

HOW TO PRAY

The life given by God to His children is a life that prays. Therefore, praying should be as natural as breathing to us Christians. Just as a new born child can breath immediately after birth, a Christian is also able to pray immediately after being saved. Prayer is also a privilege that God gives to us. Not only we can pray, but also He will listen.

I. The Meaning of Prayer

(1) Prayer is the contact between God and men

'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20

To pray is to allow Jesus to come into our hearts. In the book of Genesis, God made man according to His image and likeness and gave him the spirit of life. God's purpose was to have man as a vessel in which He can dwell, and through which He can be manifested. After falling, men have lost that blessed role until one day born again by God's grace. He changed our stony heart into fleshly heart. He also revives our spirit so that He can dwell in there. Our Lord has done everything necessary and been knocking on the door of our hearts hoping to come in. It was not our prayer that touches Jesus' heart and draws Him to us, but He moves us to pray. As long as we open our heart, the Lord immediately comes in to dwell with us, sit with us and enjoy with us all his grace.

(2) Prayer is men working with God

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; All day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; And give Him no rest until He establishes And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Isaiah 62:6-7

When God has a will or plan, He will not go on with it alone. God wants us to understand it and pray for His will so that He can answer our prayer and fulfill His will. God can have things done just through His words. Why is that He wants to wait for men to feel the same burden and pray for it before He make it happen. It is because God wants men to work with Him, to participate in His work. We can observe this principles in the Bible. Ezekiel 36:37: "...Thus says the Lord God, 'This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock.'" This verse tells us that (i)God wants to increase the number of Iseralites; (ii)God wants men to pray for that; (iii) If men pray for this, (iv) God will answer it. God values our prayer; therefore, we should frequently wait before Him to watch and pray until Jerusalem is made a praise in the earth.

II. The Contents of Prayer

(1) To fellowship with God

"But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." Matthew 6:6

Go into the inner room means to return to our spirit, for the Lord's Spirit lives in our spirit. Therefore, when we shut the door, we exclude all other people and things out of our heart in order to have close fellowship with Him. By doing so, the Lord shares with us His abundance, and we are lost in the joy of His sweet presence. This kind of prayer is the most joyful one and the foundation of all other prayer.

(2) To ask

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

'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 4:6-7

James 4:2 says: "...You do not have because you do not ask." Often time we worry very much in time of trouble. We end up with carrying our own burden but do not tell God what we need. God wants us to ask just as a father wants his children to ask him for help. Just ask in faith, the first promise the Lord gave to us was: "Ask, it will be given unto you." He will give us what is best for us.

(3) To Intercede

'Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Ask Me about the things to come concerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands."' Isaiah 45:11

From the above quote, it is clear that God wants us to intercede for others. Jeremiah 29:12 also says: *"Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you."* However, many times it is that men do not pray, so God marvels that no one bothers to pray. Therefore, Isaiah 59:16: *"And He saw that there was no man, And was astonished that there was no one to intercede; Then His won arm brought salvation to Him; And His righteousness upheld Him."* If we truly love God, we would love those whom God loves. Then we will naturally have the burden to pray for those whom loved by God.

(4) To praise and give thanks

'Yet Thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel.' Psalms 22:3

'Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.' 1 Thessalonians 5:16

'always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;' Ephesians 5:20

Our God is worthy of praises. Whenever children of God praise Him, His throne will be present in our midst. In the mean time, what are filling His throne such as glory, power, grace, authority, righteousness, and holiness will be full in our midst. Ephesians 5:20: "...always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father..." This verse tells us to give thanks always. Thanksgiving is God's will for us in Christ Jesus. Lord Jesus healed ten lepers as stated in Luke 17, however, only one leper returned to thank Him. The Lord asked him: "Weren't ten persons healed?" "Where are the other nine?" "No one returns to give glory to God but this gentile?" Therefore, giving thanks is to give glory to God. Through Thanksgiving, we not only receive grace, but also the Lord who gives grace.

III. Learning to Pray

(1) The Lord teaches us how to pray

"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.]'

Matthew 6:9-13

(A) We pray to "our Father who are in heaven": This speaks of our relationship with God. We pray to Him in the position of a child.

(B) Three things for God:

May His name be hallowed; May His kingdom come; May His will be done on earth as in heaven. These three things mean that God's name be glorified, that God obtains a kingdom and rules in the universe, and that God's will can be carried through on earth as in heaven.

(C) Three things for us:

Gives us daily bread; forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors; lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil.

(D) Three things to praise:

Kingdom, power and glory all belong to God. "Amen" at the end means "indeed" as the final signature which formalizes everything.

(2) Get rid of obstacles in our prayer

(A) If we regard wickedness, God will not hear

"I cried to Him with my mouth, And He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;" Psalms 66:17-18

God is a holy God. Therefore, we can not pray while still regarding wickedness. If we tolerate sins in our hearts, instead of refusing and rebuking sins, God will not listen to our prayer.

(B) To first forgive others

And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. Mark 11:25

To pray is to fellowship with God. In order to fellowship with God, we must have God's forgiveness first. Without His forgiveness, sins will hinder us from fellowshiping with God. The verse quoted above tells us that God's forgiveness is based on our forgiveness of others. If we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us. Then we can not fellowship with God, neither can we pray.

(D) If we do not listen to Him, He will not listen to us either.

"And it came about that just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says the LORD of hosts; Zechariah 7:13

If we do not listen to Him when He calls, He will not listen when we call on Him in time of need. The consequence of our disobedience is God will refuse to listen to our prayer.

(3) To Pray in the name of the Lord

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater [works] than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. "And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John 14:12-13

The Lord is in His name. All His abundance and who He is are all encompassed in His name. The name that has been given unto us is the name He received after ascension, that is, the name above all names. This name contains His power and authority. The Lord wants us to greater things than He did. How can it be? Because we can pray in His name. All great works are done through prayer. All things done by prayer in the Lord's name have only one purpose, that is, to glorify the Father through the Son.

(4) To pray in the Holy Spirit

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit;
Jude 1:20

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for [us] with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to [the will of] God. Romans 8:26-27

To pray is to have the Christ in us pray to the Christ on the throne. Frequently when we pray to the Lord, we feel incapable of praying, for we do not know what God wants. We just feel that we need to rely on the Holy Spirit and unite with Him in order to pray. Thus Holy Spirit is like a hidden fire moving in us and gently interceding for us with groaning too deep for words. The groaning of the Holy Spirit is full of anointment, power, and the presence of heaven. The Holy Spirit also prays for us according to God's will. When God hears that kind of prayer, things will be done for the benefit of those who love God.

(5) Secrets of prayer answered

(A) Believe that you have received them, and you shall receive them.

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be [granted] you. Mark 11:24

The Lord Jesus told us that if we believe we have received, we will receive. He was not saying that just blindly believe then we will receive. True faith comes from the assurance received while praying that we know we have received what is asked. When we feel an assurance like that, we should no longer ask but give thanks for He has heard our prayer.

(B) Seek first His kingdom and righteousness

"Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Matthew 6:31-33

The key in prayer is to care most God's right and will. When God's will is fulfilled, our needs will be satisfied. If we put God's needs first, He will put our needs first too. This really is a true statement proven again and again in our life.

(C) God has to first change us before He can change our circumstance.

The most important thing God wants to do through prayer is to change us, not our difficult circumstance. We have to first be changed before our circumstance can be changed. The purpose of prayer is not just to change our external environment, but to penetrate marvelous effect in our spiritual life. Often time we prayer for God to eliminate a certain difficulty for a long time and God does not seem to listen. Until one day the Holy Spirit works on us and changes us, that external difficulty then goes away.