

## “When you Pray”

### 1. Introduction to Prayer Series

In Matthew 6:5, during His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “And *when* you pray...”. Clearly, He was not indicating that prayer was optional (“*if* you pray”). The assumption, even command, was that believers *would* pray.

#### What is prayer?

*Prayer is communication with God through written or spoken words, thoughts, meditation, or song.*

*A solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship.*

*Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful, acknowledgment of His mercies.*

*"Prayer," says an old Jewish mystic, "is the moment when heaven and earth kiss each other."*

*Prayer is a conversation with God*

The very act of prayer makes certain assumptions:

- the finite (human) can communicate with the Infinite (Divine)
- the Infinite (Divine) is interested in communicating with the finite (His creation)
- prayer is intended to foster certain attitudes in the one who prays, rather than to influence the recipient (God)
- prayer is intended to train a person to focus on the recipient (God) through spiritual, philosophical and intellectual contemplation
- prayer is intended to enable a person to gain a direct experience of/with the Recipient
- prayer is intended to affect the very fabric of reality as we perceive it
- prayer is a catalyst for change in oneself and/or one's circumstances, or likewise those of third party beneficiaries
- the Recipient (God) desires and appreciates prayer

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer>

#### Prayer classifications:

- Private/personal prayer – *Matthew 6:6, Psalm 69:16-18*
- Public/corporate/group – *Acts 1:13-14*
- National prayer – *2 Chronicles 7:14*

#### Why do we pray?

<i>Ask</i> <i>1 John 5:14</i>	<i>Bless</i> <i>Psalm 103</i>	<i>Confess</i> <i>1 John 1:9</i>
When we are in trouble or going through difficult circumstances	Praise	Repent
When we <i>need</i> something from God	Worship	Apologize
When we <i>want</i> something from God	Give thanks	Acknowledge sin
On behalf of someone else	Adoration	Humble ourselves

Seek His will/direction in our lives		
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Why don't we pray?

If prayer is commanded by God, expected by God, appreciated by God, loved by God, heard by God and answered by God – ***why in the world would a professing believer NOT pray*** to the very One who created and saved him/her?

In *God's Prayer Program*, T. M. Moore offers “six of the most common excuses for not praying....”

- ***I tried it and it didn't work.***
  - Sometimes we can have little patience with God's timing. In our sitcom society we're so used to things working themselves out within the space of thirty minutes to an hour, that we think God should operate in the same manner. But when His timing fails to coincide with our expectations, we become disillusioned with prayer and give up appealing to Him, believing that prayer doesn't make any difference, at least not for us.
- ***I don't feel like praying.***
  - We are of the generation that was raised believing, “If it feels good, do it!” And if it doesn't feel good, or it's just too much trouble, we won't exert ourselves. Our feelings, which are already weighing us down, defeat us from appealing to the very Source that can lift us above our feelings and circumstances.
- ***I don't have much time for prayer.***
  - Of course, we all have the same amount of time each day, and we all tend to do in that time the things that we consider to be truly important. It's not that we don't have time for prayer; it's that we do not see prayer as a priority for our time.
- ***I'm not worthy.***
  - We think that only really holy and righteous people can get through to God. He's not going to listen to us until we get our act together and clean ourselves up.
- ***My concerns are so petty.***
  - After all, He has the universe to manage, a Kingdom to advance, a Church to build, lost souls to save, the prayers of great saints to honor, and on and on. Why should God consider the everyday problems of wretched folks like me? What makes me worthy of a place in His agenda?
- ***I don't know what to pray for or even how to pray.***
  - Sometimes we don't pray as we should because we've found either our prayers all sound alike, we've already prayed everything we know to pray, or we just don't know how to put our feelings and concerns into words.

<http://cruciformlife.wordpress.com/2008/09/11/6-excuses-for-not-praying/>

Conclusion to introduction

Prayer is essential to the spiritual well-being of the believer's life, like breathing is to the physical body. At its most basic form, it is a conversation with God - at its most incredible potential, it is a supernatural, intimate communication and relationship with the Almighty God, through His son Jesus Christ, powered by the Holy Spirit that can literally unleash miraculous power and produce amazing results.

Next week we look at the prototype and practice of prayer as exemplified by our Lord.