

Prayer as an expression of Love

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PRAYER (What is prayer?)

According to the NIV Exhaustive Concordance, the word **pray** is used 121 **times**, not including the various conjugations of the verb. After **pray**, you have **prayed** at 68 **times**, **prayer** at 106 **times**, **prayers** at 32 **times**, **praying** at 36 **times** and prays at 12 **times**, for a total of 375 **times**.

But what is prayer exactly, is it really all that important, and if so why? In fact it says in Matthew 6:8 that God knows what we need even before we pray to Him. So why then if He knows is prayer so important. I think that depends on how you look at prayer. Are you praying because the bible says to? Maybe you're praying because you are hurting, or in need of God's direction and guidance. These are not bad things to pray about and we are commanded in the bible to pray to God. But within that act of prayer there is an act of love. I googled why prayer is important, what I found wasn't wrong, but of the articles I read, the majority of them viewed prayer as a way of bettering ourselves, increasing our faith and leaning on God's wisdom. These things are true, but today we're going to learn about prayer as an expression of love, specifically our love for God our father.

Prayer is direct communication with God. Prayer does not need to be complicated. It needs to come from the heart.

Go to scripture, see what the bible says about prayer

Matthew 6:5-13 NLT

5 "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get.

6 But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

7 “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. 8 Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

9 Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,

may your name be kept holy.

10 May your Kingdom come soon.

May your will be done on earth,

as it is in heaven.

11 Give us today the food we need,

12 and forgive us our sins,

as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

13 And don’t let us yield to temptation,

but rescue us from the evil one.

Lots of people know this one, the Lords prayer. It covers all the bases, Glorifying God, Asking for forgiveness, asking for blessings, and deliverance from future sin. For many people this prayer is almost robotic, automatic, completely structured. But as a foundation upon which we build our own prayers to God the father, it is solid. Our prayer is meant to be relational, it should flow freely from within us, like opening up to a best friend, or hugging our loving father.

When we seek to build a friendship/relationship with someone, what are some ways we do it? We spend time with them, we find common interests, we engage in conversations with them. The same applies to our relationship with God. One of the greatest things about Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, His death for our sins, is that He closed the gap that separated us from God in heaven! Now we can hear this and think “oh that great, I’m really glad the gap is closed”, but we don’t understand the significance of that. Before Jesus, the Jews had lists upon lists of rituals, commandments, specific ways in which they would plead with God for forgiveness, and even following all those rules and

working every day to abide in Him, they still failed to gain salvation, because they only had the law. But after the cross, after the empty tomb, the law was put aside, death was defeated, and we were redeemed unto the one true God, our father in heaven. With that rebuilt connection we can go to God freely as often as we like, through prayer. God is always listening, He always hears us. What's more, He craves our prayers, He wants a relationship with you. He continues to provide for us, and we should be going to Him with our prayers to build our relationship with Him.

What else does scripture say about prayer:

Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

+ James 5:16 "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

+ 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

+ Jeremiah 29:12 "Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you."

+ Jeremiah 33:3 "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know."

+ Luke 6:27-28 "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

+ Psalms 18:6 "In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears."

+ Mark 11:24 "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

+ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

We can see that prayer is more than just closing your eyes, bowing your head, and whispering about needs and wants. It builds a relationship with our creator. I have often undermined the necessity and power of prayer. But it is literally one of our greatest gifts from God. It draws you closer to Him, so that in the thick turmoil of despair, you know He's got you. In the glorious triumph of success, you know He's blessed you. Even in the in-between, when we're neither high nor low, but somewhere in the middle, you know He's there. That is what prayer does for us. "Pray without ceasing" if you have been at calvary for more than a week you've probably heard Silas talking about "prinking". That is a made up word, to combine prayer and thinking. I consider prinking to be a way in which we can ceaselessly pray and continue to go throughout our day. But that last verse from Thessalonians is a very good one to remember.

Read it again.

+ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Give thanks in all circumstances. Do you find yourself thanking God for difficult situations? I am so quick to ask for deliverance from struggle, but how often do I thank God just being with me in the midst of that struggle? Because He is, with us, when we find ourselves in hard times. We are to rejoice and thank Him at all times. Because it feels good to be in difficulty? No, but even within the struggle He is with us. His love is greater, His love is unceasing.

What is Love?

For a perfect understanding of love we're going to read through 1 corinthians 13

1 If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. 3 If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6 It does not rejoice about

injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

8 Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! 9 Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! 10 But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

11 When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. 12 Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

13 Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love

Lets focus on a couple key verses here:

Verses 1-3, talks about having so much, giving freely, being wise, all good things. But without love in your heart they are nothing. Love is the most important part of any aspect of our life.

Verses 4 - 7, Illustrates specifically how love is supposed to look. It is not jealous, or boastful, or greedy, demanding, or angry. Love is patient, kind, enduring any circumstance. Love never quits, love never says die.

The final verses tell us that all this around us, everything we know will eventually become nothing and useless, that the only things that will last forever are: faith, hope and love. Love is the greatest.

So know that we know what love is how do we express love? There are different types of love, but we have only one way of saying it. The greeks had four (actually seven) different terms for love, you've probably heard them before so I will only give a brief rundown on them.

Philia- this is most commonly referred to as brotherly love, or sisterly love. It is the connection between friends, and family. I feel this love towards many of you whom i've known for many years now.

Storge- this is a familial love, usually attributed to children and their parents, it is a natural movement of ones soul, it is a devotion style of love.

Eros- this is a romantic love, it is an emotional involvement based on body chemistry. It is also self-serving.

Agape- Unconditional love, seeking nothing in return, seeking to give all it can, without expectation of receiving anything in return. Agape is the very definition of God's love for us.

Understanding the differences here is important, because it affects how we show different types of love.

With my wife, I try to spend time with her, I talk to her, get to know her, what are her likes and dislikes, because I love her, I try not to impose myself on her, but instead love who she is, because love is not demanding or greedy, but kind. I would like to consider my love for my wife to be a combination of the four different loves we talked about earlier. Philia, i have known her longer than almost anyone in my life, storge, a devotion to her as my wife and friend, eros, because i am romantically interested and attracted to her, and finally agape. My love for her is not perfect, but i strive to show her unconditional love.

With my children I show them love much in the same way, spending time with them, learning about them, also teaching them, and believe it or not disciplining them, so that they will grow and understand right from wrong, and be ready for the world when they are adults. This would be a storge, and hopefully agape type of love.

With my friends I show a Philia type of love, based on common interests, mutual family connections, by spending time with them/talking to them.

Correlation

So how can we connect these two things(prayer and love). How is prayer an expression of love? Go back to what I had said earlier about showing love, if you were listening or maybe reading along with my notes, you might've noticed a key theme in showing love. That is spending time with

those you love. Getting to know them, developing a relationship. How do we develop our relationship with God? Prayer. How do we spend time with God? Prayer. How do we get to know God? Prayer.

Our prayer offered up to God is an expression of our love for our creator. At least it should be. He desires a relationship with us. As any good good Father would. We consider ourselves His children, we cry out to Him when we are hurt. We should be going to Him at all times. The church is referred to as the bride of Christ, if we are His bride, then shouldn't we desire a relationship with Him as He does with us? Shouldn't we be seeking to express our love to God just as He shows us love?

Deuteronomy 7:9 *Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.*

Psalm 86:15 *But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.*

Psalm 136:26 *Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.*

Zephaniah 3:17 *The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.*

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

Romans 5:8 *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

"For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." [Jeremiah 29:11](#)

This scripture is for our benefit so we can understand how God feel about us, how He thinks about us. As a father it is my hope that my sons will understand how I feel about them, as they grow up. It is my hope that they will want a relationship with me as they become self sufficient, no longer depending on me. I want them to have a desire to spend time with me. And I am an imperfect, and faulty man, how much more then do you think God desires a relationship with you. He pours out His love on us, we should in return be always willing to go to Him in prayer, to continue to seek Him, and to show Him that we love Him, because He first loved us.