

Sunday, August 11, 2024 am

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD (21)

Prayer (20)

Questions and conclusion

Today, we conclude our study of prayer. We have addressed numerous subjects dealing with prayer. I will review them in a few moments. But we begin by addressing 2 more questions. One I have been asked this past week, and the other I mentioned at the beginning of this study that I would address it.

I. **Can a wife lead a prayer in the home with her husband?**

- a. Based on 1 Timothy 2:12-15 - I believe she should not. At best it is questionable.
- b. But what if he gives her permission? She is still in subjection to him as she leads the prayer. That is still a grey area at best. We do not have a clear example or passage or implied passage. Furthermore, that same reasoning is used to allow women to lead certain aspects of the public worship.
- c. This does not dismiss that a wife DOES have some authority in the home, especially over children (cf. 1 Timothy 5:14 – she is to manage the house).
- d. I realize this is not the norm of our society, but we must factor in that our faith needs to be: 1) Grounded in truth, 2) We are called upon to be different.

II. **Can we pray to Jesus?**

- a. There is debate about whether this is something that is acceptable. We will not address that in this lesson, but rather we will appeal to what we have already observed in our studies on prayer.
- b. If we are addressing prayer as we have been discussing in this detailed study, we have noted:
 - i. Prayer is directed to the Father. Even Jesus taught this – Matthew 6:9, John 16:23, etc. Also consider Colossians 1:3, Ephesians 3:14.
 - ii. We have noted that when we pray to the Father, it is THROUGH Jesus – John 16:23, 1 Timothy 2:5, Ephesians 5:20 - clearly that prayer is to be directed to God through Jesus.
 - iii. The Holy Spirit also has a part in our prayers – Roman 8:26-27. Like Jesus, His role is that of an intercessor (a go-between).
 - iv. Add to this James 1:17, notes that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father. Philippians 4:19 – He supplies all our needs according to His riches in glory BY Christ Jesus. This is why we approach our heavenly Father in prayer.
- c. There are no passages commanding or necessarily implying we can pray to Jesus. It is at best, a personal judgment. Perhaps we can discuss this at some time in the future if there is interest.
- d. While it may seem illogical that we should not pray TO Jesus, the safe course is ALWAYS to stay within the boundaries of what God’s word does teach (1 Corinthians 4:6). And that is to pray to the Father THROUGH Him.

III. **How can I make my prayers more effective?**

- a. We have devoted 7 months to a study prayer – how we are to communicate TO God. We have addressed:
 - i. God’s part in prayer which includes: He has granted us access to Him, He is able to answer ours prayers (providentially) and as is best (we noted the ways God may answer a prayer – “yes”, “no”, “wait” or “yes, but not the way you expected it.”

- ii. We noted several examples of godly men and women that prayed including **Jesus** (I always emphasize that if Jesus, the very Son of God, prayed so much – what does that say about the rest of us?), Paul, David, Abraham, Hannah (mother of Samuel), Solomon at the dedication, Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah, etc. We can certainly learn from these examples.
 - iii. What makes prayer acceptable and unacceptable including various attitudes we must take into account.
 - iv. We studied the Lord’s Model prayer and discussed what the content of our prayers can include.
 - v. We have talked about public prayers, how God views the prayers of sinners, and in our last lesson we answered a few questions related to prayer.
- b. With this as a backdrop, what can we do to make our prayers more effective? Here are some suggestions.¹
- i. First, let us understand there is “magic bullet” that will cause you to be more serious in our prayers (or anything else for that matter). Life is not easy, and anything worthwhile requires hard work.
 - ii. Realize that prayer requires discipline – it is something you need to INTENTIONALLY want to do. We are not going to grow in our prayers if we do not make up our minds that we want to improve. How often does scripture talk about self-control? Consider 2 Peter 1:5-7ff. Self-control (& discipline) are a part of our growth. It is not easy, but it is an absolute MUST! Colossians 4:2 tells us, “*Continue earnestly in prayer, being **vigilant** in it with thanksgiving.*” 1 Peter 4:7 calls for us to “*be serious and watchful in your prayers.*” The word watchful includes soberness (seriousness) (Bullinger), to be self-controlled, well-balanced (BDAG), well composed in mind (L&N 30:25), etc. Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 – discipline your body.
 - iii. Realize what is at stake – we are contemplating eternity. If we desire to go to heaven, we must strive to draw closer to God. We need a good relationship with Him. That means working to serve Him and maintaining purity in our lives (which includes seeking forgiveness when we sin – which involves prayer – 1 John 1:5-9). Romans 13:11-14 calls for us to wake up. What prompted Peter to tell us to “be serious and watchful in your prayers”? (1 Peter 4:7) – “But the end of all things is at hand...” This is about our eternity!
 - iv. Be aware of the present – we are living in a VERY hostile world against our faith. And it is trending worse. We cannot withstand this wickedness by ourselves. We need the “armor of God” – Ephesians 6:10-18. Notice the final piece of that “armor” – praying always...” Remember the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13.
 - v. Live a godly life – it is virtually impossible to pray properly when we refuse to surrender our lives to God – both morally and mentally. Hebrews 12:1-3 calls for us to run the race with endurance, laying aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us... looking to Jesus...
 - vi. Draw closer to God – related to the previous point. The closer you are to God (and Jesus, etc.) the more passionate your prayers will be. James 4:8, 1 Peter 3:12 – God hears the prayers of the righteous.

¹ Many of these suggestions were gleaned from various sources. I have leaned heavily on Marshall McDaniel’s book, *Devoted to Prayer*, One Stone Press © 2019. And of course, we have relied on the Bible.

- vii. Set aside time to pray– this is IMPORTANT. You need to make prayer a regular part of your life. It needs to be a HABIT. In the examples of prayer we noted, we observed how OFTEN they prayed. It was not an occasional action, but a part of who they were. E.g., Daniel prayed 3 times a day (Daniel 6:10), David started his day with prayer (Psalm 5:3), Jesus prayed often (Luke 5:16).
1. Choose a regular time on a daily (or several times a week) basis to pray. Be DELIBERATE in holding this time for prayer (it is also a good time to include Bible study/reading). NOTE: The first thing in the morning is a good time, while your mind is clear and you are rested.
 2. Remove distractions – including whatever electronic devices distract you. Find a quiet place where you will regularly pray.
 3. If life gets in your way (and it will), do not let that stop you. If you miss a day, resume the next day. Just do NOT let that distraction become your habit or keep you from praying regularly.
 4. Assume a reverent posture that best helps you to concentrate as you pray – e.g., closed eyes, bowed head, etc.
 5. MAKE yourself hold to that committed time. Habits do not form overnight. They take time and effort to maintain them. You want this to be so engrained in your life, that if you miss, you KNOW it and feel like something is missing. NOTE: Even if you make something into a good habit, it is far too easy to slip out of that habit (much quicker than developing the habit – e.g., consider dieting).
 6. Make yourself ACCOUNTABLE – let someone close to you know that you are trying to develop better prayer habits and ask them to lovingly hold you accountable.
- viii. Be thoughtful in your prayers.
1. For prayers to be acceptable to God they need to be authentic, thoughtful, and offered with humility. We have addressed this.
 2. Do not let your prayers become too ritualistic (e.g., vain repetition, uttered in a thoughtless manner, etc.). Effective prayers are varied and relevant to the occasion.
 3. THINK through what you pray. Before you pray, think about WHAT you are going to pray about. Is there a specific circumstance or REQUEST that you have been asked to pray for? NOTE: When announcements are made concerning brethren and their needs, that should be an automatic list of things to include in your prayers. NOTE 2: There is nothing wrong with writing down a list of things to pray for.
 4. Develop a “prayer strategy”. You might ask yourself, how can you pray for everything you need to be praying for? At first, if you are learning to pray, you will struggle to think of things to pray for. BUT (and I PROMISE YOU THIS), the more you pray, it will reach a point where it just flows and time may become a concern. Think about everything Paul prayed for. It has been suggested that you can set a timetable of what to pray for on a regular basis. For example.
 - a. On Monday – pray for the **church and her needs** – those mentioned, leaders, the church as a whole, various members that you see have

needs. Pray for her growth, unity & purity. Pray that you will be the part of the body you need to be.

- b. On Tuesday – pray for your **family** – both physical and spiritual concerns.
 - c. On Wednesday – pray for the **world and nation** – problems you observe that you would like to pray for.
 - d. On Thursday – Pray for **evangelistic needs**. There are many things to pray for where the lost are concerned. Maybe there is a specific person you have in mind. Or for doors to be opened within the community and abroad. Pray for preachers we support (by name).
 - e. On Friday – pray for your **community and the needy** around you.
 - f. On Saturday – pray for **yourself as you prepare for Sunday**. If there are specific struggles (likely you will pray for these daily), but you can be more thoughtful and detailed about it.
 - g. On Sunday – as you **prepare to worship God** – pray for a proper heart and forgiveness as needed. Pray for the services and all who will be part of it.
5. There are “prayer apps” and software to help remind you of what to pray for and when.
- ix. Finally, work to stay focused as you pray. Many struggle with focus, especially in our fast paced society.
 1. This is probably the most difficult suggestion to address, because our lack of focus is a product of our society. We want things instantly and we want to be entertained ALL the time.
 2. Focus is a LEARNED trait. You have to be deliberate about it. Colossians 3:1-2, 2 Corinthians 10:5, etc.
 3. Eliminate distractions. We have already mentioned this, but here we take it further. Are you willing to change you lifestyle so that you WILL be less distracted – that means less time WATCHING whatever it is you watch – television, phones, video games, movies, internet, YouTube, etc. 1 Corinthians 10:23, 6:12, etc. This is about your overall spiritual health. But beyond that, again – eliminate whatever immediate distractions stand in your way.
 4. Developing a routine can help with this, especially if part of that routine is preparing yourself to pray (and study/read your Bible).
 5. Make your prayers unique and spontaneous (while maintaining reverence). Deliberately not praying the same phrase every time will help you focus.
 6. Find a method that works best for you. For some, you focus better by writing something out and reading it, while for others, it might be the closed eyes. For some, maybe it is reading through a scripture or song that is prayer (or making it into a personalized prayer).

And thus we conclude our study of prayer. It is my hope that in these studies we have learned to appreciate prayer a little better. It is a crucial part of the Christian’s faith and life. I have described it as a “spiritual indicator”. And thus I commend this study to you with the hopes that it will in some small way help draw you closer to God. So how is your “prayer life”? Think about it!