

Lord, teach us to pray part 3: Who is called to Prayer?

This may sound like a rhetorical question and in some respects, it is: Because the true, although very generic answer is: everyone! We are all called to pray, to prayer. The question becomes, what does that mean? For some, they define and practice prayer as something very formal and they have learned a very specific way to do it; for others, it is very casual, and they struggle with prayer, because they were not raised or reared in a Christian home or church environment where it was modeled for them.

As I mentioned in an earlier part of this series, most would define prayer as talking to God or asking Him for things. But how does the Bible define prayer?

The Greek word that's used for prayer 127 times in the New Testament is *prosheuche*. (Pro-su-KAY). The word *proseuche* is a compound of the words *pros* and *euche*. The word *pros* is a preposition that means *toward*, and it can denote *a sense of closeness*. For example, one scholar says the word *pros* is used to portray the intimate relationship that exists between the members of the Godhead. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *with* God..." The word "with" is taken from the word *pros*. By using this word to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is telling us that theirs is an intimate relationship. One expositor has translated the verse, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *face to face* with God..."

The second part of the word *proseuche* is taken from the word *euche*. The word *euche* is an old Greek word that describes *a wish, desire, prayer, or vow*. It was originally used to depict a person who made some kind of vow to God because of some need or desire in his or her life. This individual would vow to give something of great value to God in exchange for a favorable answer to prayer.

All of this is included in the background of the word *proseuche*, the word used more than any other for "prayer" in the New Testament. Keep in mind, the majority of Paul's readers were Greek in origin and knew the cultural background of this word; hence, they understood its full ramifications.

What a picture of prayer this is! This tells us several important things about prayer. First, the word *proseuche* tells us that prayer should bring us face to face and into close contact with God. Prayer is more than a mechanical act or a formula to follow; it is a vehicle to bring us to a place whereby we may enjoy *a close, intimate relationship with God*.

The idea of *sacrifice* is also associated with this word for "prayer." It portrayed an individual who desired to see his prayer answered so desperately that he was willing to surrender everything he owned in exchange for answered prayer. Clearly, this describes an altar of sacrifice and consecration in prayer whereby a believer's life is yielded entirely to God.

Although the Holy Spirit may convict our hearts of areas that need to be surrendered to His sanctifying power, He will never forcibly take anything from us. Thus, this particular word for prayer tells of a place of decision, a place of consecration, an altar where we freely vow to give our lives to God in exchange for His life. Because the word *proseuche* carries this meaning of surrender and sacrifice, we can know that God obviously desires to do more than merely bless us — He wants to change us! He wants us to come to a place of consecration where we meet with Him face to face and surrender every area of our lives to Him, and in exchange, we are touched and changed by His power and Presence.

So then, we know that we are all called to pray to deepen our intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father. As we commune and communicate with Him (asking and listening), it leads us to a place of deeper surrender and consecration, where we are saying “yes” to His will being done in us and through us.

Jesus just didn’t give us the ‘Model Prayer’ (The Lord’s Prayer, that we discussed in detail last week), but He actually MODELED a Life of Prayer for us!

“In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.” -Mark 1:35

“But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.” -Luke 5:16

Many times, Jesus withdrew to pray alone. His major life events were marked by prayer: His baptism (**Luke 3:21**); His temptations in the Wilderness (**Matthew 4**); Before choosing the 12 Disciples (**Luke 6:12**); After an exhausting day of ministry, healing the sick (**Mark 1:35**); Preparing for more healing and the Sermon on the Mount (**Mark 3:13**); After hearing that his cousin John the Baptist had been beheaded (**Matthew 14:13**); Before the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James and John (**Luke 9:28**); After the Twelve returned, and before he fed the 5000 (**Mark 6:31, 32**); After he fed the 5000, and before Peter walked to him on the water (**Mark 6:46**); After healing many, and before feeding the 4000 (**Matthew 15:29**); at the Garden of Gethsemane (**Mark 14:32**); and on the Cross (**Matthew 27:46/Luke 23:34**). Now, Jesus “lives to make intercession for us” (**Hebrews 7:25**)

God desires and is working for us to be transformed into the image of His Son Jesus (**Romans 8:29**) and Jesus still intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father, so we should be growing in this area of our lives.

In both of our last teachings in this series, I quoted this Scripture:

“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” -1st Thessalonians 5:16-18

Is this hyperbole? Rejoice ALWAYS? In EVERYTHING give thanks? Pray WITHOUT CEASING?

Jesus expresses a similar sentiment in this parable from **Luke 18:1-8**

“Now, He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge *said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Notice, the Scriptures say ***“at all times we should pray...”*** Is God an unrighteous Judge? No, He is righteous! Then it goes on to say, ***“...who cry to Him day and night...”*** Remember, Jesus said, ***“Ask and keep asking, seek and keep seeking, knock and keep knocking...”*** (Matthew 7:7-12)

Yes, some people are called to a higher level of prayer and others are called to pray more than your average believer (known as Intercessors); but ALL of us are called to be a people of prayer, who live a life of prayer and collectively are a House of Prayer.

I’ve been around people that embody prayer, both individually and corporately. If you haven’t seen the Christian movie War Room, I encourage you to see it. It’s a movie about an elderly woman’s “prayer closet” that she refers to as her War Room. It is a great movie that highlights the importance of prayer.

I’ve been around people who have such a passion for prayer, that they’ve started what is known as “Houses of Prayer” where they have a vision for 24-7 prayer and worship gatherings. Before 24-7 Houses of Prayer became a thing, Monica and I used to take some of our RU students down to Charlotte to a church there, called All Nations Church, with Bonnie and Mahesh Chavda, who used to host all-night Prayer meetings from 10 pm on a Friday night until 6 am on Saturday morning. It was called the “Watch of the Lord” and we began hosting them on campus on Friday nights. There are many references in the Scriptures to night watches. Charles Wesley even wrote a Hymn titled “Hymns for the Night-Watch.”

I’ve been to 4 am Korean Prayer meetings: they do it 6 days a week. There are Prayer mountains in Korea, especially connected to *David Yungi Cho’s* Church (the largest church in the world) that are filled with Christians praying day and night. We had a prolonged season of early morning prayer at our church in Torrance for a few years that met at 6 am daily. Not everyone is called to these levels, but prayer should be important to us as individuals and as a church.

We must believe that our prayers matter! We must believe that our prayers can change things! When we pray, we are co-laboring with God in matters of the spiritual realm that affect matters in the physical realm. His Kingdom come; His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Is this your disposition in prayer? Do you approach prayer in this manner? If not, do you want to mature this area of your spiritual walk? What areas of your prayer life do you need to grow in? Have you ever taken a personal assessment of your prayer life?

How is your personal prayer life? Do you have one? That's a good start... Let me help you by dispelling some myths and lies of the enemy: Your prayers matter!

“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” -James 5:16b

Do you see yourselves as righteous? You should, because you are! Righteous simply means “right standing” and through the blood of Jesus, you are in right standing with God and you have been made the righteousness of Christ (**2nd Corinthians 5:21**). You have been qualified if you are born again.

Maybe you weren't brought up in a household that modeled a life of prayer, or taught you how to pray; maybe you weren't brought up in a church that modeled prayer or taught you how to pray. When it comes to praying out loud, or praying with others, I think too many people are afraid of what other people are going to think. Agreement in prayer is very important, so we must learn how to pray in groups of 2 or more:

“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.” -Matthew 18:19

Proverbs 13:20 tells us that ***“He who walks with wise men will himself be wise.”*** The same is true when it comes to prayer: The person who prays with seasoned prayer warriors, will learn how to pray effectively. Corporate prayer is important and needed for the life of a church and for change in our community. We need to use our Prayer Chapel way more than it is currently being utilized.

We must learn to pray with Authority in the Spirit realm. One of the roles of the Church is to be a spiritual army and to do battle in the spiritual realm. To do this effectively, known as Spiritual warfare, we must pray confidently with the authority that Jesus gave us. I'm going to do a more in-depth series on this topic in the near future. This teaching probably does not come from the pulpit often in the United Methodist circles, but it's important and needed because:

“Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” -Ephesians 6:11-13

Some of you may be having a one-way conversation with God, because all you were taught concerning prayer was to go to God with your requests. But prayer is a two-way conversation and you need train your spiritual ears to learn how to hear God's voice. This is so foundational to living a victorious Christian life and walking in the fullness that God has planned for you. It's also important in prayer, because you can find out what is on God's heart that He wants you to pray for and agree with Him concerning.

Praying in the Spirit. Many of you haven't received your prayer language yet. The Apostle Paul talked about praying with the mind and praying with his spirit (**1st Corinthians 14:14**). Both have their advantages. We are to earnestly desire the greater gifts of the Spirit, and this is a gift that edifies (builds up) the one praying in it (**v.4**). I'm going to teach a series in the near future on Spiritual Gifts and will teach more in-depth on this topic.

For now, take baby steps: You don't become a prayer warrior overnight; but you need to take steps in that direction. Like I just said, find some people who know how to pray and pray with them. Listen, observe, get in the Word and start praying in agreement with that. When you are praying the Word of God, you are almost always praying in agreement with His will. Find the good prayers that are in the Scriptures and pray them. Use the Lord's Prayer as a model prayer and expand your prayer life and your prayer language.

Next week at our Worship at the Park, I will talk about how to pray for those in your spheres of influence and using your prayers to prepare the way for the preaching of the Good News.