



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

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Prayer, Creating a Personalized Prayer List

(Lesson #2)

Lesson #24

The definition of prayer:

Prayer is communion with God in order to...

1. Intimately know, love and worship Him.
2. Understand and conform our lives to His will and ways.
3. Access and advance His kingdom, power, and glory.

In the hurry of our day to day lives we often stop to say a prayer at one of three times:

When we wake up, right before our busyness begins,

Before we fall asleep, capping off our busy day or

Before we hastily throw food into our mouths

It's not wrong to pray at these times, but sometimes this repetitive schedule or prayer leads to repetitive prayers (Matthew 6:7), and before we know it we're praying the same ole things at the same ole time as usual (at least that's what happens to me).

This being the case I thought it'd be good to write out a list of things we, probably, don't pray about all that often. Consider this list as a way to break up the monotony of our repetitious prayers. This list certainly isn't exhaustive (add more prayer suggestions in the comments below), but can help us to refocus on the fact that we're talking to the Almighty God of the universe. Praying about things we normally don't will help us remember that fact. Here are 25 things we need to pray about more:

1. Our government
2. Our nation
3. The community you live in
4. The homeless
5. Children without parents
6. People who do not know Christ
7. Those that have run away from God
8. Those that are struggling with addiction
9. Being a better father/mother
10. Being a better spiritual leader
11. Becoming a more active member of the body
12. Your enemies
13. The house you live in
14. Your children
15. Your preacher/ministers
16. Your congregation
17. The hungry
18. Missionaries
19. Those dying for their beliefs
20. Our military

21. Your spiritual life
22. Widows/widowers
23. Those that have recently lost loved ones
24. The spread of the gospel
25. Opportunities to reach those that are lost

I hope that this list will help to improve the prayer lives of all who read it. Prayer is too serious an action to be relegated to something rote and routine. Feel free to print this list out or revisit it as you have need.

Our busy lives can bring meaningful prayer to a grinding halt. Take prayer back and make it personal again by infusing new topics into your discussion with God. We don't necessarily need to pray more, but we do need to make sure that the prayers we're saying matter and this list of 25 is a good place to start.

Praying the Psalms

The Book of Praises

As a whole, the psalms comprise the best place in Scripture from which to pray Scripture. I base that on the original purpose for which God inspired the psalms. The book of Psalms—which means “book of praises” in Hebrew—was the songbook of Israel. The psalms were inspired by God for the purpose of being sung to God.

It is as though God said to his people, “I want you to praise me, but you don't know how to praise me. I want you to praise me not because I'm an egomaniac but because you will praise that which you prize the most, and there is nothing of greater worth to you than I. There is nothing more praiseworthy than I, and it is a blessing for you to know that. It will lead to your eternal joy if you praise me above all others and above all else and to your eternal misery if you do not. But there's a problem. You don't know how to praise me, at least not in a way that's fully true and pleasing to me. In fact, you know nothing about me unless I reveal it to you, for I am invisible to you. Therefore, since I want you to praise me, and it is good for you to praise me, but since you don't know how to praise me, here are the words I want you to use.”

In other words, God gave the Psalms to us so that we would give the Psalms back to God. No other book of the Bible was inspired for that expressed purpose.

A practical illustration for praying the psalms is found in Don Whitney's little book, *Praying the Bible*, using Psalm 23:

You read the first verse—"The Lord is my shepherd"—and you pray something like this:

Lord, I thank you that you are my shepherd. You're a good shepherd. You have shepherded me all my life. And, great Shepherd, please shepherd my family today: guard them from the ways of the world; guide them into the ways of God. Lead them not into temptation; deliver them from evil. O great Shepherd, I pray for my children; cause them to be your sheep. May they love you as their shepherd, as I do. And, Lord, please shepherd me in the decision that's before me about my future. Do I make that move, that change, or not? I also pray for our under-shepherds at the church. Please shepherd them as they shepherd us.

And you continue praying anything else that comes to mind as you consider the words, "The Lord is my shepherd." Then when nothing else comes to mind, you go to the next line: "I shall not want." And perhaps you pray:

Lord, I thank you that I've never really been in want. I haven't missed too many meals. All that I am and all that I have has come from you. But I know it pleases you that I bring my desires to you, so would you provide the finances that we need for those bills, for school, for that car?

Maybe you know someone who is in want, and you pray for God's provision for him or her. Or you remember some of our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world, and you pray for their concerns.

After you've finished, you look at the next verse: "He makes me lie down in green pastures" (v. 2a). And, frankly, when you read the words "lie down," maybe what comes to mind is simply, "Lord, I would be grateful if you would make it possible for me to lie down and take a nap today."²

Possibly the term "green pastures" makes you think of the feeding of God's flock in the green pastures of his Word, and it prompts you to pray for a Bible teaching ministry you lead, or for a teacher or pastor who feeds you with the

Word of God. When was the last time you did that? Maybe you have never done that, but praying through this psalm caused you to do so.

Next you read, “He leads me beside still waters” (v. 2b). And maybe you begin to plead,

Yes, Lord, do lead me in that decision I have to make about my future. I want to do what you want, O Lord, but I don’t know what that is. Please lead me into your will in this matter. And lead me beside still waters in this. Please quiet the anxious waters in my soul about this situation. Let me experience your peace. May the turbulence in my heart be stilled by trust in you and your sovereignty over all things and over all people.

Following that, you read these words from verse 3, “He restores my soul.” That prompts you to pray along the lines of:

My Shepherd, I come to you so spiritually dry today. Please restore my soul; restore to me the joy of your salvation. And I pray you will restore the soul of that person from work/school/down the street with whom I’m hoping to share the gospel. Please restore his soul from darkness to light, from death to life.

You can continue praying in this way until either (1) you run out of time, or (2) you run out of psalm. And if you run out of psalm before you run out of time, you simply turn the page and go to another psalm. By so doing, you never run out of anything to say, and, best of all, you never again say the same old things about the same old things.

So basically what you are doing is taking words that originated in the heart and mind of God and circulating them through your heart and mind back to God. By this means his words become the wings of your prayers.

Application/Activity

Prayer, at its heart, is communicating with God. Reverently and openly. Sincerely. Interacting directly with the magnificent God of the universe who is really there. This week your application is to pray. Pray a lot and pray often. Work through your prayer list that we have created in class.

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