

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (16)

Content of our prayers – 2

In our last lesson we noticed the model prayer of Jesus. In that lesson Jesus gives us a good pattern to begin with in our prayers. In His brief prayer He noted, we address our heavenly father with reverence and a desire that His will be accomplished. We can make requests both for our physical and spiritual needs. We conclude by again acknowledging that His will shall be accomplished, and our willingness to accept whatever answer He might give to us. Today we want to develop some of the things we pray for a little further by noting some of the different words used to help us understand the content of our prayers.

I. Some thoughts about the content of our prayers

- a. *The content of our prayers is subjective.* We shall see that there are many different things we pray for. Each of us is different and God knows each of us uniquely. As we pray to Him, while there are certainly guides to keep in mind, each of us prays for different things based upon our individual needs and concerns, and who we are. That each prayer need not be a set pattern is seen in the multitude of different prayers recorded throughout scripture. Sources say that there are nearly 400 prayers recorded in scripture.
- b. *We pray on different occasions for different things* (another lesson). We see this as we engage in a study of different recorded prayers. *Not every prayer needs to contain every aspect.* Look to the examples of the prayers of Jesus. We have several of His prayers recorded and they are different, based on the occasion, and contain different elements associated with His model prayer. In *Devoted to Prayer* (Marshall McDaniel), he notes there are 3 reasons to offer varied prayers.
 - i. It is commanded – 1 Timothy 2:1 describes 4 different types of prayers. We will address these in our next point.
 - ii. Life demands it – our lives are constantly changing. The needs we have right now will be different tomorrow, etc.
 - iii. Because blessings come from varied prayers. As we pray different types of prayers, we are expanding our communication (and relationship) with God. We are requesting different blessings based upon our needs. We are thinking of others and just ourselves. This also keeps us humble and more cognizant (fully aware and alert) as we consider the varied ways he can and does bless us.
 - iv. NOTE: This is reason to not mechanically utter the same prayer every time.
- c. *Sometimes a brief prayer is sufficient for the occasion, as briefly noted in our last lesson.* The recorded prayer of “the sinner” in Luke 18:13, is only 7 words, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” The model prayer we discussed last week is only ~70 depending on translation. At other times, we ought to devote time to prayer – especially our personal prayers. It is my personal belief that this is where prayer strengthens our devotion to God.

II. Words associated with prayer

- a. **Prayer** – (προσευχή, proseuchē) - the general word for prayer – petitions to God. Found 134x in the NT, it is the most common word associated with prayer and simply reminds us that we ought to be praying.
 - i. Matthew 6:7, 9 – “in this manner therefore pray...”
 - ii. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 – pray without ceasing...

- iii. 1 Timothy 2:8 – men pray everywhere...
 - iv. James 5:16 – confess and pray for one another...
 - v. Note that 1 Timothy 2:1 uses the plural for this word. This again implies there are different ways and types of prayers to be offered.
 - vi. We find in this word that prayers are not a mere suggestion, but commanded by God.
- b. **Supplications** – (δέησις, deēsis) – found 19 times (noun) and 22 times (verb) in the NT and is usually translated, “prayer”. It is translated supplication 6x. It is a word that implies urgency and pleading. This is the prayer we offer when we have a serious need or something that is immediate, whether for ourselves or others. AS a verb, the word is sometimes translated beg and implore, which helps us understand the urgency attached to the word.
- i. Philippians 4:6 – with prayer and supplication... let your requests be made known
 - ii. 1 Timothy 2:1 – supplications... made for all men. The NASB uses the word “entreaties.”
 - iii. Ephesians 6:18 – part of our “armor”, along with prayers.
 - iv. Hebrews 5:7 – speaking of Jesus (likely in the garden), the writer noted, *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up **prayers** and **supplications**, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,...* NOTE: The word “prayers” here is this Greek word. The word “supplication” is a different Greek word (ἱκετηρία, hiketēria) and found only here and has virtually the same meaning though it includes humility (actually associated with offering an olive branch – a sign of peace). The mention of 2 different words implies the intensity of the moment.
 - v. Romans 1:9-10 – as a verb, “making request” in his prayers to come to them.
 - vi. Acts 8:22 – as a verb, “*repent therefore of this your wickedness, and **pray** God if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you.*”
- c. **Intercessions** – (ἐντευξις, enteuxis) – a formal petition on behalf to others.
- i. In this word we learn that we are to pray for others. As we know of their needs, both spiritual and physical, let us be praying for them.
 - ii. The root word is the foundation of Jesus as our intercessor. Hebrews 7:25 notes, *Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* See also Romans 8:34.
 - iii. And of the Holy Spirit, who makes intercession for us as we pray. Romans 8:26-27.
 - iv. As we can see from the word is more than a mere mention of something. There ought to be genuine concern behind our request.
 - v. The word is also found in 1 Timothy 4:5 as we give thanks for what we have been blessed with.
- d. **Pleadings** – (παρακαλέω, parakaleō). In some versions the word is beseeched.
- i. The word presents the idea of calling one to one’s side.
 - ii. It is a fairly common word describing one who stands beside you and comforts you (cf. The Helper – Holy Spirit – that Jesus promised to send is a derivative of this word – i.e., He would be summoned to stand by their side as they did the work Jesus had given them).
 - iii. Romans 12:1-2, Paul used this word saying, “*I beseech you therefore brethren...*”
 - iv. But twice, it is used in reference to prayer - 2 Corinthians 12:8 – where Paul is pleading with the Lord to remove his thorn in the flesh AND Matthew 26:53 where Jesus tells his disciples that you could pray to the Father and He would send 12 legions of angels.

- v. Associated with prayer this is another word associated with intensity, SERIOUSNESS and a realization of how much we need Him.
- e. **Requests** – (αἴτημα, aitēma) - a request is to ask for something. Certainly that is what we do in our prayers.
 - i. Philippians 4:6 - if you have requests make them know to God
 - ii. 1 John 5:15 – the petitions we have asked of Him.
- f. **Confession** – (ὁμολογέω, homologeō) - while we have addressed this in previous lessons. Confession is the acknowledgment of something, specifically sins.
 - i. 1 John 1:9 calls for us to confess our sins to God (in prayer) and He will forgive us.
 - ii. Acts 8:22 while not using the word implied that Simon needed to acknowledge his sin. We might also confess our struggles and weaknesses to God.
 - iii. James 5:16, sometimes we our confessing our trespasses to one another so that we can pray for each other. While the prayer in this verse is a different word (common word for prayer), it is clear that our prayers are related to that which we confess.
- g. **Thanksgiving** – (εὐχαριστία, eucharistia) –
 - i. Our prayers should always be filled with gratitude. While not specifically listed in the Lord’s model prayer, it is clearly implied that we are thankful for what God has done and what we ought to be doing. Cf. Matthew 6:11, see 1 Timothy 4:3-4.
 - ii. Philippians 4:6, Ephesians 5:20, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, etc. Directly related to our prayers. Something need only be said once to be true. What about when it is instructed continually?
 - iii. Luke 17:15-16 finds an occasion where Jesus healed 10 lepers as they went on their way. One, a Samaritan, returned glorified God with a loud voice, fell down before Jesus and gave Him thanks. This illustrates gratitude for what God has done for us.
 - iv. Thankfulness in our prayers keeps us humble.
- h. Many texts combine these words – 1 Timothy 2:1 – God commands that we offer different types of prayers, clearly on different occasions. Ephesians 6:18 mentions prayer and supplication, Philippians 4:6 – prayer, supplication & thanksgiving. The combining of terms illustrates that our prayers are varied based upon the occasion and our needs.

And thus we can see through a word study some of the things we can pray. I want to present 1 more lesson on this topic (the content of our prayers) in which we will look at some specific examples of things that believers prayed for. This will give us a broader picture of what our prayers can consist of.

As you pray to God, understanding these different types of prayers can help you as you devote time to better connect with him in this blessed avenue He has provided to listen to us. What about you? Are you praying to God as you ought to?

Sunday, June 30, 2024 am

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Content of our prayers – 3

- III. What can and should we be praying for
- a. Praising God with thanksgiving. Don't forget this in your prayers.
 - b. Our material needs – according to His will, not selfishly, etc.
 - c. Our spiritual needs – forgiveness, strength to overcome temptations, wisdom – James 1:5, spiritual growth
 - d. For others – our brethren
 - e. For the church –
 - f. For the lost – a subcategory of others, but it is worthy of its own attention. We could devote an entire lesson to evangelism and prayer (and I have done so). Here we are simply reminded of some of the things we could pray for.