

NAME _____
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WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is as old as man, as universal as religion and as instinctive as breathing (**Genesis 4:26**) It is practiced in some form by all men of all faiths. Prayer springs from the heart with a need – a need greater than man’s ability to encounter. Prayer is man’s acknowledgement of a being higher than himself.

Most men try to pray, yet so few know how. There are two kinds of prayers: the prayer that does not reach God and the prayer that does reach God. This is illustrated by our Lord in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (**Luke 18:9-14**). Both men went to the same place, at the same time, for the same purpose – to pray.

The Pharisee prayed in his religious pride, expecting God to answer because he thought himself worthy. He informed God of his own goodness, that he was better than others. He boasted of his good works. He said *“I fast, I give, I... I... I...”* This is the kind of prayer that does not reach God. **It is self-righteous prayer.**

Now look at the publican, and his prayer. He came to God in great humility, conscious of his unworthiness, confessing himself a sinner and begging for mercy. This is the kind of prayer that does reach God. This is righteous prayer.

It is a rare privilege to pray, because it brings you into close fellowship with God, admitting your need for Him and your utter dependence upon Him.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

In **Matthew 7:7** it says, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”*

Prayer is asking and receiving; it is talking with God. It is making your request known unto Him in faith. Mathew 7:7 seems simple on the surface, that we are in danger of failing to recognize its immensity. Our Lord instructs the believer to **ask, seek, and knock**, because these three words cover the whole spectrum of prayer.

- 1) Prayer is asking and receiving. When you **know the will of God** regarding a need, whether it is material or spiritual, you can ask and receive. This is prayer according to the revealed will of God (**I John 5:14-15**).

2) Prayer is seeking and finding. When you do not know the will of God regarding a need, whether it be material or spiritual, then you are to seek His will in prayer, concerning this need until you find it. This is **prayer for the knowledge of the unrevealed will of God** in a specific need (Col. 3:1; and Jeremiah 29:12, 13).

3) Prayer is knocking and opening. When you know the will of God, and yet you find a closed door, you are to knock, and keep on knocking until God opens the door. This is **tenacious prayer** – prayer for mountain-moving faith. Knocking prayer perseveres until the impossible becomes the possible. This is miracle-working prayer (Matt: 17: 14-21). All things are possible when you ask, seek, and knock.

WHY PRAY?

In Luke 18:1 it says, **“and he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”**

1. Because Jesus said, **“Men ought to always pray.” Prayer is imperative.** You are commanded to **watch and pray** (Matt. 26:41)
2. Because prayer is the only way to get things from God. (James 4:2) **“Ye have not because ye ask not”**
3. Because there is joy in prayer (John 16:24)
4. Because prayer will deliver you out of all your troubles (Psalm 34:6)
5. Because prayer can unlock the treasure chest of God’s wisdom (James 1:5)
6. Because prayer is a channel of power. (Jer. 33:3)
7. Because it is a sin not to pray (I Sam. 12:23)
8. Because sinners can be saved when they pray in faith (Romans 10:13-14)
9. Because Jesus, while here in the flesh, prayed often to the Father. Now if Jesus, the Son of God needed to pray, then we should “pray without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17)

HOW TO PRAY

In Matthew 6:9 it says, **“after this manner therefore pray ye.”**

In **Luke 11:1** our Lord gave this as a model prayer after one of His disciples said unto Him, ***“Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his disciples”***

1. We are to pray to ***“our father, which art in Heaven”***, because He is all-wise, all loving and all powerful. We are also instructed to pray in the name of Jesus (**John 14:13-14**), depending on the meditative influence of the Holy Spirit (**Rom. 8:26-27**).
2. We are to pray for His will to be done in everything.
3. We are to pray for the coming of the Kingdom (**Matt. 25:31-46**).
4. We are to pray for our daily necessities.
5. We are to pray for forgiveness, and practice forgiving others.
6. We are to pray for the leading of the Lord, and deliverance from evil.
7. We are to pray in faith, for ***“without faith it is impossible to please Him”***. (**Hebrews 11:5, 6**)

This model prayer (the Lord’s prayer) is brief, to the point, and not repetitious. It is the perfect prayer.

There was a remarkable change in the prayer life of the disciples after the resurrection of Jesus, and it is noted again after Pentecost.

- Before the death of Jesus, the disciples slept while Jesus prayed in the garden (**Matthew 26:36-46**).
- After his death and resurrection:
 1. They assembled in the Upper Room, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit, and they prayed. We should always pray when assembled with believers (**See Acts 1:14**)
 2. They prayed as they went from house to house (**Acts 2:42-47**)
 3. They prayed as they gathered as a church when Peter was in prison. (**Acts 12:5**)
 4. Paul and Silas prayed in prison (**Acts 16:25**). Here we see Christians praying in presence of unbelievers, but not to be heard of them. Never pray to please others present; pray only to please God.

5. The most important place to pray is any place where you can be alone with God (Matthew 6:6).

6. We are instructed to pray in all places at all times (I Tim. 2:8; Eph. 6:18)

In Jude v. 20, it tells us that we are built up on our most holy faith by praying in the Holy Ghost, or in Tongues.

It is a great joy to be able to talk with God, any time, any place, and under any condition, and to know that He will hear and answer.

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

When prayers are not answered, you should examine yourself in the light of God's word. If you find anything not pleasing to God, confess it, believing God for forgiveness that your prayers may be answered. (I John 1:9)

HINDRANCES TO ANSWERED PRAYER

1. An unharmonious relationship between husband and wife will hinder prayer (I Peter 3:1-7).
2. Selfishness will hinder prayer (James 4:3)
3. An unforgiving spirit will hinder prayer (Matt 5:22-24). Many Christians go without answers to prayer because they have wronged others, or have been wronged, and have failed to humble themselves and seek reconciliation.
4. Unbelief will hinder prayer (James 1:6-7; Hebrews 11:6).

DOES GOD ANSWER ALL PRAYERS?

The Bible is filled with answered prayers from Genesis to Revelation. We are commanded to pray, (Luke 18:1) and God has promised to answer (Jeremiah 33:3). In John 15:7 there are two requirements for answers to prayer.

- **First**, you are to abide in Him; that is, to continue in Him, it means to remain in His perfect will at all cost (Romans 12:1, 2)

- **Second**, His words are to abide in you; they are to become a vital part of our life. We are to be filled with, and guided by, His words (Colossians 3:16,17). If we meet these two requirements, we can expect our prayers to be answered.

FOUR WAYS PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED:

1. The answer is sometimes immediate. In Matthew 14:22-31 Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus, and as he began to sink, he prayed *“Lord, save me.”* The answer was immediate.
2. The answer is sometimes delayed. The delay is according to His will (Romans 8:28). The resurrection of Lazarus is a good example of delayed answer to prayer. Lazarus was sick, Mary and Martha sent for Jesus to come, and heal him, but Jesus delayed coming until Lazarus was dead and in the tomb for four days. He then came and raised Lazarus from the dead. The answer was delayed for a purpose, but not denied. (John 11:1-44).
3. The answer is sometimes “no”. When God answers with a no, He always accompanies the answer with peace (Phil. 4:6,7) and grace, (II Cor. 12:7-10).
4. The answer is sometimes different from what you expect. You pray for patience and God sends tribulation because tribulation worketh patience (Romans 5:3). God answers all prayers – not according to our wishes, but according to His perfect will.