

Lord, teach us to pray part 1: What is prayer?

I'd say that most people who go to church, or who profess the Christian faith, have a vague idea of what prayer is. I say vague, because most people would probably respond to the question, "What is prayer?" would mostly reply with "Talking to God" or "Asking God for things." And while that is can be used as a simple definition of prayer; prayer is much more than just "talking to God" or "asking Him for things."

Jesus is quoting **Isaiah 56:7** (cf. **Mark 11:17**) when He says that His House shall be a House of Prayer:

"Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."

In other words, that the Church, the House of God would be known for prayer and that His people would be known as a 'praying people.'

The Apostle Paul gives us the admonition that we should ***"pray without ceasing."*** (**1st Thessalonians 5:17**)

Jesus modeled prayer for us in **Matthew 6** and **Luke 11**:

[SLIDE →] ***"When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."***

"Pray, then, in this way:

'Our Father who is in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name.

'Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

'Give us this day our daily bread.

'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]' -Matthew 6:5-13

He's given us this model and yet, for many in the church, we've delegated and relegated prayer to specific short individual monologues such as: Praying before meals, praying at the start of our days, praying before we fall asleep, praying during church services or events, asking for specific things or only praying when others request it, etc.

What would we need to change about our traditions and culture to be known as a House of Prayer? We have a Prayer Chapel... is that sufficient?

I know that many of you, maybe even most of you pray. Rhetorical question: How many of you would you say that you 'pray without ceasing?' What does that even look like?

Over the next few weeks, I want us to pursue the Scriptural answers to these questions and others as we lay the foundations of becoming a House of Prayer and being known as a 'praying people.'

I want to expand your knowledge of, and participation in, the different types of prayer that we see in the Scriptures and to move us into a culture corporately, as a body of believers, that highly values prayer, beyond our individual prayer routines.

Let's take a look at the Word of God and see some types and examples of prayers:

-Prayer of Thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6-7) *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

-Prayer of Confession (repentance) (John 1:9) *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Prayer of Supplication/Petition (Philippians 4:6,7) Notice it separates out "prayer from petition" (cf. **Ephesians 6:18**) actually separates out: prayer, petition [request] and intercession; likewise, **1st Timothy 2:1, 2** also separates out these distinctive types of prayer: *"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people — for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness"*

Prayer of Intercession (1 Samuel 12:23) *"As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right."*

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are intercessors on our behalf. Moses modeled intercession for us in Exodus 32, when he entreated the Lord not to destroy Israel in their rebellion.

Prayer of Consecration (for yourself or over something or someone else; to be set apart) *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you" (2nd Corinthians 6:17; cf. Romans 12:1, 2)*

Prayer of blessing (Numbers 6:22-27) *Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them:*

The LORD bless you, and keep you; The LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.'
So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them."

(cf. Luke 6:28; 1st Peter 3:9) *"...bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."
"...not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing."*

Praying in the Spirit (tongues) (1st Corinthians 14:13-15) *"Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also."* This "spiritual gift" is also known commonly as your "prayer language."

(Ephesians 6:18) *"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."*

Corporate Prayer (Prayer of agreement) (Matthew 18:19) *"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven."* There is power in agreement, which is why corporate prayer is very important. [SLIDES: farming pics]

Over the next few weeks, I want us to delve into Scriptures in relationship to these different types of prayer and challenge us to "up our prayer game" both individually and corporately, because it will be one of the foundations of growth in our lives, both individually and corporately: we cannot minister beyond our prayers. If we are to become who God wants us to be, we will need to grow exponentially in this area.

We have not because we ask not... (James 4:2) Jesus told us in **Matthew 7**, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."* In the Greek, it reads, "ask and keep asking... seek and keep seeking... knock and keep knocking." Prayer changes things. It is a powerful weapon in our spiritual arsenal (**2nd Corinthians 10:3-5**)

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ..."

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 person is powerful and effective." (emphasis mine)*

I want you to examine your prayer life this week and be ready to be challenged.