

Worship God In Spirit & Truth

Why Pray?

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Why Praying?

Jesus discussed prayer during His discourse commonly referred to as 'The Sermon on the Mount' stating "And whenever you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to stand in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they will be seen by people. I tell you with certainty, they have their full reward! But whenever you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees from the hidden place will reward you. "When you are praying, don't say meaningless things like the Gentiles do, because they think they will be heard by being so wordy. Don't be like them, because your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:5-6). In Mark 11:17 Jesus refers to Isaiah 56:7 stating God's temple is a place of prayer. Now God's temple dwells in man.

"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples'" (Luke 11:1). Jesus then repeated what he stated in Matthew 6:9-13 in the Sermon on the Mount prayer discourse.

What is significant in their request to be taught how to pray? Did Jesus' disciples not know how to pray? Could it be the disciples' perception of prayer was tainted by observing their religious leaders, the Pharisees, pray? Did the patriarchs pray or was God's direct communication with them the same as prayer? Under the law given by God through Moses were the priests, prophets or kings the only Israelites who could pray?

In the Old Testament patriarchs, priests, prophets and Hanna prayed. Their prayers appear mostly to be requests for forgiveness, deliverance and pleadings for relief from suffering. They were not the only ones as Daniel and others were "praying toward the temple," the place of God's presence.

The New Testament prayers are noticeably different from those in the Old Testament as they were generally about spiritual things. Luke records in Acts 10:1-5 that a Roman centurion, Cornelius, prayed to God continually and that God heard his prayers.

Attitude of the One Praying

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, 'I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess' [arrogant- look how good I am]. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner [humble]'" (Luke 18:10-13). From the following verses, one understands that prayers of the humble rather than the self-righteous are heard.

Answered Prayer

John tells us that Jesus is the Vine and Christians are the branches. If the branch (a Christian) does not remain attached to the Vine (Christ) death occurs and the branch (Christian) is cut off and cast out – no

longer in a save condition. Those who remain attached to the vine are in Christ and their prayers are answered as they glorify God, not self (John 15).

Hindrance to Prayer

God may not always hear a prayer as there are situations, conditions, attitudes and motives that hinder one's prayer from being heard.

- James 4:2-3 "You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."
- 1 Peter 3:7 "Husbands, in the same way, be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

Frequency of Prayer

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:1-8)?

Followers of Christ should consistently pray for help in overcoming life's daily adversities as they live for Christ. Paul states "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18).

Prayers and Instructions by Jesus

- Personal Prayer - let this cup (Jesus' pending death by crucifixion) pass, but Thy will be done
- Instruction on Prayer – do not use vain repetitions
- Warning –prayers to be seen of men are not heard

Apostles

- Prayer for boldness – Upon Peter's release by Council
- Prayer for Action – Peter prayed and said, "Tabitha arise"
- Personal – in jail and at midnight Paul and Silas prayed

Apostles and Christians

- General Instructions – is any afflicted, let him pray
- For others – we give thanks and pray for you always
- Prayers for self – build up self and pray in the Holy Spirit
- For Forgiveness – Repent of this wickedness and pray
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Always have doing God's will foremost in your heart. Pray constantly. Prayers can be short and very specific. Pray for things that last forever. Seek God's guidance in keeping His Kingdom first in daily living and in putting others ahead of self. Pray for and help the spread of the Gospel of Christ. Pray for others and for thankfulness are always appropriate.

Prayers can be very short, at any place, for self or others, when happy or sad or specific or general, but not self-centered.

Questions

1. The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray as prayer was not practiced under the Old Covenant.
 - ☐ True
 - ☐ False
2. God answers the prayers of the
 - ☐ Arrogant
 - ☐ Humble
3. What hinders prayers
 - ☐ Nothing as God answers all prayers
 - ☐ Improper treatment of spouse
4. When is the hour of prayer?
 - ☐ Four times a day
 - ☐ Whenever you need something
 - ☐ No set hour - pray without ceasing
5. For a Christian's prayer to be acceptable to God he must remain in Christ.
 - ☐ True
 - ☐ False

Answers to Questions

1. True
2. Humble
3. Improper treatment of spouse
4. No set hour – pray without ceasing
5. True

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