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# What You Need to Know About Prayer: Part 1

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# WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PRAYER

(Part One)

*"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).*

Today we begin a four-series, all-important overview of prayer. During the series twelve key questions will be asked and (hopefully) provide scriptural answers. These twelve are:

1. What is the meaning of prayer?
2. What eight relationships are seen in the model prayer of Jesus?
3. What kind of person is unable to pray the Lord's Prayer?
4. What are some reasons for prayer? Why should you pray?
5. What are the ground rules of effective prayer?
6. What about the direction and objects of prayer?
7. What about positions in prayer and time of prayer?
8. What are some hindrances to prayer?
9. What are some problems associated with and some divine responses to prayer?
10. What are some practical approaches to prayer?
11. Does God ever hear the prayers of an unsaved person?
12. Who was probably Scripture's greatest prayer warrior?

Part one will deal with questions 1-3.

## **1. What is the meaning of supplication (prayer)?**

*"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18).*

*"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1).*

*"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).*

It may be said that no sinner is saved without prayer and no believer is sanctified (to grow in grace) apart from prayer. The prayer may be like Solomon's prayer (one of the longest in the Bible, with 31 verses; see 1 Kings 8:23-53) or like Peter's prayer (one of the shortest, with one verse containing three words—see Matt. 14:30), but in any case, prayer must be exercised.

Definition of prayer--

1. Definition of prayer—Prayer may be best defined as “having fellowship with God.” It is more than simply talking *to* God, but rather talking *with* God. It implies a two-way give-and-take.

All too often this simple, basic, bottom-line definition is either misunderstood or simply ignored.

May I offer a personal experience to illustrate this.

There was a member in one of the churches I pastored who regularly called my wife for some Christian “fellowship” each Monday morning. Following this she often would phone my office, expressing just how much she enjoyed conversing with Sue. But this was really not the case. In reality the only word poor Sue could contribute was the word hello, as she answered the phone. Then, for the next ten or fifteen minutes the caller would go non-stop and abruptly conclude, saying how great it was to talk with her again. But sadly the “visit” was over 99% monologue and less than 1% dialogue!

2. Elements in prayer—*“After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Give us this day our daily bread. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen”* (Matt. 6:9-13).

According to this model prayer of Jesus', which was given to us at the request of the disciples, prayer includes 10 elements:

- a. A personal relationship with God: “Our Father”—The word *our* signifies the believer's brotherly relationship between himself and all other Christians. While the Bible nowhere presents the universal fatherhood of God, it does declare the universal brotherhood of believers. The word *Father* signifies the relationship between God and the believer.
- b. Faith: “which art in heaven”—Paul declares that without this element, our prayers are useless. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe*

*that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*"(Heb. 11:6).

- c. Worship: "hallowed be thy name"—David felt this part of prayer to be so important that he appointed a select group of men who did nothing else in the temple but praise and worship God. *"Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith"* (1 Chron. 23:5).

*"Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was ... So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight"*(1 Chron. 25:1, 7).

In the book of Revelation John sees four special angels who exist solely to worship God and who *"rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come"*(Rev. 4:8).

See also Christ's statement to the Samaritan woman: *"But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23-24).

A pastor friend of mine once had the joy of leading one of the most wicked men in his entire community to the Lord. This former drunkard, thief and street fighter now glowed with the love of Christ. Shortly following his amazing conversion he asked the pastor if he could give his testimony, which request was quickly granted. Thus, this uneducated and crude convert stood before the congregation and, with many tears, related what Christ had done for him. He ended his testimony by quoting what had become his life's verse, Matt. 6:9, "Hallowed be thy name."

"Folks," he cried out, "this is what it's all about! The name of the Lord should be 'hallowed.' We ought to 'holler' it from the housetops!"

After he was finished the pastor observed to his smiling congregation that, if the truth were known, this new convert had captured the true spirit of Matt. 6:9, if not the letter.

- d. Expectation: "Thy kingdom come"—This kingdom is that blessed millennial kingdom spoken of so much in the Old Testament. *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"*(Isa. 2:2-4).

This kingdom was later previewed by John in the New Testament. (See Rev. 20:1-6.)

- e. Submission: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"—Jesus would later give the finest example of this element in Gethsemane. *"And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt"*(Matt. 26:39).
- f. Petition: "Give us this day our daily bread"—This suggests that our praying should be as our eating—daily.
- g. Confession: "And forgive us our debts"—The blood of Christ will forgive us of every sin, but not one excuse. Only confessed sin can be forgiven. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).
- h. Compassion: "as we forgive our debtors"—*"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"*(1 John 4:20). (See also Matt. 18:21-35.)
- i. Dependence: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"—It should be understood that, while God has never promised to keep us *from* temptation, he has promised to preserve us *in* and *through* temptation. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (1 Cor. 10:13).

- j. Acknowledgement: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever"—See David's great prayer in 1 Chron. 29:10-19, where he actually anticipates the final part of Jesus' model prayer.

## 2. What eight relationships are seen in the model prayer of Jesus?

1. That of father and child (*Our Father*)
2. That of God and worshiper (*Hallowed be thy name*)
3. That of king and subject (*Thy kingdom come*)
4. That of master and servant (*Thy will be done*)
5. That of benefactor and suppliant (*Give us this day our daily bread*)
6. That of creditor and debtor (*Forgive us our debts*)
7. That of guide and pilgrim (*Lead us not into temptation*)
8. That of Redeemer and redeemed (*Deliver us from the evil one*)

## 3. What kind of person is unable to pray the Lord's Prayer?

If you don't know Christ ... you can't pray, "Our Father."

If you glorify yourself ... you can't pray, "Hallowed be Thy name."

If you reject His rules ... you can't pray, "Thy kingdom come."

If you won't submit ... you can't pray, "Thy will be done."

If your life is only for here and now ... you can't pray, "On earth as it is in heaven."

If you are self-sufficient ... you can't pray, "Give us our daily bread."

If you won't forgive ... you can't pray, "Forgive us our debts."

If you seek sin ... you can't pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

If you are a friend of evil ... you can't pray, "Deliver us from evil."

If you build your own kingdom ... you can't pray, "Thine is the kingdom."

If you want power ... you can't pray, "Thine is the power."

If you always take credit ... you can't pray, "Thine is the glory."

Hugh Stowell's words are appropriate here:

### From Every Stormy Wind That Blows

From ev'ry stormy wind that blows, From ev'ry swelling tide of woes,  
There is a calm, a sure retreat—'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.

There is a place where Jesus sheds The oil of gladness on our heads,  
A place than all besides more sweet—It is the blood bought mercy seat.

There is a scene where spirits blend, Where friend holds fellowship with friend;  
Tho sundered far, by faith they meet Around one common mercy seat.

Ah! Whither could we flee for aid When tempted, desolate, dismayed,  
Or how the hosts of hell defeat, Had suff'ring saints no mercy seat?

Ah! There on eagle wings we soar, And sin and sense molest no more;  
And heav'n comes down our souls to greet, While glory crowns the mercy seat.

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