

Learning to Pray

Discipleship 201—Lesson #3

But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
Matthew 6:5-8

Introduction: Prayer is a conversation with God, through which we are privileged to talk with and listen to the almighty. Prayer is more than a few ritualized prayers said to God in the morning when we awake and before meals. Prayer is an ongoing line of communication.

Factoid:

99% of Americans say they pray, yet most prayers said are **FORMULA** prayers (which can become superstitious), and prayers said at a time of **CRISIS**. Imagine that this type of communication is all we had with our friends: what type of friend would we be?

What is Prayer?

A. Prayer is the **LIFELINE** of the Christian

1. Through prayer we develop a loving **RELATIONSHIP** with God.
2. Prayer needs to be expressed both **PERSONALLY** and publicly
3. Not enough to use **RITUAL** prayers. (*though, there is nothing wrong with them, either*)

"When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Matthew 6:7

B. Through prayer, we develop a **RELATIONSHIP** with God

1. We can call God **DADDY**

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Matthew 6:9

- a. Not because God is a **MALE**
- b. Expresses an **INTIMATE** relationship built upon obedience and trust

2. We call God the **SON**

Paul wrote, *"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ... that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.*

Ephesians 2:12-18

- a. We have no right, based on our own **GOODNESS** to have access to God

b. The **CROSS** removes that barrier

3. We call God the **SPIRIT**

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

Why Pray?

A. If God knows everything we need before we ask, why bother?

1. Prayer is not only **ASKING**

2. Prayer is also:

THANKS, PRAISE, ADORATION, LISTENING, CONFESSING, ASKING

B. Prayer does **CHANGE** things, including:

1. **US**

2. our **CIRCUMSTANCES**

3. our **RELATIONSHIP** with God.

C. When prayers seem to go unanswered it is because:

1. **SIN** has created a barrier between us and God that needs to be confessed

See, the Lord's hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2

2. Our **MOTIVATION** is wrong

You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:2, 3

3. Our request is not **GOOD** for us

Jesus said, Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! Matthew 7:1-11

4. Our **TIMING** is off, we need to wait

5. Those made within the will of God are **ALWAYS** answered.

And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him. I John 5:14

How do we pray?

- A. Set aside time every day
 1. Be **CONSISTENT**
 2. Don't be overly **OPTIMISTIC**
 3. Be comfortable with **SILENCE**
 4. Connect it to your **BIBLE** reading time
- B. Follow the pattern of the **LORD**'s Prayer
 1. Spend time in **MEDITATION**,
...Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
 - a. recognizing God's holiness & **PRESENCE**
 - b. Let go of the **CARES** of life, entrust them to God
 - c. Honor God's **NAME** in your praise
 2. Share in God's **PASSION** and vision
...Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 - a. God expects an **INVITATION**. He will not crash into our lives without one.
 - b. God has called us to be His **HANDS** and **FEET**. The kingdom does not come if it does not come through **US!**
 3. Direct our **PETITIONS** to God
...Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.
 - a. Daily **BREAD**: that which is necessary
 - b. **REPENTANCE** and forgiveness
 - c. Save us from the **TRAILS** of life: seeking God's help through our difficulties
 - d. Deliver us from **SATAN**: the recognition that the true battle of life is **SPIRITUAL**