supplicating will often involve a sense of urgency and a deep desire to have God meet personal needs.

May my supplication come before you; deliver me according to your promise. (Psalm 119:170)

- D. Prayer is fellowshiping with the Father -- a vital, personal contact with God who is more than enough.

Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray (also) for one another, that you may be healed and restored (to a spiritual tone of mind and heart). The earnest

(heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available (dynamic in its working). (James 5: 16 Ampl.)

For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous (those who are upright and in right standing with God), and His ears are attentive to their prayer. (1 Peter 3:12 Ampl.)

- E. Prayer is an act of humble worship in which we seek God with all our heart.

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

- F. Prayer often begins with confession.

15 I wait for you, O LORD; you will answer, O Lord my God. 16 For I said "Do not let them gloat or exalt themselves over me when my foot slips." 17 For I am about to fall, and my pain is ever with me. 18 I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin. (Psalm 38:15-18)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

- G. Prayer is asking God for guidance and waiting for his direction and leading.

17 When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went down to the stronghold. 18 Now the Philistines had come and spread out in the Valley of Rephaim; 19 so David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?" The LORD answered him, "Go, for I will surely hand the Philistines over to you." (2 Sam 5:17-19)

- H. Prayer is an expression of an intimate relationship with our heavenly Father, who makes his own love and resources available to us.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

II. Some further things prayer is:

A. Entreating (asking for earnestly) spiritual power (calling to God)

1. Elijah

37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." 38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. (1 Kings 18:37-38)

- a. A specific need (v. 21)
- b. A specific request (v. 24)
- c. Result (v. 39)

2. Jehoshaphat (II Chronicles 20)

- a. Prayer for a need (v. 4, 12)
- b. Answer (v. 15)
- c. Result (v. 30)

B. Transacting spiritual business (commanding in God)

1. Law of spiritual authority

- a. *18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. (Matthew 18:18-19)*
- b. *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19)*

C. Tapping spiritual secrets (confiding with God)

- 1. *12 Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. 13 He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. 14 The LORD confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them. (Psalm 25:12-14)*

2. Results of this type of prayer

- a. Wisdom of God
- b. Peace of God
- c. Blessings of God

D. Developing spiritual love (communing)

1. The people who know.....

And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do [exploits]. (Daniel 11:32 AV)

With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. (Daniel 11:32)

2. Hebrew word "Yada" - life giving intimacy.

- a. The word "know" in both the Hebrew and Greek indicate there is an intimacy, a feeling of closeness. (as in Philippians 3:10 also)
- b. *in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:6)*

3. Just as intimacy in marriage creates a meaningful marital relationship, intimacy with God creates a meaningful spiritual relationship.

4. As intimacy in marriage causes a woman to become pregnant; so intimacy with God can cause us to become pregnant with His life: ideas, ministry, and direction.

5. Does not come to birth immediately.

- a. Don't boast too soon: may miscarry, may be a false alarm.
- b. Give it time to grow and develop; it will soon become visible to all. Pushing too soon can cause a premature birth and/or birth defects.

III. Prayer needs to be:

A. Systematic--but simple, not complicated

1. Organized

*Now that I have prepared my case, I know I will be vindicated.
(Job 13:18)*

2. Specific

*"Present your case," says the LORD. "Set forth your arguments,"
says Jacob's King. (Isaiah 41:21)*

B. Complete

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and
requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all
the saints. (Ephesians 6:18)*

IV. How do we pray?

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his
disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."
(Luke 11:1)*

A. Why did the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray?

1. Because they saw Him praying, they asked Him to teach them.

- a. go for guidance to those who have it working in their life
- b. marriage, finances, areas of Christian walk

2. Because they saw his consistency.

3. Because they saw the relationship He had with His Father.

B. Jesus' response:

1. Not a two-day seminar, but a simple guideline, example

2. Previous chapters and verses: Kingdom life, don't do acts of righteousness to be seen by men.

"Be careful not to do your 'Acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. (Matthew 6:1)

V. How not to pray.

5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:5-8)

- A. For attention (we are to pray to our Father)
- B. To make noise and to be heard
- C. Not complicated
- D. Not like the pagans with many words (chanting)

VI. Five elements of effective praying

9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:9-13 NIV)

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as [it is] in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13 AV)

--Have the courtesy to come into His presence and acknowledge Him by Name--
Our Father, Redeemer, Savior, Protector, Lord, Provider.

--Can call Him Father because of the relationship. Picture Calvary and thank God
you can call Him 'Father' by virtue of the blood of Jesus.

A. Worship/worship (Psalm 36:5-7, 106:1-5, 111; 1 Chronicles 16:12-25, 29:10-13; 2 Chronicles 6:14-15; Acts 4:23-30; Ephesians 3:14-23)

1. Adoration: Praise for who He is
2. Thanksgiving: Expressing gratitude for what He has done
3. Gratefulness for being part of His family

B. Confession of sin (Psalm 19:12-13, 32:1-8, 51, 66:18-19; 1John 1:9)

With confession of sin there is blessing through the clear line to God--there is nothing to stand in the way of relationship with Him. Guilt is released and the burden of it is lifted.

C. Petition for my personal needs (Philippians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 John 5:14-15)

1. In accordance with His Word and Will
2. In His purpose for the world
3. Not sinful (Wrong motives)

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:3)

4. Specific (I'm not sure if God answers more or if I'm more aware of His answer because I was so specific.)

D. Intercession for the needs of others (Matthew 9:38; Ephesians 1:14-23; Colossians 4:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5)

1. World awareness

Needs around us, listen to news, read newspaper.

2. Jesus' prayer for us as an example (John 17)

- a. For protection by His name (v. 11)
- b. Not to take them out of the world but protect them from the evil one. (v. 15)

- c. Sanctify (set apart for God and His purposes) by the Word. (v. 17)
 - d. Unity so the world may believe. (v. 23)
- E. Commitment of myself to God and His will in this world. (Luke 22:42; 2 Timothy 1:1)
 - 1. To the purposes of God.
 - 2. Not my will but thine be done

VII. Promises concerning prayer:

- A. God does not ignore our prayers.

....he does not ignore those who cry to him for help. (Psalm 9:12 New Living Translation)

- B. Our prayers bring us into God's presence.

The Lord is close to all who call on him, yes, to all who call on him sincerely. (Psalm 145:18 New Living Translation)

- C. God honors persistence in prayer.

Keep on asking, and you will be given what you ask for. Keep on looking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7 New Living Translation)

- D. God will give you wisdom if you ask for it.

If you need wisdom -- if you want to know what God wants you to do -- ask him, and he will gladly tell you. (James 1:5 New Living Translation)

- E. A sincere prayer brings wonderful results.

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results. (James 5:16 New Living Translation)

- F. God hears our prayers when they are in line with his will.

And we can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. (1 John 5:14 New Living Translation)