

## **Basics on Prayer (A Biblical Study on Prayer)**

### A. The priority of prayer:

Prayer is a reverent response to the God who reveals Himself. He initiates; we respond. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of prayer. It is through prayer that we ask God for salvation and commune with Him as our Father in heaven. The priority of prayer can be seen in several ways.

#### 1. The command to pray:

\*Luke 18:1 ‘Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.’

\*Matthew 6:5-13 ‘But when you pray, do not be like hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. This is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”

\*I Thessalonians 5:17 ‘Pray continually.’ Also: Philippians 4:6; I Timothy 2:1; Ephesians 6:18-19.

#### 2. The examples of prayer: The priority of prayer can be understood through the examples of the Lord Jesus and others.

\*Mark 1:35 ‘Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed.’

\*Luke 22:41,44 ‘He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed. And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.’

\*Psalm 5:3 ‘In the morning O Lord, Thou wilt hear my voice; In the morning I will order my prayer to thee and eagerly watch.’ (NASB)

\*Psalm 55:17 ‘Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice.’ (NASB)

\*Daniel 6:10b ‘...Three times a day he (Daniel) got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.’

\*Romans 1:9,10a ‘God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of His Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times.’

\*I Thessalonians 3:10 ‘Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.’

3. The power of prayer: The priority of prayer is also seen through what it accomplishes.

\*Colossians 4:12 ‘Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.’

\*Philippians 4:6-7 ‘Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.’

\*James 5:15,16 ‘And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.’

\*John 16:24 ‘Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.’

\*I Timothy 2:1-3 ‘I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Savior.’

\*Ephesians 3:20 ‘Now unto Him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.’

B. The elements of prayer:

The basic elements of prayer must be carefully understood in order to have an effective prayer life.

1. The direction of prayer:

a. To God the Father:

\*Ephesians 5:20a ‘Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything....’

\*Matthew 6:9 ‘This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.’

b. Through God the Son:

\*Ephesians 5:20 ‘Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

\*John 14:13 ‘And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.’

\*Hebrews 10:19-22a ‘Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the House of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.’ \*Also: Hebrews 7:25; 13:15.

c. By the power of the Holy Spirit:

\*Ephesians 6:18 ‘And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.’

\*Romans 8:26 ‘Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.’ (NKJV)

2. The steps of prayer: The Lord Jesus warned His followers to avoid empty repetitions in their prayers. The steps of prayer are *only* to provide a skeleton or framework within which we can build our prayer life. Even the prayer our Lord gave in Matthew 6:9-13 is meant to be a model for prayer.

The following steps are meant to serve as a guideline for your prayer. They form an acronym based on the word- ACTS:

a. Adoration: It is good to begin prayer with adoration toward our Father in heaven. We do this by offering praise to God in speech and song.

\*Psalm 100:4 ‘Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name.’

\*Psalm 50:23a ‘Whoever offers praise glorifies Me.’ (NKJV)

\*Psalm 30:4 ‘Sing to the Lord, you saints of His; praise His holy name.’

\* Hebrews 13:15 ‘Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.’

Note: Praise should focus on God’s character. We should praise God for His holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy, grace and love. This first step of prayer will open our eyes to our need of confession—the second step of prayer.

b. Confession: When we adore and praise God for His greatness, we will be humbled by a deeper realization of how far short we fall in comparison to His character. Such a realization should lead to confession of our sinfulness and our sin. Confession is agreement with God about the sinfulness of our sin; it involves an adapting of God's view of our sin. Hebrews 1:9 reveals that God hates sin.

\*Psalm 66:18,19 'If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.'

\*Psalm 139:23,24 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.'

\* Proverbs 28:13 "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

\*I John 1:9 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from unrighteousness.'

c. Thanksgiving: Thanksgiving differs slightly from the step of adoration in that it focuses more on what God has done than on God's character. The step of thanksgiving extends to every area of our life with God. God's blessings: spiritual, relational and material, should compel us to thank Him!

\*I Thessalonians 5:18 'Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'

\*Ephesians 5:20 'Always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

\*Colossians 1:12-14 'Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins.'

\*Also: II Corinthians 2:14; Romans 1:8; II Thessalonians 1:3; I Timothy 1:12;2:1,2; 4:4.

d. Supplication: The step of supplication involves prayers that request God's help in an area of need. Our supplications or petitions are sometimes personal; sometimes for others. Prayers for others are prayers of intercession. All our petitions should be consistent with the will of God as revealed in the Bible.

\*Ephesians 5:18 'And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.'

\*Philippians 4:6 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.'

\*I Timothy 2:1-3 ‘I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good and pleases God our Savior.’

\*Also: Hebrews 4:16; Colossians 4:2-4;12

### C. The unanswered prayer:

Scripture presents many reasons for unanswered prayers. It is vitally important to pray in a manner consistent with the teaching of the Bible. Many Christians request things against God’s will and get frustrated because they do not receive their desires. God answers prayer in one of three ways: yes, no, or wait.

The list below presents some possible reasons behind a negative response from God.

#### 1. Unwilling to heed God’s Word:

\*Proverbs 28:9 ‘If anyone turns a deaf ear to the Law even his prayers detestable..’

#### 2. Unwilling to obey God:

\*I John 3:22 ‘And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.’

#### 3. Unwilling to show compassion:

\*Proverbs 21:13 ‘If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor he too will cry out and not be answered.’

#### 4. Lack of harmony at home:

\*I 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 prayer.’

#### 5. Selfish motives:

\*James 4:3 ‘When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.’

#### 6. Known and unconfessed sin in our lives:

\*Psalm 66:18 ‘If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.’

#### 7. Lack of faith:

\*James 1:6-7 'But when He asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord.'

8. An unforgiving heart:

\*Mark 11:25 'And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your father in heaven may forgive you your sins.'

D. Great prayers of the Bible:

Much can be learned about prayer by studying the prayers revealed in Scripture. The list below is not complete but is a good place to start reading and learning.

1. Genesis 18:23-22 - Abraham's prayer
2. Exodus 32-34- Moses' prayers
3. II Kings 19:14-19 - Hezekiah's prayer
4. I Chronicles 29:10-19 - David's prayer
5. II Chronicles 6:12-42- Solomon's prayer
6. Psalm 51:1-17- David's prayer of confession
7. Daniel 9:3-20- Daniel's prayer
8. Mathew 6:9-13- Our Father...
9. John 17:1-26- The Lord Jesus' prayer
10. The epistles- The prayers of Paul