

Spiritual Disciplines - Prayer

Prayer: Talking and listening to God, an intimate fellowship with God. May include praising, thanking, confessing, asking, interceding, and receiving.

Our previous study was about our devotional wings (*meditation, confession, adoration, and submission*). Now we come to *petition*, the offering of our requests to God. As we begin, we are charged with five elements necessary to fully experience the power of *petitionary* prayer.

IN-SPIRITED PRAYER:

How does prayer in the Spirit occur? Read **Romans 8: 26, 27**

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

The indwelling Holy Spirit, through His superior intimate knowledge, both prays for us and joins us in our praying, infusing His prayers into ours so that we “pray in the Spirit”. Praying in the Spirit is the will of God, and what God wills He empowers as we let him.

Two things happen here: First, the Holy Spirit tells us what we ought to pray for. Apart from the Spirit’s assistance, our prayers are limited by our own reason and intuition. But with the Holy Spirit’s help they become informed by Heaven. As we seek the Spirit’s help, He will speak to us through His Word, which conveys His mind regarding every matter of principle. Thus, in Spirit-directed prayer we will think God’s thoughts after Him. His desires will become our desires, His motives our motives, His ends our ends. He shows our hearts which matters to pray for, He gives us the absolute conviction they are God’s will.

When God’s people truly “pray in the Spirit”, they receive similar direction and conviction, not only about people, but about events and projects and even whole nations. The second benefit of “praying in the Spirit” is that it supplies the energizing of the Holy Spirit for prayer, infusing tired, even infirm, bodies and elevating the depressed to pray with power and conviction for God’s work.

We as men learn to pray in the Spirit using the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit.

CONTINUAL PRAYER:

The next ingredient of petitionary prayer is that it is continuous-- “on all occasions” . Paul told the Thessalonians to “pray continually”.

1 Thessalonians 5:17- Pray without ceasing.

Is continual prayer possible? Yes and no. It is impossible to carry on a running dialogue while we are working or at other times, but the prayer called for here is not so much the articulation of words as the posture of the heart.

Paul challenges us to understand that this life is not meant just for some, or for a spiritual elite, but for all of us. Continual prayer is God’s will for every Christian, no exceptions. We are to have perpetual inner dialogue with God. We must always be looking up, even when we are driving to work or mowing the lawn etc...

VARIED PRAYER:

The third aspect of the prayer life is that it is varied-- “with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Varied prayer grows out of what we have just seen about continual prayer, because if we pray continually, the various situations we encounter will demand a variety of prayers. Think of the variety appropriate to life’s situations: prayer to resist temptations, prayer for wisdom, for power, for self-restraint, for protection of others, for growth, for conviction.

PERSISTENT PRAYER:

The fourth aspect of effective prayer is persistence. Read **Luke 18: 1-5**

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, there was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

As men do we pray with Scriptural persistence for our families? For the Church? Are there individuals, groups, causes, souls for which we hold up our hands in prayer? God answers persistent prayer.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER:

The fifth aspect of asking prayer is intercessory prayer-- “for all saints”. There are many worthy petitions to make, but “saints” are to have a large place in our prayers. In [Ephesians 6: 19, 20](#) Paul requests for prayer for himself.

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Petitionary prayers for others brings grace to their lives.

The anatomy of petitionary prayer: *In-Spirited prayer “in the Spirit”*, *Continual prayer “on all occasions”*, *Varied prayer “all kinds of prayers and requests”*, *Persistent prayer “be alert and always keep on praying”* and *Intercessory prayer “for all the saints”*.

But the question is, how are we to pray this way? Here we must turn to very practical advice.

THE PRACTICE OF PETITIONARY PRAYER:

The Prayer List

Every Christian man should have a prayer list which lists, among other things, the names of his family, spouse, friends etc. And should also be detailed, featuring personal items under the names of those closest to him. If you don't have a prayer list start small.

Quiet Time

Next you need some quiet. Many of us never experience silence during our waking hours. We wake up to a clock radio, shave to the news, drive through noisy traffic, enter a noisy office, return home listening to rush hour reports, relax in front of the TV. What is more, the occasional silence we do encounter can be distracting because it heightens other distracting noises. Silence is sometimes louder than the noise you are trying to ignore.

Place

Along with this you must find a place where you will not be disturbed. The park, or go on a hike in the middle of nowhere. Your office etc.

Time

Give your best time of day to prayer. Before work or after. During your lunch break. After you get home and settle down etc.

Posture

One's prayer posture can make a difference. What is important is that your posture enhance reverent attention.

Preparation

As to preparation for prayer, honest practicality is of greatest importance. It is not the physical details that are of prime importance but the condition and stance of your heart. Whatever helps you focus on the Lord, use it.

Length

Often the best prayers are short and passionate. It's the quality not the quantity. A legalistic commitment to duration can kill one's prayer life.

THE DISCIPLINE OF PETITIONARY PRAYER

The practice of prayer--- the **list**, the **quiet**, the **place**, the **time**, the **posture**, the **preparation**, and the **length**-- all suggest one thing---**Discipline.**

Work

Prayer is work, not a sport. Prayer is the proper work of the soul which loves Christ.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

We must never wait until we feel like praying, otherwise we may never pray. We must also understand that we must not overcommit ourselves, especially if we are just beginning. Sometimes we do overcommit ourselves resulting in being overwhelmed. It is better to commit yourself to what you can handle at first. For example, Ten minutes of Bible reading, Ten minutes of meditation, ten minutes of disciplined prayer. A regular time of devotion and prayer will become a habit, and the habit of prayer will uplift your spiritual life.

Food For Thought

What does Paul ask prayer for in Ephesians 6:19, 20 ? Do you want other Christians to pray for you in this area? Why or why not?

Do you find it difficult to find enough time and a quiet place away from interruptions for your prayer times?

What can you do practically to pray more frequently and to be better prepared for prayer times when they come?

Homework

Make a list of those individuals for whom you want to pray regularly, then establish a time when you will pray for several people on the list often. And when you pray, ask for specific answers, so you will see them as they arrive.

