

What Is Prayer?

As children of God no matter how diligently we may strive to please God in all other phases of our responsibilities, if we do not pray properly, we will be miserable failures. This series is designed to help the child of God learn to appreciate the great blessing of prayer and to teach him how to pray effectively. Today, we will seek to define prayer in scriptural terms.

First, prayer is the general term for addressing God. God has made it possible for His children to talk to Him. In 1 Timothy 2:5, Paul says, "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" and in Hebrews 4:14-16, the Hebrew writer said, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." God also asks us to call on Him. In Ephesians 6:18, 1 Timothy 2:1-3, and 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Paul tells us, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints," "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior," and "pray without ceasing." We should pray to Him each and every day.

Second, prayer is the privilege and duty of the righteous (James 5:16). Jesus gave us a model prayer in Matthew 6:9-13, not to be repeated as He said, but as a general pattern. If you read this prayer, you will notice that He focuses more on spiritual aspects than physical. Those trying to live righteously will have their prayers approved by God. In 1 Peter 3:10-12, Peter said, "For, the one desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Third, prayer is an act of faith as we see in Luke 18:1-8 and in James 1:5-7, which says, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord." One cannot please God without faith and one must have a working faith as James 2:14, 24 tells us. The scripture tells us, "What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him?" and "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." Prayer is not a substitute for works. It is a mockery unless one strives for the most effective service possible. As a farmer does not pray for good crops as a substitute for his obligation to prepare the soil, plant the seed, etc., but for

reinforcement of his efforts; no Christian should pray for the sick, needy, or lost as a substitute for his responsibilities (Galatians 6:10; Romans 15:1; Mark 16:15-16).

Finally, prayer is more than thinking. It is a communication between two parties — God listens and we speak. This raises an important question: “Must one verbalize private prayers?” I do not believe so and let’s look at scripture to prove this. God knows our hearts (Acts 15:8). In Hebrews 4:13, the Bible reads, “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” In 1 Samuel 1:12-13, Hannah had not verbalized her prayer, but she “poured out her soul before the Lord” (v. 15). She had “spoken” (v. 16) and “asked” (v. 17).

Let us never belittle or take prayer for granted. It is a great blessing that we are able to speak to our Creator and let us always “pray without ceasing”.

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