

The Basics of Prayer

I. Introduction

- A. In a lot of the Old Testament, the expression "I pray you" is used to get permission. Today we might say, "I ask you."
 - 1. The New Testament writers used the word pray as a command that we must obey!
 - 2. Jesus said, "Stay awake and pray for strength against temptation. The spirit wants to do what is right, but the body is weak." (Mark 14:38).
 - 3. He also said, "And when you pray..." [not if you pray] (Matthew 6:7).
 - 4. Paul commanded believers to pray.
- B. The Apostle James also commanded the believers to pray, especially when they had a personal need.
- C. Prayer as the New Testament teaches it, is not optional; it is required.
- D. The disciples of Jesus asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray as John taught his followers." (Luke 11:1).
- E. If the foundation of prayer is wrong, the expression of prayer won't be right. There are five basics to prayer we need to study.

II. Prayer Is Getting Alone with God

- A. Jesus purposely took time to get away from the crowds and away from His disciples so He could have nights of communion and fellowship with God.
- B. If Jesus felt the urgent need to find time to get alone with His Father, shouldn't we?
- C. It seems easy to limit prayer to asking God to meet our needs. But a much higher form of prayer is simply enjoying the presence of God.
- D. Praying while you are hurrying and doing things quickly will not bring us into a closeness with God. Praying scary emergency prayers will not bring us into this private closeness.
- E. Prayer is getting alone with God. But it is also a discipline of life.
- F. Jesus called His disciples away into the desert and taught them about entering a "closet or room" for prayer.
- G. Public praying is very important, but it can never satisfactorily replace coming into God's presence one-on-one.

III. Prayer Is Getting Along with God

- A. Too many Christians think about their salvation is only a way to escape from the fires of Hell.
- B. God accepts us when we are very immature and helpless.
- C. Our ways and thoughts are very different from God's.
 - Isaiah 55:8-9 The Lord says, "My thoughts are not like your thoughts. Your ways are not like my ways. ⁹ Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts."

- D. We really need to talk with our Lord about all our problems. That will help us so we don't become confused, resentful, or rebellious.
- E. If you do not pray regularly, you will probably have a hard time getting along with God.
- F. Saul of Tarsus (Paul) was on the road to Damascus when God stopped him. God talked with him, and it completely changed him.
- G. Paul learned to prove the will of God by communicating with God. We can too.
- H. We need to fully understand that God never changes. God never compromises. That will help us get along well with God.

IV. Prayer Is Getting Adjusted to Life

- A. When we are born, we know nothing.
- B. In a most wonderful way, prayer helps us to adjust to whatever is happening in our life.
- C. God wants to teach us to make the right decisions. Then we won't need Him to pick up the pieces after things fall apart.
- D. God often answers our prayers for guidance through circumstances or through other people.
 1. God will adapt His communication to us so that we can understand.
 2. He is a great teacher. He realizes that He has not finished teaching us until we have learned the lesson. So He adapts His teaching to our learning skills.
- E. A college student can sign up for classes and pay the tuition in full, but they won't learn anything unless they attend classes.
- F. We can pray for many different things. No matter what we pray for, God uses this time of fellowship and communication to help adjust us to life.

V. Prayer Is Getting Answers from God

- A. The most common kinds of prayer are begging God for something and asking God to give us something.
- B. Jesus told us two requirements to have our prayers answered: ask and believe.
Matthew 21:22 If you believe, you will get anything you ask for in prayer.
- C. One of Christ's most powerful teachings on prayer begins, "So I tell you, ask, and God will give to you. Search, and you will find. Knock, and the door will open for you.." (Luke 11:9).
- D. When we pray, we expect an answer from God. Sometimes God says "later" to our prayers.
- E. Probably the most common answer to prayer we Christians receive from God is, "I will if you will."
- F. Still another way God answers our prayers is, "I have already done that!"
- G. Whatever way God answers prayer, the Bible always teaches, demonstrates, and promises that prayer is getting answers from God.

VI. Prayer Is Giving Adoration to God

- A. Adoration is the highest form of prayer available to humans.
- B. Moses was a great adorer of God (Exodus 15:1,11,18).

- C. David was also a passionate adorer of God.
- D. In the New Testament, the story of Mary anointing Jesus with the pure nard (perfume) is a beautiful picture of adoration (John 12:1-7).
- E. It is not enough to just admire (appreciate, respect, approve) the Lord.
- F. Worship, at all levels, often begins in prayer.
- G. Many people never experience this intimate prayer because they have not learned to tell God about their deep inner feelings.