

Prayer Lesson 1 (What is Prayer)

As a young Christian I viewed prayer as a way for me to check in with the Lord mainly because I didn't want Him to forget about me and I certainly didn't want Him to think that I had forgotten about Him. In other words it was my time to be with my God and have His undivided attention. Since then I've grown to know and love Him more because I prayed without ceasing. Because our communication was consistent, I evolved to where I can say with certainty that I am a friend of God and He is my Best Friend. Who laid so many different assignments on my heart. So I began this series obediently to help everyone further understand the meaning, the purpose, and benefits of prayer.

What is the meaning of prayer?

Prayer can be described as a gateway to talk and speak to The Lord, a conversation with Him while acknowledging His Supremacy and power. Others may view it as a way to receive something missing and find some type of order and direction in their individual lives. In this first Lesson we will be discussing what prayer means, how it affects us individually, and the different types of prayers to elevate our prayer life and position as a Christian.

Beginning Your Prayer Life...

Some don't know where to begin and others are lost on how to come and speak to Jesus. If you are confused or scared that's a good thing to some extent as the Bible says fear is the beginning of wisdom. However, there is no reason for hesitation when you pray or talk with God; He already knows your thoughts and is waiting for you to make contact with Him. Let's start out with some steps of understanding the basics of prayer below.

- Remember to be mindful that first and foremost you are communicating with the Most High, The all powerful, all knowing, so you must begin by giving the utmost reverence/respect to Him.
- Picture yourself kneeling in front of Jesus at the foot of the cross. Since I pray with this image in mind myself, for me it shows humility and respect as well as recognition that I am not on the same level as He is, as I kneel and bow my head before speaking.
 - The position of prayer is important but not the most important part of prayer. There are many different ways that we pray, position ourselves to pray such as standing with your head bowed, as many view this stance as a symbolic gesture of strength and war ready position for spiritual warfare as a soldier would do. In groups ie church settings, the congregation may hold hands to symbolize this as well, understanding there is strength in numbers. (Matthew 18:19-20)
 - Kneeling with praying hands and head bowed is another method used
 - For those unable to do these things because of sickness, ailments, etc. may just simply lay, close their eyes, and look towards heaven etc.
 - Mark 6:41 Jesus prayed looking toward heaven but Genesis 17:3 states that Abraham fell on his face to pray

Whatever method chosen remember that God is more interested in your spiritual position and attitude more so than your physical position

Have you ever went to someone's house and when they opened the door just stand there not knowing what to say? Or called someone on the phone and never say a word? I'm quite sure few have done these things because there should be a purpose when you call someone or show up on their door steps. That being said, let's continue with the steps below.

- Always have a purpose when you go to God in prayer. When you call on The Lord understand that He's always there to hear and answer your call, so when He answers don't waste His time. This is a special time of being in the presence of the God Almighty who wants us to call on Him. *Isaiah 65:24 "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."*

We want to be mindful not to make a performance out of prayer. Understand that God is not impressed with words or dignified speech that aim to impress man or Himself. What God is impressed with is spiritual humility and a heart of obedience. The reason we have conversations with one another varies from day to day, from person to person, and time to time. And we don't have the same conversation with the same people for the same purpose each time. Repetition forms habit and can take away the focused meaning of what you are doing. When we use repetition in prayer, which is needed for certain things, but repetition of a standard prayer can force your words to become meaningless because your mouth is use to saying the words but your heart does not feel what you speak and therefore it becomes what the Bible calls "vain repetitions."

Helpful Scriptures

1. Matthew 6:7 *"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."*
2. Isaiah 29:13 *"Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men"*
3. Hebrew 4:15-16 *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

What Does Prayer Mean to Your Life As A Christian?

Types of Prayer

To avoid becoming robotic when we pray we should focus on the relationship development with Jesus through prayer and the purpose of our prayer. There are many types of prayers such as prayers for forgiveness, direction, strength, health, emotional stability, gratitude, correction, clarity, spiritual growth, or to simply make

a specific request known. Below are a few examples of explanations of common prayer types which can be used collectively or individually.

- ***The prayer of Supplication***, according to Hebrew practices, this is described as something similar to a petition as we are asking God to provide or do something for us or on our behalf. Now we know that prayer is a way of beckoning or calling on the Lord and supplication is the act of asking which is what God wants us to do, but the Bible states in ***Philippians 4:6-8 "Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God."*** Let's break this down to get a clearer understanding of what Paul's meaning here.
 - ***"Be careful for nothing..."*** This part can be a little confusing trying to comprehend how to be careful for nothing, but what Paul is saying to the Philippians here (as expressed in other biblical translations) can be related to mean anxiety, worrying, etc. We deal with so many things on a daily basis some things good, some bad, and some are just everyday issues and struggles that simply are a part of living life. Well Jesus doesn't want us to be distracted by these things no matter what they are or how they may affect us be it mentally, physically, emotionally, or spiritually. God made us so He definitely knows our struggles, our anxiety, and the issues that we face but He is revealing to us the solution of exactly what we need to do and what we don't need to do, by tying in the next phrase...
 - ***"through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving"***. What this means is that once we put these phrases into action, we do not have to be careful or cautious because there is nothing we need to be cautious about. We have the solution that will come through prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, which is where God is welcoming us to unload all our burdens, confusions, heartaches, and pain on Him to alleviate our load by putting them in His hands. Peter also tells us this in 1 Peter 5:6-7, ***"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him for he cares for you."*** Jesus wants His children to be stress and worry free having the confidence and faith in Him that He is the answer, there to protect you, guide you, love you, comfort you, wipe the tears from your eyes, and never leave or forsake you. Supplication is where we make our request known. It doesn't have to always be about you and your wants but to pray on someone else's behalf as well. We often times make the mistake of thinking if the Lord has not answered our request in a timely fashion, then He doesn't care or has not heard our cry or request. I will refer to an old statement I commonly heard in and out of church and that I now say... **He may not come when you want Him but He is always on time!** The relationship with God by way of prayer doesn't happen overnight, it's a process. I had to pray on how to pray and understand that it's more to prayer than supplication, it's thanksgiving, reverence and building a stronger relationship with the Father. The first sermon I preached was about the Hebrew boys, as I was going through so much at the time but prayed to get to a place and beyond where the Hebrew boys stood for God and God stood up for them no matter the situation they faced. Even though I knew the story and heard it preached so many times, this was a pivotal moment for my relationship with the the Lord. The Hebrew boys knew that they were not going to bow and that if they didn't they would be put to death, yet they stood for God; they knew that God had all power and was definitely equipped to deliver them, but if not their faith nor their position would change, then God stood up for them.
 - God knows what He is doing and trust that He knows what's best. So pray your prayer of supplication and make any and all request known. Tell God all you need and want and just step aside as He will work it out for you, I'm a living witness! Allow Him to display what He can do and let His glory shine through any circumstance.

Constant prayer is not recommended here, but needed because it's an open line of communication, that is never busy for you to call on the Lord for anything and He beckons us to take advantage.

In Psalms 51 David prayed a prayer of supplication:

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. **11** Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar."

Psalms 51:1-7, 9-19 KJV

- Repentance Prayer is where we pray accepting everything with acknowledgement to God that we've done something unpleasant in His sight, by sinning knowingly and unknowingly and are seeking redemption, acceptance, and understanding as well as correction.
- Thanksgiving Prayer (incorporated with Philippians 4:6-8) is exactly what it says, a prayer of thanks. As a child my Mother would have prayer and bible study with us and on certain nights she would tell us that when we prayed not to ask The Lord for anything, just thank Him for what He has done, what He is doing, and what we desire Him to.
- Intercession Prayer is when you say a prayer on behalf of someone else. Some use the term "standing in the gap" to describe this particular prayer to plead someone else's case to the Lord. I read a passage that describes this type of prayer as holy, believing, preserving prayer on another's behalf pleading with God in desperation to intervene. That being said, this is what Jesus does for us and on our behalf. He is the mediator between God and man when we pray and makes intercession for us to the Father.

**** 1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.***

**** Romans 8:34 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.***

- Prayer of Consecration and Dedication is a prayer that can be a little confusing because it's a command to God. This is not to be demanding or disrespectful to God but showing God that you recognize He has the power and put the power in you to command / request to be granted even though He has to be called upon to activate it. So we often pray and end our prayers with 'Thou will be done' but when praying this type of prayer we shouldn't use the word 'if' because if means that you are asking for something you are not sure you will receive and brings forth immediate doubt. God doesn't like doubt, He wants us to be confident and put our confidence in Him and Him alone. We doubt in situations when we are unsure and this is OK because we don't know the mind of God or get lost sometime which is when we use the word "if". Sometimes we do so knowing what the will of God is as Jesus did in **Luke 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.** It's not that Jesus doubted God He was in the flesh and simply needed strength to endure the will of God and get through the situation, as we see in the next verse... **43 And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening Him.**
- Another example that is commonly used is the story when Jesus told Lazarus to come forth from the grave. He lifted up His eyes and said to His Father and said, **"Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."** **John 11:41-42.** This is a demand of sorts and you will know when to use this command to God once you strengthen your prayer life and relationship with God. Don't be alarmed but be mindful that you won't get the results you are looking for if when the command is given to someone that doesn't know you. For example if the Lord doesn't know your voice and you are making a mockery of His Power and Spirit, there may be a different result than expected.



**The Effectual fervent prayer of a
righteous man availeth much.
James 5:16**