

**Topic: The Value And Importance of Prayer
(Part II)**

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Matthew 6:5-13

1. God desires for His children to pray and expects that they will pray!

A. The prominence of prayer by God's people in the OT and NT.

(1.) In the Old Testament: Abraham (Gen. 20:17), Isaac (Gen. 25:21), Jacob (Gen. 32:9), Moses (Ex. 8:30), Hannah (I Sam. 1:10, 2:1), David (II Sam. 7:19-29), Solomon (I Kings 8:22-53), Daniel (9:4-19), Peter, Paul, Stephen, and a whole slew of others.

Prayer is what God's people all through the ages, from the beginning of time, have done.

2. It is God's will that believers be seriously "DEVOTED" to prayer.

Many passages in the NT encourage us to make prayer a PERSISTENT PRIORITY in our personal and corporate lives. There is major emphases in the New Testament on DEVOTION TO PRAYER.

A. Prayer was part of Jesus' REGULAR PRACTICE and should be part of our daily devotional time with God (Mk. 1:35, 6:46, 14:32, 35, 39; Lk. 6:12, 9:28).

B. Jesus encouraged PERSISTENT PRAYER. "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should ALWAYS PRAY and NOT GIVE UP." (Lk. 18:1).

C. The 120 disciples practiced PERSISTENT PRAYER. "Those present were Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together CONSTANTLY IN PRAYER, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:13-14).

D. The early church was DEVOTED to prayer. "They DEVOTED THEMSELVES to the Apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread AND TO PRAYER" (Acts 2:42).

E. The Apostles were DEVOTED to prayer. "And we will give our ATTENTION TO PRAYER and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4).

F. Paul commands that Christians DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO PRAYER.

(1.) Rom. 12:12, "Be FAITHFUL in prayer".

(2.) Col. 4:2, "DEVOTE yourselves to prayer." The greek word translated, "devote" is an imperative. It is a command and it is given to every person who was in the Colossian church. Other translations say, "continue in prayer", "persevere in prayer", "be persevering in your prayers", and "continue earnestly in prayer".

(3.) "... ALWAYS KEEP ON PRAYING ..." (Eph. 6:18).

(4.) "Pray CONTINUALLY" (I Thess. 5:17).

G. The Apostle Paul prayed PERSISTENTLY.

(1.) "How CONSTANTLY I remember you in my prayer AT ALL TIMES" (Rom. 1:9-10).

(2.) "We CONSTANTLY pray for you" (II Thess. 1:11).

H. Paul praises other Christians who were DEVOTED TO PRAYER. Col. 4:12, "Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Jesus Christ, sends greetings. He is ALWAYS WRESTLING in prayer for you ..."

Three Questions To Answer About Prayer:

1. What is prayer?
2. What can we expect God to do when we pray?
3. What is the general CONTENT of our prayers to be?

1. What is prayer?

There are different words used in the Bible for prayer and taken together, the issue of prayer means to talk to God; to speak directly to God, to express wishes to God, to entreat God; to desire of God.

Matthew 6:6, "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray TO YOUR FATHER ..." Look at Matt. 6:9, "This then, is how you should pray: "Our Father ..."

"Men began to CALL ON THE name of the LORD" (Gen. 5:26);

"And Abram CALLED ON THE name of the LORD" (Gen. 13:4).

"Isaac built an altar there and CALLED ON THE name of the LORD" (Gen. 26:25).

In describing prayer throughout the OT, we often find it recorded in Scripture that, such and such a person(s) "CALLED ON THE LORD" (Samson-Jud. 15:18, 16:28; Samuel-I Sam. 12:18, David-II Sam. 22:7, "In my distress, I called to the LORD; I called out to my God. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came to his ears", etc.).

"At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: 'O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. 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" (I Kings 18:36-37). Prayer is talking to the Lord.

Ps. 54:2, "Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth."

2. Now, what can we expect God to do when we pray?

Answer: We can expect God to hear (answer) prayer.

Matt. 6:6, "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."

**Deut. 4:7, "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them
the way the LORD our GOD IS NEAR US WHENEVER WE PRAY TO HIM?"**

Ps. 65:2, "O God WHO HEARS PRAYER, to you all men will come".

Ps. 17:6, "I call on you, O God, FOR YOU WILL ANSWER ME; give ear to me and hear my prayer."

Prayer is our opportunity to speak directly to God. As God expects us to listen to Him when He speaks to us in His Word, even so we can expect God to listen to us when we pray because He has invited us to come and talk to Him and He has told us that He will hear!

Prayer is talking directly to God. It doesn't matter if you pray to the Father, or to Jesus, but the general pattern of prayer in the Scriptures is to the Father.

3. What are we to say when we pray? What is the general CONTENT of our prayers to be?

IMPORTANT GENERAL TRUTHS ABOUT PRAYER LEARNED FROM THE MODEL PRAYER THAT JESUS GAVE

1. In the model that has been called, "The Lord's Prayer", Jesus instructs and welcomes us to pray for our spiritual and physical needs.

Spiritual:

- We are to pray that "God's will" will be done on earth.
- We are to pray for forgiveness of debts (sins).
- We are to pray that that we would be quick and ready to forgive those who sin against us.
- We are to pray for escape from temptation.
- We are to pray for deliverance from Satan's power/influence in our lives.

Physical:

- We are to pray for our daily bread (representative of all physical needs).

Things that Paul prayed for illustrate how our prayers for ourselves and others should be primarily about our spiritual needs.

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2. In the model prayer, Jesus instructs us to not be focused on only ourselves, but to think of and include others in our prayers.

Notice all the plural pronouns.

"This, then, is how you should pray:

'OUR Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give US today OUR daily bread.

Forgive US OUR debts, as WE forgive OUR debtors.

And lead US not into temptation, but deliver US from the evil one."

D. A. Carson says this: "Christians are not to pray in splendid isolation and not to construe spirituality in terms of the rugged individualism which stamps so much Western Christianity. There is, no doubt, a place for praying as an individual to God; but the general pattern of our praying must be broader than that. Therefore, when I as one follower of Christ among many, address *our* Father, my concern is to embrace *our* daily bread, *our* sins, and *our* temptations-not just *mine*."

Five specific points about prayer as learned from Jesus' model prayer:

"This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

1. Come to God in prayer, carrying an attitude of awe, respect, admiration and submission.

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'

D. A. Carson says, "We are to reverence, honor, consider holy God himself. To pray, 'hallowed be your name' is to pray, 'Grant that I may reverence you. Work in me and in other men so that we will acknowledge your unsurpassed and glorious holiness always.'"

2. Come to God in prayer, expressing your desires that His reign, rule, and influence spread throughout the world.

'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

3. Come to God in prayer, laying out all your personal, physical needs and the needs of others.

"Give us today our daily bread."

4. Come to God in prayer, humbly confessing sin and a genuine willingness to forgive other sinners.

'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.'

5. Come to God in prayer, asking for everything that is necessary for spiritual advancement in yourself and others and for every Christian to successfully engage in spiritual warfare.

'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'