

## **WHY PRAY**

### **William Barkley The Lord's Prayer**

Prayer is not so much an emergency appeal in need as it is a continuing and unbroken conversation and fellowship with God. We may well remember that the words I, me, my, and mine never appear in the Lord's Prayer.

The Jews describe the first necessity of prayer by an almost untranslatable word 'Prayer' they said, 'needs *kawannab*.' *Kawannab* is concentrated intention and devotion; it is the attitude in which eyes and mind and heart are fixed on God.

### **Dick Eastman The Hour That Changed The World**

Prayer is the simplest act a creature of God can perform. Prayer is the vision of the believer. It gives eyes to our faith. In prayer we see beyond ourselves and focus spiritual eyes on God's infinite power.

Prayer is also man's ultimate indication of trust in his heavenly Father.

Prayer is not optional.

Be careful not to become a slave to "any prayer system".

Why pray?

1. Because Jesus calls us to prayer.
2. Because prayer works.

Nothing is beyond the reach of prayer because God Himself is the focus of prayer.

But when we neglect the closet of prayer we remove ourselves from the focus of God's power.

**E. M. Bounds** Prayer is the contract of a living soul with God. In prayer, God stoops to kiss man, to bless man, and to aid in everything that God can devise or man can need.

**Charles Spurgeon** Prayer is the slender nerve that moveth the muscles of omnipotence.

**Dr. E. Stanley Jones** In prayer you align yourselves to the purpose and power of God and He is able to do things through you that He couldn't do otherwise. For this is an open universe, where some things are left open, contingent upon our doing them. If we do not do them, they will never be done. For God has left certain things open to prayer – things which will never be done except as we pray.

**Adam Clarke Warns.** Apostasy begins in the closet. No man ever backslid from the life and power of Christianity who continued constant and fervent in private prayer. He who prays without ceasing is likely to rejoice evermore.

**Rosalind Goforth** Prayer has been hedged about with too many man-made rules. I am convinced that God has intended prayer to be as simple and natural, and as constant a part of our spiritual life as the intercourse between a child and his parent in the home.

Whether it be so heavy that others cannot bear  
To know the heavy burden they come and share;  
Whether it be so tiny that others cannot see  
Why it should be a burden, and seem so real to me,  
Either and both I lay them down at the Master's feet  
And find them alone with Jesus mysteriously sweet.

**Andrew Murray** Prayer is indispensable to what God in heaven desires to do on earth. Intercession is the main element in the conversion of souls. All efforts are in vain without the power of the Holy Spirit given in answer prayer.

Christ lives in heaven to pray – asking the fullness of the Spirit for His people. God delights in nothing as much as in prayer. Believe that the highest blessing of heaven will be given to us as we pray more.

**C. H. Spurgeon** Whenever God determines to do a great work, He first sets His people to pray.

**John C. Maxwell** Prayer changes us by drawing us closer to God, changing and molding us into His likeness in the process. David understood prayer's power as a personal change agent. His prayer in Psalm 25:4-5 describes the process that prayer takes a person through:

***Show me your ways, O Lord,***

***Teach me your paths;***

***Guide me in your truth and teach me,***

**For you are God my savior, and my hope is in you all day long.**

When God *shows us* His standards and His will for our lives, it isn't always easy on us. It almost always requires us to grow and change. But once we accept what God shows us, He is able to *teach us*. And when we are teachable and growing, He is finally able to *guide us*, and lead us into His plan and purpose.

When God shows me, He has my heart.

When God teaches me, He has my mind.

When God guides me, He has my hand.

**Becky Triabassi** Prayer allows God's presence into all areas and aspects of one's life, beginning with simple, daily decisions and culminating with one's life's purpose.

- Prayer fuels faith to dream and hope and risk.
- Prayer woos us to the Word by our need to hear God's response to our requests.
- Prayer teaches trust in God through waiting upon His timing.
- Prayer reveals God's plan and our purpose in opening up to us detailed directions for both the present and the future.
- Prayer releases God's power to live and walk in the supernatural realm of the Holy Spirit.
- Prayer unleashes love for God – emotional, real, and all consuming.

**Bruce Wilkinson** Simply put, God favors those who ask. He holds back nothing from those who want and earnestly long for what He wants.

**Andrew Murray God will hear me. What a wonderful certainty!  
We have God's Word for it. God delights in hearing our prayer.**

**Andrew Murray            A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD**

**As you pray for God's great mercies to be granted, take with you these thoughts:**

- 1. The infinite willingness of God to bless. His very nature is a pledge of it. He delights in mercy. He waits to be gracious. His promises and the experience of His saints assure us of it.**
- 2. Why then is the blessing delayed? In creating man with a free will and making him a partner in the rule of the earth, God limited Himself. He made Himself dependent on what man would do. Man by his prayer would hold the measure of what God could do in blessing.**
- 3. Think of how God is hindered and disappointed when His Children seldom pray. The weak Church, the lack of the power of the Holy Spirit, is all because of the lack of prayer. How different would be the state of the Church and of the world if God's people were to unceasingly call on Him!**
- 4. Yet God has blessed – just up to the measure of the faith and the zeal of His people. If He has thus blessed our weak prayers, what will He do if we yield ourselves wholly to a life of intercession?**
- 5. This call to repentance and confession! Our lack of conversation has held back God's blessing from the world. He was ready to save, but we were not willing for the sacrifice of a whole-hearted devotion to Christ and His service.**

**John Bunyan Prayer is a sincere, sensible affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, as according to the word of God, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the will of God.**

**God commands us to pray.**

**He commands us to pray in public and private.**

**Prayer brings those who have the spirit of supplication into a wonderful communion and fellowship with God; therefore, God has ordained prayer as a means for us to grow in a personal relationship with Him.**

**Prayer opens our hearts to God.**

**Our prayers are the means by which our souls, though empty, are filled by God to overflowing.**

**In our prayers, we Christians can open our hearts to God as to a friend, and obtain a fresh confirmation of His friendship with us.**

**I might also distinguish between prayer in the heart and prayer that is spoken aloud.**

**Can you pray these psalms from your heart?**

**Psalm 42:1, As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.**

**Psalm 119:40 How I long for your precepts! Preserve my life in your righteousness.**

**Psalm 119:174 I long for your salvation, O Lord, and your law is my delight.**

**Psalm 84:2 My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.**

**Psalm 119:20 My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times.**

**When your affections are indeed engaged, and engaged in such urgency that your soul will spend itself to nothing, as it were, rather than go without the good desired, you will have communion and solace with Christ.**

**When you pray, you pour out your heart or soul to God. Prayer is an unbosoming of yourself, an opening of your heart to God, an affectionate pouring out of your soul in requests, sighs, and groans.**

**Prayer must be a pouring out of the heart or spirit to God. This shows the excellency of the spirit of prayer.**

***So also, if your prayers are not in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, you can be like the sons of Aaron, offering with strange fire.***

**True prayer submits to the will of God and says "your will be done" matt. 6:10.**

**While you're praying, God is searching your heart to see from what root and spirit your prayer arises.**

**God answers only those requests that are according to His will, and nothing else.**

**Only the Spirit can teach us to pray according to His will.**

**He is the only Being able to search out all things, even the deep things of God.**

**Without the Holy Spirit, though we had a thousand common prayer books, we would not know what we ought to pray for, especially since we have infirmities which make us absolutely incapable of praying according to His will.**

**Unless the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness, we cannot conceive rightly of God to Whom we pray, of Christ through Whom we pray, of the things for which we should pray, nor how we shall address God.**

**Right prayer must be made both in the outward expression and the inward intention: it must come from what the soul apprehends in the light of the Holy Spirit.**

**No one can know how to come to God the right way unless he learns how to pray in or with the Holy Spirit.**

**Your heart must be lifted up by the Holy Spirit, if you are to pray rightly. And when it is up, if you are to continue to pray rightly, your heart must be held up by the Holy Spirit.**

**And indeed, here is the life of prayer: to have your heart kept with God in the duty of prayer. If it was a great matter for Moses to keep his hands lifted up to God in prayer, how much more then for us to keep our hearts lifted up to God.**

**For as my heart, when I go to pray, I find it is disinclined to go to God; and when it is with Him, so disinclined to stay with Him, that many times I am forced in my prayers; first, to beg God to take my heart and set it upon Himself in Christ; and second, when it is there, that He would keep it there.**

**Our heart faces many difficulties in the time of prayer. No one knows how many by-ways and back-lanes our heart may use to slip away from the presence of God. How much pride the heart has, if enabled with expressive language to pray with Him. How much hypocrisy, if praying before others. And how little conscience is there made of prayer between God and the soul in secret, unless the Spirit of supplication is there to help. When the Holy Spirit gets into the heart, then there is prayer indeed, and not until then.**

To pray with understanding is to pray while being instructed by the Holy Spirit in the Understanding regarding those things for which you are to pray.

**Andrew Murray** The Power of prayer rests in the faith that God hears prayer.

**Kenneth Boa** The concept of communicating with God, talking directly and openly with Him just as we would talk with an intimate friend, is one of the greatest truths of Scripture. As John Piper observed in *The Pleasures of God*, "Prayer is God's delight because it shows the reaches of our poverty and the riches of His grace." When prayer is overlooked or appended as an afterthought to service, the power of God is often absent. It is dangerously easy to move away from dependence upon God and to slip into the trap of self-reliance. But prayer and action are complementary, not contradictory, and it is wise to overlap them as much as possible. Christian service is most effective when prayer not only precedes it but also flows together with it.

## WHY SHOULD WE PRAY

There are many reasons for making this discipline the centerpiece of your spiritual journey. Here are ten:

- ❖ Prayer enhances our fellowship and intimacy with God (Ps. 116:1-2; Jer. 33:2-3).
- ❖ The Scriptures command us to pray (Lk. 18:1; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; 1 Tim. 2:1).
- ❖ When we pray, we follow the example of Christ and other great people in Scripture like Moses and Elijah (Mk. 1:35; Num. 11:2; 1 Kings 18:36-37).
- ❖ Prayer appropriates God's power for our lives (Jn. 15:5; Acts 4:31; Eph. 3:16; Col.4:2-4).
- ❖ We receive special help from God when we pray (Heb 4:16).
- ❖ Prayer makes a genuine difference (Lk. 11:9-10; Jas. 5:16-18). As William Temple observed, "When I pray, coincidences happen; when I don't, they don't."
- ❖ Prayer develops our understanding and knowledge of God (Ps. 37:3-6; 63:1-8; Eph 1:16-19).

- ❖ Our prayers and God's answers give us joy and peace in our hearts (Jn. 16:23-24; Phil. 4:6-7). Our problems may not disappear, but in prayer we gain a new perspective on our problems along with the peace and patience to stand firm.
- ❖ Prayer helps us understand and accomplish God's purpose for our lives (Col. 1:9-11).
- ❖ Prayer changes our attitudes and desires (2 Cor, 12:7-9).

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ENHANCING YOUR PRACTICE OF PRAYER

### **Choose the best time.**

Select a particular time of the day and dedicate it to personal prayer only. For most of us, the morning is best because we have been refreshed by the previous night's rest, and we are not yet absorbed in the demands of the day. This is often the time we can keep most consistently, and during morning prayers we can dedicate the day to the Lord. It is extremely wise to bring Him into our decision-making process by thinking through and planning the day's activities in prayer. "If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, he will be in last place the remainder of the day" (E. M. Bounds).

### **Choose the best place.**

Select a place where there will be a minimum of interruptions and distractions. If possible, pray away from your phone and your desk. When the weather and your schedule permit, you may want to try praying during a walk.

### **Set a minimum time for daily prayer.**

Try to be realistic – don't attempt too much at first or your prayer life will become mechanical and discouraging. Start with a few minutes and gradually build from there. Faithfulness on this level will lead to an increased appetite and you will actually look forward to the times you spend with God. "In prayer, quality is always better than quantity" (Robert Coleman). Nevertheless, quality should not become a substitute for quantity. "Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition that without a due measure of private devotions the soul will grow lean (William Wilberforce).

**Be Consistent.**

Regard your prayer time as a daily appointment you have made with God and respect it as such. If the discipline of regular time with God is not a matter of the highest priority, your spiritual life will suffer, and this will ultimately affect every other aspect of your life. Set your heart to pursue the person, knowledge, and ways of God by spending regular time with Him.

**Focus on the person of God**

Prepare your heart and mind for prayer by releasing all stresses and concerns and giving them to the Lord. It is a good practice to read or meditate upon a passage of Scripture and then to concentrate your attention on the presence of Christ in your life. Rest in His presence, "casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

**Come before Him in humility.**

You are in the unmediated presence of the holy God who is like a blazing light and a consuming fire, before whom all things are manifest. Judge yourself to be sure that you are approaching Him in honesty and openness, with no barriers of unconfessed sin, because He hates sin and cover-ups. Sometimes we get too casual before the One who spoke the hundreds of billions of galaxies into existence.

**Come expectantly to the throne.**

The significance of prayer is not what we are asking, but the person we are addressing. Come in simplicity and trust like a child to a father. Expect the supernatural – ask Him for something only He can do ("Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" Gen 18:14) and watch what happens.

**Pray at all times in the Spirit.**

"We do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26). Our prayers should be initiated and energized by the Holy Spirit who "intercedes for the saints according to the will of God"(Rom. 8:27).

**Strive for a balance.**

Our prayers should incorporate all the elements of confession, adoration, supplication (intercession and petition), and thanksgiving. We are usually short on adoration and thanksgiving.

**Pray scripture back to God.**

By personalizing passages of Scripture and offering them back to the Lord, you integrate them in your own life and experience and think God's thoughts after Him.

**Do not do all the talking.**

Practice times of silence before the Lord so that you can be sensitive to the promptings of His Spirit. Be responsive to Him by confessing any areas of exposed sin, interceding for others, praying for wisdom, and submitting to His desires.

**Make prayer a part of your relationship with people.**

Personal prayer is crucial, but it must not crowd out corporate prayer. Prayer should be a part of the home and part of Christian friendship. Great benefit can be derived from setting up a prayer partnership with another person, a prayer cell with a few people, or a prayer fellowship with several people.

**Plan special times of prayer during the year.**

You may want to consider setting aside one or more special times (a morning or evening or a whole day) for a personal or small group prayer retreat. This can be especially meaningful when done in context of planning ahead for the next several months or when a critical decision must be made.

**Practice the presence of God.**

Helmut Thielicke noted that "prayer is no longer the active soil of our life, our home, the air we breathe." When ministry becomes a substitute for prayer, it becomes self-dependent and ineffective. We should desire not only to have one or more times that are formally dedicated to prayer during the day, but also to be conscious of the presence of God throughout the day. In this way, each task is rendered in His name and done in conscious dependence upon Him. Another desirable habit we should seek

to cultivate is to pray for others as we see them and talk with them. This can radically affect our attitudes and behavior. A third beneficial habit is to begin to associate our work with prayer. "it is not prayer in addition to work, but prayer simultaneous with work. We precede, enfold, and follow all our work with prayer. Prayer and action become wedded" (Richard Foster).

## **A DEEP MYSTERY**

***I AM PRAYING TO YOU BECAUSE I KNOW  
YOU WILL ANSWER, O GOD.  
Psalm 17:6***

God will hear me. What a deep mystery! There are difficulties that arise and perplex the heart. There is the question of God's sovereign will. How can our wishes change His perfect will? He knows what is best and lives to give us the very best. How can our prayer change what He has ordained?

What is the need of persevering in prayer? If God is infinite love, delighting to give, why is there need for pleading, for urgency and long delay in answering our prayers?

What of the multitude of apparently unanswered prayers? Many have pleaded for loved ones and they die unsaved. Many cry for physical healing without results. This tries our faith and makes us hesitate when we say, "God will hear me."

Prayer is a deep spiritual mystery. Answers can be given that remove some of the difficulty from our questions but, as little as we can comprehend of God, we can comprehend one of the most wonderful of His attributes – He hears prayer. It is a spiritual mystery.

God hears because we pray in His Son and because the Holy Spirit prays in us. If we have believed in Christ and the Holy Spirit, we should not hesitate to believe in the power of our prayer too. We can believe and rejoice in it, even when every question is not yet answered. We need to surrender our questions to God's love, trust His faithfulness and obey His command to pray without ceasing. Andrew Murray