

Prayer

To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.

- Martin Luther

What are some of your biggest struggles regarding your prayer life?

- A tendency of not always prioritizing my prayer time.
- I need to remember that prayer is not all about me nor simply getting things.
- I don't always leave enough time aside for prayer. And when I forget to pray and remember ... I feel that I do it out of guilt.
- Remembering to pray for those I don't get along with.
- I sometimes expect quick answers to my prayers. I need to remember that God will not always answer prayer the way I expect Him to.

What are some of your biggest struggles regarding your prayer life?

- Praying the same prayer over and over again without reflecting much on it.
- The feeling that my prayers aren't accomplishing much.
- Discouragement when it seems that prayers are going unanswered.
- Nothing zaps my prayer-life quicker than thinking it's an obligation and duty rather than a privilege that builds my relationship with God.
- I sometimes end up in drifting into another thought and lose my prayer focus.

What would you like to learn more about prayer?

- We often think of prayer in terms of being a task, a discipline – perhaps we need to learn that it is more like a conversation with God. Spending time is prayer is a relationship, not a checklist.
- How do we know when to stop praying for something or someone? How do we best gauge God’s leading vs. our own discouragement?
- How can we guard against our “faithful persistence” morphing into “vain repetitions”?

Pray - Prayer - Prayed - Praying

How many times is prayer mentioned in the Bible?

513 times (KJV)

302 times (NASB)

Prayer is woven throughout the Bible



Prayer is woven throughout the Bible

- From Genesis to Revelation
- From Adam to John
- Jesus prayed all night
- Jesus teaches us to pray daily
- Paul teaches us to pray continually

What is the essence of Christianity?

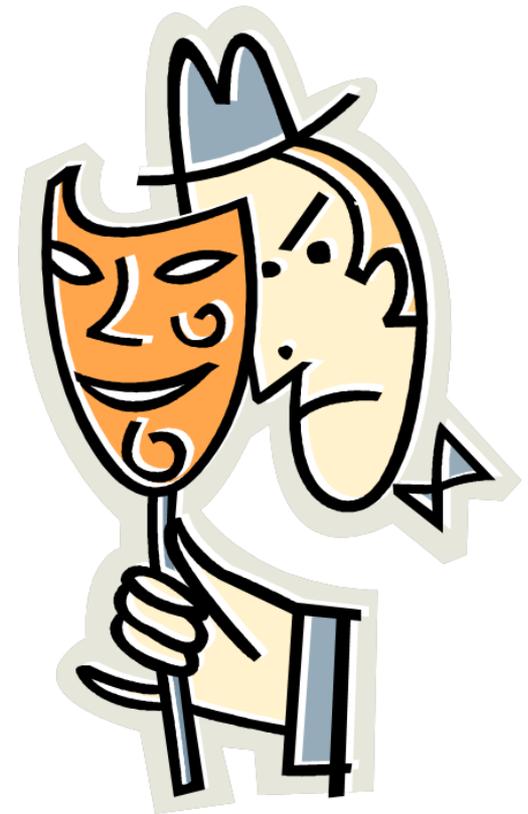
Relationship

So prayer is the foundation of Christianity



If we are Christians but we don't pray, then our external actions don't match our internal character

Hypocrite: An actor;
someone who plays a part



Prayer is transformative

Ex. 34:29 - When Moses came down from Mount Sinai ... he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.

Ps. 34:5 - Those who look to him are radiant ...

Luke 9:29 - As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.

Rom. 12:2 - Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

2 Cor. 3:18 - And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image ...

Transformation; metemorphōthē

Prayer can transform your life from:

- Self pity to thankfulness
- Self-centered to self-giving
- Complaint to gratefulness
- Misery to joy
- Anxiety to acceptance
- Duty to delight
- Dryness to excitement



Prayer opens the way for God's work

Acts 16:25, 26 - About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken.

Acts 16:16 - Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

So why don't we pray?

Because anything worth anything is hard

It takes time ... practice ...

commitment ... effort ...

We must pray regardless of
how we feel



How many of us feel that we don't pray enough?

How many of us feel guilty about our lack of prayer?

Romans 8:1 - Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

- You may be disappointed or disillusioned
- You may be too distant or unworthy
- You may feel that God is remote and inaccessible
- Prayer may be dry, routine, or boring
- In any case, God wants us to learn how to pray, and He welcomes us as we are
- Our awareness of our lack of prayer shows our hunger for God, which can itself become a prayer

Outline

- The Prayer of Affliction
- The Lord's Prayer
- The Prayer of Relinquishment
- The Language of Prayer
- Unceasing Prayer

The Prayer of Affliction - Most of the godly men and women in the Bible have felt forsaken

- David (Ps. 22:1)
- Jeremiah (Jer. 15:18)
- Elijah (1 Kings 19:4)
- Mary
- Jesus
- Martyrs
- Abraham - 75 years old in Gen. 12:2,
86 years old when Ishmael was born,
100 years old when Isaac was born

Job 1:20 - Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and _____.

(a) wept

(b) cursed the day that he was born

(c) covered himself with ashes

(d) refused to eat or drink

(e) gashed himself with sharp stones

(f) other

Job 1:20 - Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and **worshiped.**

(a) wept

(b) cursed the day that he was born

(c) covered himself with ashes

(d) refused to eat or drink

(e) gashed himself with sharp stones

(f) other

Gen. 16:11 - And the angel of the Lord said to her, Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction.

shema - Deut. 6:4

Ishmael, from *shema* and *el*, named from birth

Gen. 16:13, 14 - She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: You are the God who sees me, for she said, I have now seen the One who sees me. That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi ...

But Hagar still led a hard life ...

Gen. 21:8-20 occurs 14 years later

Rev. 2:8, 9 - To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions ...

- God hears your affliction - Ishmael
- God sees your affliction - Lahai Roi
- God knows your affliction - eido

Ps. 116:10 - I believed, even when I said,
“I am severely afflicted.”

Holy, holy, holy
Though the darkness hide thee
Though the eye of sinful man
Thy glory may not see
Only thou art holy
There is none beside thee
Perfect in power, in love and purity.

Reginald Heber, 1861

Blessed be your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be your name.

Blessed be your name
On the road marked with suffering
Though there's pain in the offering
Blessed be your name.

You give and take away, you give and take away
My heart will choose to say
Lord blessed be your name.

Matt and Beth Redman, 2002

Who will pray for us when our affliction is so deep that we cannot even share it with others?

The Spirit and the Son intercede for us in our affliction

Rom. 8:26, 34 - In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans ... Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who will pray for us when our affliction is so deep that we cannot even share it with others?

Luke 22:31, 32 - Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

Amos 9:9 - For I will give the command, and I will shake the people of Israel among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and not a pebble will reach the ground.

When we feel afflicted, we can pray the
“lament Psalms”

Psalms 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 28, 31,
42, 43, 53, 54, 55, 56, 59, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86,
88, 120, 141, 142

Ps. 42:1-4, 11 (a lament Psalm)

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng ... Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Outline

- The Prayer of Affliction
- **The Lord's Prayer**
- The Prayer of Relinquishment
- The Language of Prayer
- Unceasing Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

... is a pattern for all Christian praying. Jesus is teaching that prayer will be acceptable when, and only when, the attitudes, thoughts, and desires expressed fit the pattern ... every prayer of ours should be a praying of the Lord's Prayer in some shape or form. We never get beyond this prayer; not only is it the Lord's first lesson in praying, it is all the other lessons too.

- James Innell (J. I.) Packer

The Lord's Prayer

Matt. 6:9-13

is in the center of the
Sermon on the Mount
(Matt. 5-7)



Revenge
Money Words
Obedience Relationships
Prayer Thoughts
Marriage
Forgiveness Persecution
Law Attitudes

From the start of
Jesus' sermon to
the end of Matt. 7 is
109 verses. The
middle verse is
Matt. 6:9.

But first Jesus gives us two warnings

Matt. 6:5-8

And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like Gentiles, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Jesus warns us

- Do not try to impress others
- Do not try to impress God

You can buy dozens of books with titles like “the power of prayer,” or “effective prayer,” or “getting results by prayer” (but you can’t always judge a book by its title ...)

- But prayer is not a tool
- And prayer is not an exercise in control

Prayer is about relationship and submission

The context of the Lord's Prayer comes from Luke 11:1 - One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

- The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray
- John and Jesus taught their disciples to pray

Matt. 6:9-13 (NIV)

- 9 This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
- 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
- 11 Give us today our daily bread.
- 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Matt 6:9 - Our Father in heaven ...

1 John 3:1 - Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us (KJV)

Consider the incredible love that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called children of God (Phillips)

God is called father 12 times in the OT, but never directly addressed as father

God is called father 17 times in Matt. 5-7

God is the new model for fatherhood (Luke 15)

John 1:12 - Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God ...

Matt 6:9 - Our Father in heaven ...

Yet God is also *in heaven*

We recognize the awesome majesty,
sovereignty, and glory of God

Should we fear God?

Rev. 1:17 - When I saw him, I fell at his feet as
though dead. Then he placed his right hand on
me and said: “Do not be afraid. I am the First
and the Last.”

Matt 6:9 - Our Father in heaven ...

Did Jesus fear God?

Isaiah 11:1-3 - A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

Matt. 6:9-13 (NIV)

9 This, then, is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Three petitions
about God

11 Give us today our daily bread. →

One petition about
our physical needs

12 And forgive us our debts, as we
also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

Three petitions
about our
spiritual needs

Each petition includes personal responsibility

Matt. 6:9 - Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

His name is already holy, but it is profaned by the world
Ezek. 36:23 - I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned ... Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.

2 Thess. 1:11, 12 - ... we always pray for you ... that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you ...

- Matt. 6:9 expresses reverence, God's majesty, our submission, and our commitment to participate in God's holiness

Isa. 6:1-8 - **1** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. **2** Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **3** And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” **4** At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. **5** “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” **6** Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7** With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.” **8** Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Matt. 6:10 - Your kingdom come.

Matt. 3:2, 4:17 - Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

Luke 11:20 - The kingdom of God has come upon you.

John 18:36 - My kingdom is not of this world.

- Matt. 6:10 expresses our submission and our commitment to God's kingdom

Matt. 6:10 - ... your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

- We acknowledge God's sovereignty - especially during times of tragedy
- We give up second guessing God
- We let God be God
- We thank God for unanswered prayer!
Num. 11:15, 1 Kings 19:4, Psalm 106:15,
Jonah 4:3, Mark 5:18-20, Luke 22:42,
John 11:15

Matt. 6:11 - Give us today our daily bread.

- We acknowledge our dependence on God - 1 Cor. 4:7, James 1:10, 17
- We revoke our pride in our self sufficiency
- We recognize that God's provision is not just for us, but also for others
- We ask for bread, not cake
- We ask for daily bread, not for a storehouse of bread



Matt. 6:12 - And forgive us our debts ...

- We ask for daily forgiveness
- We ask for forgiveness for sins of willfulness, ignorance, thoughts, words - Ps. 19:12-14

But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me ... May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Matt. 6:12 - And forgive us our debts ...

- We ask for daily forgiveness
- We ask for forgiveness for sins of willfulness, ignorance, thoughts, words - Ps. 19:12-14
- We pray the Psalms of repentance - Ps. 51
- Repentance leads to joy - 2 Cor. 7:10
Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret
- Forgiveness is free and costly - Heb. 10:19
- We confess corporately - Ezra 9:5-7, Neh. 1:4-7, Jer. 14:7, Daniel 9:4-6

Matt. 6:12 - And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- “as” - the scariest word in the Bible
- We forgive in the midst of intentional sin - Luke 23:34
- We maintain relationship with the offender
- An unforgiving spirit is a symptom of not understanding God’s forgiveness

Matt. 6:13 - And lead us not into temptation ...

- Jesus had recently been led into temptation by the Spirit – Matt. 4:1
- We don't always recognize temptation because Satan offers us good things, as in Matt. 4:1-11
- This is a prayer of humility, as the entire Lord's prayer is saturated with humility

1 Peter 5:5 - Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.



Matt. 6:13 - ... but deliver us from the evil one.

- Jesus had recently had an encounter with the evil one in Matt. 4:1-11
- We resist evil through God's Word and prayer
 - Eph. 6:10-18 - Take the ... sword of the Spirit, the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.
 - Ps. 119:9, 11 - How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Matt. 6:9-13

- 9 This, then, is how you should pray:
Our Father in heaven,
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Prayer is conversation with God

Moses, Jonah, Abraham, Jeremiah, ...

John 15:16 - You did not choose me, but I chose you ...

- God initiates the conversation

Neh. 8:5, 6 - Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

- We read, study, meditate, and immerse ourselves in God's word to accurately inform our prayers

If prayer is the foundation of Christianity,
then God's Word is the footer



God's Word is the footer

- We must learn how to interpret God's word
- We will pray incorrectly if we don't understand God through his Word
- We will pray God's Word incorrectly if we don't understand it – for example, Rom. 3:20, Rom. 8:28, 1 Cor. 15:31, ...

The greatest prayer book in the world:

Psalms

- Psalm 1 is a meditation on God's word
"Blessed is the one ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night." (verse 2)
- Psalm 150 is praise (13 times in 6 verses)
- In between is everything from adoration to confession to petition to thanksgiving to complaining to revenge
- It may take awhile to get to Ps. 150 and praise

Martin Luther tells us to pray:

1. The Lord's Prayer, Matt 6:9-13
2. The Ten Commandments, Ex. 20:2-17
3. The Apostles' Creed (4th century)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Other written prayers

- Many Bible passages
- Prayer books, like the Book of Common Prayer

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

Written prayers help us:

- Articulate our inner thoughts without the need for creativity
- Maintain consistency in prayer without dependence on our moods
- Unite with the universal church
- Resist the temptation to be original or clever or impressive to others
- Avoid the familiarity which dilutes our reverence for God

Some concluding thoughts

- Unceasing prayer is built on regular, focused prayer time
- God understands when we are spiritually discouraged. The important thing is regular advancement in our prayer life.
- Col 4:2 - Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.
- “Devote” is used 10 times in the NT, and it refers to prayer 5 times – Acts 1:14, 2:42, 6:4, Rom. 12:12, Col. 4:2

Schedule a variety of prayer times

- Confession
- Praise
- Intercession
- Persecuted church
- Missionaries
- Songs and other written prayers
- Reflection on your day
- Psalms (Ps. 119)
- NT passages like Phil. 2
- Write your own prayer

Other Practical Suggestions

- Make prayer the priority of your life
- Pray when you're at your best
- Make prayer lists; keep a prayer journal
- Pray God's Word
- Use prayer books
- Pray with others
- Read books on prayer (caveat emptor)
- Others?