

## **Prayer, From the Westminster Larger Catechism**

### **Q178: What is prayer?**

A178: Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit; with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

### **Q179: Are we to pray unto God only?**

A179: God only being able to search the hearts, hear the requests, pardon the sins, and fulfil the desires of all; and only to be believed in, and worshiped with religious worship; prayer, which is a special part thereof, is to be made by all to him alone, and to none other.

### **Q180: What is it to pray in the name of Christ?**

A180: To pray in the name of Christ is, in obedience to his command, and in confidence on his promises, to ask mercy for his sake; not by bare mentioning of his name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength, and hope of acceptance in prayer, from Christ and his mediation.

### **Q181: Why are we to pray in the name of Christ?**

A181: The sinfulness of man, and his distance from God by reason thereof, being so great, as that we can have no access into his presence without a mediator; and there being none in heaven or earth appointed to, or fit for, that glorious work but Christ alone, we are to pray in no other name but his only.

### **Q182: How does the Spirit help us to pray?**

A182: We not knowing: What to pray for as we ought, the Spirit helps our infirmities, by enabling us to understand both for whom, and: What, and: How prayer is to be made; and by working and quickening in our hearts (although not in all persons, nor at all times, in the same measure) those apprehensions, affections, and graces which are requisite for the right performance of that duty.

The Westminster Catechism is priceless in reminding us the basics of the Christian Faith. When you have specific questions, it has specific, succinct answers. You may already know the answers to these questions, but a review is helpful to remind us why we believe what we believe, and to see and understand the reasons set forth in the Bible. For the next few weeks we will review what the catechism teaches us concerning prayer.

Answer 178 lays a magnificent foundation on which to build our prayer life. Keep in mind that God wants His desires to become our desires, and that some of our desires are selfish, and some may even be bad for us. As the old hymn says, “Thou art the potter, I am the clay.

Mold me and make me, after thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.” We want the Holy Spirit to make us pliable so God can perform the work he promised, in us.

Lord God my Father, the first and the last, the giver of life and of every good gift. As your child, I want to live and pray in a way that pleases you. I pray for the help of your Spirit in order to learn to pray, and to persist in praying until it becomes a duty that I love to perform. I pray that you will give me great joy in the time I spend in communion with you.

I dare make requests of you, not because of any good in me, for without your mercy there is no good in me! I approach you boldly based only on the righteous works of my savior and brother, Jesus Christ your son. To whom you gave me before the foundation of the world. Who showed compassion to me even when I was an enemy, dedicated to pleasing only myself, full of self-righteous pride.

I pray that you will search my heart and reveal my sin to me, make me abhor my sin, and make me sincerely repent and turn away from evil, to ask your forgiveness and return to you. Allow me to see your open arms, always willing, even eager, to forgive and forget my transgressions, and welcome my return to you.

Sanctify me Lord, according to your word and the timeframe you have appointed for me. Allow me to see an increase in my obedience and devotion to you, as long as it keeps me from becoming self-satisfied in any way. Make me content with what you give me, and encourage me to love people when they are unlovable, as you love me.

I pray all these things in the name of my savior Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who died in my place, and for all sinners given to him by the Father. Amen.