

Steps For Effective Prayer

The purpose of prayer is **not** simply to inform God of all our needs.

Matthew 6:5-8 [New King James] *“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.”*

Note, God knows our need before we ask Him for them, also prayer is not an exercise in developing a more powerful language or becoming more profound, as the Pharisees did.

Hebrews 4:14-16 [New King James] *“Seeing then that 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 was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

We have a High Priest whose human experiences allow Him the unique ability to elevate and expound our words and thoughts before God the Father.

Romans 8:26-27 [New King James] *“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*

Also the Holy Spirit will help us, as the Spirit of Christ [both God] in our prayers, [Romans 8:9].

Prayer is not just talking to God –

When we are in a conversation with another person, we can easily fall into the rut of talking **to** that person rather than talking **with** the person.

Prayer is intended to be a conversation between two people, God the Father and ourselves –

Such two-way conversation is an art that must be developed.

God the Father does **not** want us to just go over a list of needs and names.

God wants us to meditate and expound on the items we pray about, with Him, not at Him.

In this article I wish to give you points in mastering this art of two-way effective prayer.

God teaches us that we should pray –

Ephesians 6:18 [New King James] *“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,”*

We are to pray always with the help of the Holy Spirit, not just at set places and times.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 [New King James] *“pray without ceasing,”*

Again we are not limited to special times or places.

Colossians 4:2-4 [New King James] *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”*

There are several scriptures throughout the Christian Bible that give us special things to pray for, again “with thanksgiving” is mentioned.

Pray that the gospel message may be reaching out to as many people as God the Father wants to reach at this time, [John 6:44].

1 Timothy 2:1-2 [New King James] *“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”*

Eventually all people will come to the true understanding as to why human beings exist, again thanks to God is a major part of our prayers.

Thanking God for who He is and His plan for all humanity.

Matthew 6:6 [New King James] *“But when we pray ...”*

This indicates that prayer must become an intricate part of our lives, not just on special occasions or for special things.

The more often we pray, the more effective our prayer will become.

Such regular times of prayer are ways of learning more about God and also builds character.

As with most spiritual concepts, praying must be practiced to be really appreciated.

Ways to challenge yourself –

Pray regularly – It is a good idea to set a specific time aside to pray, and make it a goal to pray at that time every day.

Another idea is to pray several times a day before work activities and tasks, in this way prayer becomes a regular part of your daily routine.

Pray long enough to be effective – Begin now with a few minutes each day, adding a few more minutes each week until we reach between a half hour and an hour each day.

Pray well away from all distractions – This may involve getting up earlier or late at night when rest of family is asleep.

Establish a personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ –

John 15:13-15 [New King James] *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.”*

Jesus Christ calls true Christians His friends.

The only way you can have a meaningful friendship with someone is to spend time with them, God the Father and Jesus Christ are no exception to this fact.

We follow Jesus Christ's example and instruction to pray to God the Father, [Matthew 6:9] now through the resurrected Jesus Christ as our Master and Intercessor, [1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:23-27].

Our prayers must be motivated by love –

When we desire a deep personal relationship with someone, we realise we must get away from talking only about ourselves. This same principle applies with our relationship with our Creator God.

To develop a close personal relationship with God, our prayers must supersede just talking about ourselves and our needs.

Let us notice how our prayers should express love towards God and towards our neighbours.

Luke 15:7 [New King James] *“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”*

There is joy in heaven over a godly attitude. When we talk with God, when we want to become more like Him, God is pleased.

When we worship God in humble prayer, He is glorified.

Revelation 5:8 [New King James] *“Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”*

Our prayers are like incense, a pleasant fragrance to God. It is like giving someone a beautiful, fragrant bouquet of flowers.

Our prayers should express love towards other people –

The Creator God has concern for everyone's needs.

If we are involved with the lives of other people we can become involved alongside or as an instrument in God's hands.

John 13:34-35 [New King James] *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

We are commanded by God to love other people. This will be a powerful witness to others of the love that the Creator God has for all human beings. We would be living out this love of God in our lives as His disciples.

John 14:21, 23 [New King James] *“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” ... “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’”*

If we keep His word by expressing outgoing concern for others, God will dwell in us, make His home with us, through the active presence of the Holy Spirit, who is God.

1 John 3:16-18 [New King James] *“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*

Love must involve active expression.

Ways we express this love, are fellowshiping when God's people meet together, visiting people who are "shut-ins" due to age or health, writing cards and letters of friendship and concern, gifts to the fatherless and widows, [**James 1:27**].

All of this love towards others begins on our knees in prayer expressing our concern towards others before God.

A prayer list is an effective tool for expressing our concern for others before God. Do not try to get through the list every day but spend time on each item.

A prayer list is a tool, not a burden.

The more we pray for others, the more we separate our needs from our wants –

When we place our personal requests to God in perspective with the needs of others, we may find that many of our supposed "needs" are actually just "wants."

Prayer focuses our mind –

This world is totally out of focus, the vast majority not knowing the reason for human existence, [**2 Corinthians 4:4**].

We need to take our minds off the "around" and look up to where our future with Jesus Christ is.

Colossians 3:1-4 [New King James] *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*

Looking at this world too long can give us a blurry vision of real life.

Conclusion –

2 Corinthians 4:14-18 [Philips Translation] *"We know for certain that He who raised the Lord Jesus from death shall also raise us with Jesus. We shall stand together before Him. We wish you could see how all this is working out for your benefit, and how the more grace God gives, the more thanksgiving will rebound to His glory. This is the reason why we never collapse. The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength. These little troubles [which are really so transitory] are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain, for we are looking all the time not at the visible things but at the invisible. The visible things are transitory: it is the invisible things that are really permanent."*

In the society in which we live daily life emphasises the visible and the now. So in this age of such distractions we need, more than in any other age, to exercise our freedom and privilege to keep close to the present invisible Creator God.

Communicating with God in prayer, is the most important action any human being can perform in building an eternal friendship with our loving Creator, that will become more intimate throughout eternal life with Him, [John 17:3].