

The Practice of Prayer

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From PRAYER AND FASTING to the PRACTICE OF PRAYER

1 Thess. 5:17 - *'pray without ceasing, pray continually, never stop praying, pray constantly, continually be prayerful'*
(NIV, NLT, ESV, CSB, ISV)

Col. 4:2 - *'Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.'*

Prayer is mentioned in the Bible hundreds of times in different forms and fashions and the Disciples of Jesus even asked Jesus to teach them how to pray.

Jesus Himself made prayer a practice and example for us to follow...

Lk. 5:16 - *'But Jesus would often go to some place where he could be alone and pray.'*

The early church was founded on a prayer gathering in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

3 PRAYER POSTURES

- **The Privilege of Prayer**
- **The Problem of Prayer**
- **The Practice of Prayer**

Posture #1 - The Privilege of Prayer

When we here privilege culturally, we often think of class or prestige, entitlement...But God doesn't owe you or I anything.

'what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?' Ps. 8:4 NIV

Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father - Jms. 1:17 NLT

What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift? - 1 Cor. 4:7

Prayer is a privilege and gift from God that we can often take for granted, but not realize the daily power we have in it. The power is in the one prayer connects you to - God Himself! Prayer is a gift from God He wants you to use, not because it's religious conduct, but relationship connector to Himself.

You talk to God in prayer. You listen to God through His word. But it's more than talking to God. Because you aren't just talking to God, but trusting God.

“The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need..” – Matt 6:7-8 MSG

At the root of every relationship breakdown is disconnection. We are made for relationship with God and others. And lack of trust and healthy communication are at the root.

He has given you the privilege to be in reconciled relationship with Him, forgiven of our sins, and approach Him personally and confidently as Hebrews states...

“Therefore let us [with privilege] approach the throne of grace [that is, the throne of God’s gracious favor] with confidence and without fear, so that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find [His amazing] grace to help in time of need [an appropriate blessing, coming just at the right moment].” Heb 4:16 AMP

The struggle is we often don’t live like this. Prayer is more of a moment of exchange with God, versus a continued experience with Him. It’s a ritual, not a relationship. It’s relational, not conditional.

But just like in any relationship, there are communication challenges for various reasons, so there is in prayer.

Posture #2 - The Problem Of Prayer

1. It Can Seem Complex

Disciples asked Jesus, ‘Lord, teach us to pray’. Lk. 11:1.

Matt 6:5-13 MSG

5 “And when you come before God, don’t turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for fifteen minutes of fame! Do you think God sits in a box seat?

7-13 “The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They’re full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don’t fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply.

2. It Seems Like A Burden

We want to pray but get unmotivated because we don’t know what to say or how to pray. Our minds stray when we pray. What should be a blessing, feels like a burden.

3. It Can Seem Impersonal

Prayer isn’t a formula. It has key elements and forms, but remember, it’s relational.

Isa. 30:8 says, *Therefore the Lord waits [expectantly] and longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the Lord is a God of justice; Blessed (happy, fortunate) are all those who long for Him [since He will never fail them].*

God is waiting expectantly for you – He’s attention is on you and for you
God longs to be gracious to you! WOW!

4. It Can Seem Like It Doesn’t Work

When we pray and don’t get what we are expecting, if we pray conditionally versus relationally, we give up. Conditional prayers only see the current reality and not the big and long term picture. Relational prayers see the heart of a Father in God who loves you, knows what’s best, even when you don’t understand.

But what of when you’re crying out to God for an answer, seeking His will, desiring something in your life...and all you get is a ‘no’ or silence? The Bible clearly says God responds to all your prayers.

Jer. 33:3 says, ‘Call to me and I will answer you’

God doesn’t always answer the way we might think, expect, or even want in certain moments.

Hebrews 11:39 - *These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.*

Even Jesus in a way received silence from God in one of His most vulnerable and lonely moments in the Garden. If we believe God is God and guides our lives, and you choose to live a faithful life surrendered to Him, does this mean there’s a problem of prayer and it doesn’t work?

But Here is a Few Reasons why it can seem like prayer doesn’t work:

1. If one person prays one thing and another prays the opposite...
2. Some prayers seem like they aren’t answered in trying to see change in someone –But God would have to take away free will for this...
3. When you dishonor your...
1 Pet. Says, “In the same way, you husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way [with great gentleness and tact, and with an intelligent regard for the marriage relationship], Show her honor and respect...so that your prayers will not be hindered or ineffective.”
4. Prayer is like a traffic light – Green (go); Yellow (not yet, slow down); Red (no)

One of your greatest tests of faith is what we do when you pray and thing aren’t going as you thought. Prayer isn’t conditional, but relational.

REMEMBER...

God will take the bad and turn it for your good and His purpose in your life – Romans 8:28 - *We know that in all things God works for good with those who love him¹ those whom he has called according to his purpose.*

God is good and does good – Ps. 119:68 - *He always has your best interest at heart...*

God is love – 1 Jn 4:8 (He’s there, aware, cares)

Posture #3 – The Practice of Prayer

How can we pray and pray effectively?

Like the disciples who asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, most of which weren't from a religious background by the way...

Jesus said in Matt. 6:5-13 MSG

“And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either...Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace....The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:

Peter cried 3 words, 'Lord, save me' – it wasn't the length, but strength of the prayer – the faith that is!

Some verses to explain this...

“And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.” – Heb 11:6 NLT

“So let us come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, with hearts that have been purified from a guilty conscience and with bodies washed with clean water. 23 Let us hold on firmly to the hope we profess, because we can trust God to keep his promise.” – Heb 10:22-24 GNT

“My sacrifice is a humble spirit, O God; you will not reject a humble and repentant heart.” – Ps. 51:17 GNT

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.” 1 Jn 5:14

In other words...

1. Come as you are – sincere heart
2. Come with faith – don't be a Christian atheist and pray in line with God's word
3. Come purified – stand in the righteousness of Jesus before God, not your sin
4. Come surrendered – humble and contrite

The practice of prayer is one that is relational...

The practice of prayer is real...

The practice of prayer is repentant...

The Lord's 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. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." Matthew 6:9-13

1. Connect with God Relationally .
"Our Father in heaven"
2. Run to Name . When we honor his name – we can run to it
By His name we are set free and saved – strong tower – many curse His name but don't experience the power and benefit of it.
"Hallowed be your name"
3. Pray His agenda first. Seek first his kingdom...keeps priorities and perspectives in check
"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"
4. Depend on Him for Everything . God is your source
"Give us today our daily bread" - daily keeps us focused on him and not forgetful of him. Doesn't say 'give us our yearly bread' – daily.
5. Keep your Heart Right with God and people. How hard is to be in harmony with someone when we have tension – nothing develops- *Keep right else our hearts are callous and cold & hinder our growth*
"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"
6. Take Your Stand against the enemy.
"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."
7. Have Faith in God's ability. Apply to every area
"For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."