

## How Should I Pray?

I would like to begin by reading through the first paragraph in our lesson on page Prayer is communication with God. It is how we talk with God. By praying, we are not changing God's mind as much as we are aligning ourselves with His will.

Our memory verse is Philippians 4:6-7. Let's recite it together: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Let's take a look at these verses and the previous five ones to get the context. In verse 1, Paul is lovingly telling his sisters and brothers in Philippi to "so stand firm in the Lord". He goes on and lists out five ways for the believers to be strong in the Lord, and, of course, this includes prayer.

Paul lays down five stepping stones to lead us to have the right heart and attitude in our prayer life.

1) In verses 2 - 3 (here is point 1 in your outline) Paul calls for harmonious, unified living in the church to provide that spiritually strong atmosphere to grow. Here at Cornerstone our elders painstakingly pursue leading in and maintaining unity in the body to provide a secure environment for us sheep to grow in and serve each other.

This is God's will. Back in Philippians 2, Paul says to complete his joy by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. In other

words, we are to enjoy the unity of the church and do everything we can to make for peace and joy.

2) (Here is point 2 on your outline) The second “stone” in standing firm in the Lord is walking in a spirit of joy in God. Verse 4 says to “rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice”. This joy is based upon the wonderful attributes of our great God and our relationship with Him, not our overwhelming circumstances. If we go back to our previous lessons where we learned about the gift of the Bible-God’s Word, the character and attributes of God, the person and work of Jesus, our salvation, the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are given a multitude of reasons to rejoice in God always. So don’t just focus on your circumstances or difficulties but instead look to the God over your circumstances.

So spiritual strength and fitness come to those who have chosen to rejoice in God no matter the difficulty because their focus is on their Lord, which is always a cause for joy.

At times, when I am overthinking conversations with any one of my four adult children and begin to analyze their lives and decisions or I feel left out of their lives and as a mother I demand more, I lose my joy because I am putting them in the place in my heart that only belongs to God. I begin to be anxious for them, their paths, their spiritual walks, their parenting, their marriage or their future marriages. I could spend all day worrying about them. My focus on Christ gets blurred, and I forget all about Him. I go totally horizontal and forget the vertical.

Then in His goodness, His Holy Spirit reminds me of truth about God from Scripture like Lamentations 3:22-23: “The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Thy

faithfulness.” My children cannot do loving and kind things for me unceasingly like God does. My children’s compassions do fail. My compassions fail! They definitely are NOT new every morning. Our faithfulness fails! That’s when the Lord helps me to rejoice in Him alone.

If we are rejoicing in the Lord, focusing on the Lord, remembering His promises, then we are able to do what Paul says in the next verse.

3) Verse 5a call us to “Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men.” We are called here to forbear with others, to endure and be patient with others, to put them ahead of ourselves. In other words, **(here’s point 3)** we are called to be humble. Again, I’m thinking of my children and being humble and gentle in my communication with them and not demanding or being critical but taking on an attitude that is gentle and humble or lowly as Jesus called Himself in Matthew 11:29.

How much more in my communication with God, if Jesus is gentle and lowly then surely I cannot elevate myself and presume on certain answers to my prayers from God. I am a sinner who has been saved by grace; grace is a gift that has been given to me by God, and in that I will be grateful. Which brings us to something that should really make us grateful...

4) This is a beautiful, calming little statement. I love it! In the second half of verse 5, Paul says, “The Lord is near.” That verse stops me. It sends my heart and mind on the fact that my God, the Creator, my wonderful Savior and Lord is near me now. Makes me think of Hebrews 13:5, “I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you.” Whom or what else do I need to depend on? The Lord is with me.

Several years ago, John Marc and I attended the funeral of our friend Steve Fernandez, senior pastor of the church we attended when we were still in the Navy

stationed in Vallejo. Steve got a brain tumor and went home to be with the Lord. In Steve's last weeks, he needed to be fed. His brother John, also a pastor, shared in the service that one time when he was feeding Steve that he said to him, "Isn't it gonna be great when you get there, and you're perfect and you see Jesus?" Steve replied in slurred speech, "It's great right now." Steve's joy was in the Lord. At one point of the service, they had a video of Steve with him speaking and he recited this verse, "The Lord is near" from Philippians 4. I knew 4:6-7, but I never paid any attention to verse 5, "The Lord is near". Steve Fernandez believed with his whole heart that the Lord was near to him. Never forgot that. This verse should produce a confidence in the Lord, a confidence Steve Fernandez had, that He is near and start to reorient our horizontal gaze to the vertical and chip away at our anxiety.

5) Now here we are, back to the beginning of our memory verse, "Be anxious for nothing." Paul is saying because of your harmony in the body, your joy in the Lord, humility and patience and knowing God is near, you are standing firm and don't need to be anxious for anything. Here's what you do, "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." (Here is point 5) Paul is calling us to call out to God in prayer with a thankful heart. He is the God of promise who is working all things for our good, Romans 8:28. Be thankful for all He has already done in our lives, the mercies He has shown. Be thankful for all He will accomplish for His glory in your life because of your difficulty.

When I have trouble falling asleep at night because I am anxious, I recognize I should pray. But what I started doing instead of asking and requesting I started thanking God for all He did that day. Sometimes my list started with a clean kitchen, and I think I repeated that several times, because I was so grateful for a kitchen that had been piling up for several days, before I knew it I was asleep!

We have so much to be thankful for if you are a child of God. Be “thankful for past mercies that are the foundation of future blessings” from God.

Now, under section II, point 1, The gift from God for a thankful heart is (**listen for the fill-in the blank**) stated in verse 7: “And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” What verse 7 promises is the calm, serenity, contentment, and peace we long for. What happens here is the answer to our prayer, our supplication, our request is no longer the issue. **Here’s point 2**: The issue is our heart is being more closely aligned with God’s loving and sovereign will for us, and we are growing closer to Him and more like Christ.

I love this illustration:

If I am on a boat out in a lake, and I throw a rope from the boat and catch hold of the dock and I pull...do I pull the dock to me, or do I pull myself to the dock? Prayer is not pulling God to my will but prayer is the aligning of my will to the will of God. “Not my will but thine be done.”

Paul is teaching us to stand firm in the Lord by living in unity within our church, walking in a spirit of joy in God, cultivating a humble heart before others and especially before God, and as our thankfulness is increasing and our anxiety is diminishing, we have the peace of God. That’s how I want to pray...I hope you do, too.

### III. Practice of Prayer

- 1) Make an appointment to pray. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.
- 2) Pray Scripture – Colossians 1:9-12
- 3) A.C.T.S.

- 4) When someone asks for prayer, try to pray immediately with them
- 5) Prayermate app
- 6) Use prayer journal to see God's work in your heart
- 7) Ask for prayer, find a prayer partner

### How Should I Pray?

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

**Main Point:** Paul lays down five stepping stones in Philippians 4:1-7 to lead us to have the right heart and right attitude in our prayer lives, and he describes the incredible products of humble, grateful prayer in our lives.

#### I. Prerequisites of Prayer

- 1) Paul calls for harmonious, unified living in the church to provide that spiritually strong atmosphere to grow. Philippians 4:1-3
- 2) The second "stone" in standing firm in the Lord is walking in a spirit of joy in God. Verse 4
- 3) We are called to be humble. Verse 5a
- 4) This is a beautiful, calming little statement. I love it! In the second half of verse 5, Paul says, "The Lord is near." Verse 5b
- 5) Paul is calling us to call out to God in prayer with a thankful heart. Verse 6

#### II. Products of Prayer

- 1) The gift from God for a thankful heart is the peace of God. Verse 7
- 2) Alignment with God's loving and sovereign will

#### III. Practice of Prayer

- 8) Make an appointment to pray. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.
- 9) Pray Scripture – Colossians 1:9-12

*Cornerstone Community Church*

*Paula Wiemann*

- 10) A.C.T.S.
- 11) When someone asks for prayer, try to pray immediately with them
- 12) Prayermate app
- 13) Use prayer journal to see God's work in your heart
- 14) Ask for prayer, find a prayer partner