

Fundamentals Of The Church

What Is Prayer?

(1 Th 5:15-18)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning
 - a. What a blessing to be here today to present God's most precious Word.
 - b. It is good have my mom, and grandma/Nana here today. They both have been a great inspiration in my life.
2. Series of lessons:
 - a. Fundamentals Of The Church
 - i. We examine how we go about "Understanding Bible Authority"
 - ii. We learned how to keep our foundation strong which is with "Love"
 - iii. Last week we started looking into our recognition to God for who He is as we learned about "Worship" and it important.
 - iv. This week we are going to start looking at the "acts of worship" starting with "Prayer."
3. There are certain things that every Christian that I have ever talked with has admittedly struggled with in their lives.
 - a. Prayer is one of those areas that if you 100 Christians what they need to work on the most 100 would probably put their prayer life in there.
4. And so we are going to look closer at prayer over the next few Sunday mornings and see what God has to say about prayer.

I. Prayer Defined

- A. Webster's Defines it as...
 1. "an address (as a petition) to God or a god in word or thought"
 2. "a set order of words used in praying"
 3. "an earnest request or wish" (Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc.)
- B. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary has...
 1. "Dialogue between God and people, especially His covenant partners." (Brand, C., Draper, C., England, A., Bond, S., Clendenen, E. R., Butler, T. C., & Latta, B. (2003). Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary (1320). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.)
- C. Easton's Bible Dictionary says...
 1. "PRAYER — is converse with God; the intercourse of the soul with God, not in contemplation or meditation, but in direct address to him. Prayer may be oral or mental, occasional or constant, ejaculatory or formal." (Easton, M. (1996). Easton's Bible dictionary. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.)
- D. Prayer Defined by the Bible is...
 1. An imploring of God
 - i. **Ex 32:11** "Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

2. A pouring out of the soul before God
 - i. **I Sa 1:15** "But Hannah answered and said, "No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD."
3. A lament to heaven
 - i. **II Ch 32:20** "Now because of this King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to heaven."
4. A pleading/supplication to God
 - i. **Jb 8:5** "If you would earnestly seek God And make your supplication to the Almighty"
5. A drawing near to God
 - i. **Ps 73:28** "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works."
6. A physical act of reverence to God
 - i. **Ep 3:14** "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ibid)

[With prayer defined sufficiently let us now take a closer look at some of these.]

II. Addressing God

- A. God has made it possible to address Him directly w/o relying on other humans.
 1. **I Ti 2:5** "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"
 2. **He 4:14-16** "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
 3. **Mt 27:51** "Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split"
- B. Because God has made it possible He asks us to address Him.
 1. **Lk 18:1** "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men **always ought to pray** and not lose heart."
 2. **Ep 6:17-18** "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 **praying always with all prayer and supplication** in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints"
 3. **I Ti 2:1-3** "Therefore I exhort first of all that **supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks** be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. 3 **For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior**"
 4. **I Th 5:17** "pray without ceasing"

III. Prayer Is A Honor & Responsibility Of The Child Of God

- A. We have been chosen to be heard by God.
 - 1. As we just read before all those verses on praying.
- B. However it is the child of God's responsibility to be righteous so he can be heard.
 - 1. God does not hear those that are living in sin & not striving for righteousness.
 - i. **Is 59:1-2** "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear."
 - 2. God does hear those striving to walk with Him.
 - i. **I Pt 3:10-12** "For "He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.""
- C. The non-Christian can be heard by God but only if he is striving to find God and be obedient to Him.
 - 1. We see this with Cornelius.
 - i. **Ac 10:1-4** "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a **devout man** and one **who feared God with all his household**, who gave alms generously to the people, **and prayed to God always**. 3 About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" 4 And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "**Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.**"

IV. Prayer Is Asking, Seeking, Knocking

- A. **Mt 7:7-11**
 - 1. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"
- B. Notice...
 - 1. We are to ask petitions of God.
 - 2. We are to seek answers to life problems
 - 3. We are to knock to gain entrance into a more abundant life.

V. Prayer Is More Than Simply Going Through The Motions

- A. Many times we as Christians just simply go through the motions
 - 1. We don't always grasp there is someone listening.
 - i. God listens
 - ii. We talk
 - 2. If we did we wouldn't...
 - i. Make our prayers non-thoughtful through...
 - a. Vain repetitions
 - 1. **Mt 6:7** "And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words."
 - b. Puffed up rhetoric
 - 1. **Mt 6:5** "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."
 - 3. Thus we must focus our thoughts to God and not ramble with no goal in mind.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Søren Kierkegaard "Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays."
(<http://www.quotegarden.com/prayer.html>)
 - a. Prayer is a powerful tool that will change those seeking righteousness for the better without question.
 - b. As one develops a "life of prayer" they will, with certainty, draw closer to God.
- 2. So here is the question for each of us to think on this week and the rest of our lives here on earth, "Have I today drawn closer to God because of my prayers?"
- 3. Invitation