

Prayer



Prayer is as important to a Christian as oxygen is to the body. It is communication between us and God and vice versa. Prayer has the potential for unleashing tremendous power in our lives and the lives of others. Its outcome may touch people spiritually, physically, mentally and materially.

‘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’ (Ephesians 6:18),

Jesus was dependent upon His Father for all that He accomplished. The same applies to us.

Fill in the places and times of the day when Jesus prayed;

Place	Time of day
Mark 1:35 _____	Mark 1:35 _____
Mark 6:46 _____	Luke 6:12 _____
Luke 5:16 _____	Luke 22:45 _____

Sometimes when I feel spiritually barren, it is because I'm not spending much time in prayer, perhaps just a few minutes a day. So, with a conscious effort I try and pray longer.

It's clear from Scripture that there should be time set aside for specific prayer and a constant turning to the Father in an attitude of prayer throughout the day.

Often prayer is a joyous exercise. However, if it's hard going, and I'm not aware of any sin in my life, I find it most helpful to walk when I pray and speak out loud. This keeps me from getting sleepy and it also helps me concentrate while I'm praying. If when praying you start to daydream, go back to where you stopped praying and carry on from there. If you get distracted by ideas and things to be done jot them on a piece of paper to be thought about later.

Draw a line to the correct answer to each verse.

Hindrances to prayer	
Mark 11:25	Unbelief
James 4:3	Unforgiveness
James 1:6,7	Sin
Psalms 66:18	Asking with wrong motives

Different kinds of prayers

It's important to remember that prayer is not just asking. Pete Greig suggests prayer consists of at least 4 parts - P.R.A.Y.

Pause	Be still and know God. Psalm 46:10
Rejoice	Rejoice in the Lord always. Phil 4:4
Ask	Ask in my name. John 13:14
Yield	Offer your bodies as a sacrifice. Rom 12:1

Karl Barth, probably the greatest theologian of the 20th century said these words. 'To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.' Praying has power. However, we will without doubt be tested with disappointment at times.

Principles for a healthy prayer life

1. **We must pray in the will of God.**

Read James 4:3.

We must examine our motives to determine whether our prayers stem from healthy or selfish motives. No father would give a youngster every thing he asked for no matter how hard he pleaded for it e.g. a carving knife or matches. Reading the Bible can sometimes help to clarify our motives. However, don't be slow in bringing your requests to God.

2. **We must forgive others for any wrong they may have done.**

Read Mark 11:25.

Too many Christians have hidden resentment in their lives toward other people. This is one of the most common ways of robbing

Ourselves of the presence of God

3. **We must remain in Christ.**

Read John 15:7.

When the branch of a tree remains attached to a tree trunk, it remains healthy. So, the Christian remains spiritually alive by learning to obey Christ's teachings and by being open to what He wants to say to us deep within. This sometimes involves being still and just listening to what He has to say.

4. **We must pray in faith.**

Read Mark 11:24.

If you are sure your prayers are with right motives, then pray with confidence, as you are coming before the throne of a King who has the power to answer!

A Roman Centurion having a sick slave came to Jesus with a request for healing. Most people in those days would have asked Jesus to come to the sick person, but not this man. 'Just give the order, and my servant will get well' he claimed (Matthew 8:8). That is faith; the assurance that God is going to answer.

5. **We must pray in the name of Jesus.**

Read John 16:24.

In the Bible, the name of a person represented the character of that person. So then, in praying in Jesus' name we pray for His honour, not ours. It is right to include in our prayers, 'in Jesus Name'.

Conclusion

There are other aids also helpful in preparing your heart for prayer. It can be useful to read a Psalm which expresses your thoughts, which in turn can be prayed as a prayer. It can also be useful to write out your prayers. That way you can give more thought as to what you want to pray. Finally, learn to be still and seek to hear what God has to say to you.

Praise God for answers to prayer. Individuals, nations and governments have been transformed through it. However, while many of our prayers will be answered immediately, some will appear to take such a long time before an answer comes. They may not even be answered in our lifetime or even in the way we expect. Hindsight has shown me that God answers prayer at the right time and in the right way. Other situations we won't understand until we reach Heaven.

The lasting success of your Christian life and service will be in direct proportion to the effectiveness of your prayer life, so keep prayer a priority. And when you lapse persevere and get back into a renewed walk with your Lord.

'... if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land' (2 Chronicles 7:14).