

HOW TO PRAY AND WHY

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.” —MATTHEW 6:6

How do we pray? The mass consensus would be “from the heart”. But what exactly is the state of our hearts when we pray? Is it taken up with our will or with God’s will?

Prayer is essential if we are to come to know God and His will. It involves a perpetual fixed state of heart, mind and spirit that remains unceasingly aware of God’s presence. Brother Lawrence was a 17th century monk who lived in Paris and died in obscurity and pain, but also in perfect joy because He knew God. In his classic booklet, ‘Practicing the Presence of God’, he wrote: “And it seems like a world of trouble to bring one’s self into the consciousness of God’s presence. Yet it is actually so simple. In our common business, I began to live as if there were no one except God and me in the world.”

We pray because the most important part of our Christian lives is communion with God. It deepens and enriches our relationship with Him. It brings knowledge of Him and from Him. It conveys our worship and love for Him as well as God’s reception to us with all that He pours into our lives. Through our experiences of intimate union with God, we learn to recognize His voice. God knows us intricately; what opens our eyes and pulls at our hearts. To each of us, He speaks in a uniquely different way, and it is in that secret place within us that we hear Him. At any time, we can pray, but it needs to come from that intimate place reserved for God where nothing is hidden and we are most real.

Prayer provides a way of turning our agenda into God's agenda. If there is disconnect between what we are asking and what God knows we need, through prayer, He brings us into a position where adjustment is made, conforming us to His intent and purpose. Oswald Chambers wrote, "I tell God what I know He knows in order that I may get to know it in the way that He knows it."

What we bring before God is that which is of the mind and will of Jesus. Effective prayer flows out of an intimate relationship with Him. In our submission to the will of Christ, we can pray with confidence because what we will be praying for is derived from Christ. Prayer illuminates God's way, draws us close, carries direction, power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and sets our lives on a divine course orchestrated by God.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, my prayer life is indispensable and I treasure it dearly. I ask that it continually deepens our relationship and brings me into an ever increasing knowledge of You. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Is my relationship with God nourished and growing through my prayer life?