

## ***How should we pray? (Part 1)***

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**Introduction:** How valuable is prayer to us?

A. How valuable was prayer to Jesus?

1. He often spent *all night in prayer*.

2. His apostles saw an example *they never forgot!* (Lk 11:1; Acts 6:3-4)

B. Is prayer valuable *to us*?

1. It depends on the *daily direction of our thoughts!* (Heb 11:6)

2. Do we really see our need for God?

3. Consider the times during the day you directly address God! Are we aware of His constant presence and care? (1 Thess 5:17; Neh 1:4-5)

### ***I. Knowing God is the foundation of all prayer.***

A. Jesus wants all of us to know that *God loves to give to us!* (Mt 7:7-11; Lk 12:32)

1. Loving parents understand this! We want to give wise gifts.

2. God takes *pleasure in giving and providing* for our real needs. Let this sink in!

3. Sadly, worldly men are blind to their needs and thus despise the gifts of God!

B. There are greater gifts that God gives *beyond physical life and its necessities*.

1. If man can see his need of God for physical life then he should seek to learn about a much greater gift!

2. Jesus sought to get worldly people to *open their eyes*. (Jn 4:10-11)

C. Genuine Christianity changes the whole heart and *brings a living joy*. (Jn 16:23-24)

1. At the root of Christianity is one coming to know the character of God. He *knows and cares for me personally*. (1 Pt 5:6-7)

2. The challenge for each person is to know God to the point that I personally trust Him. In an untrusting world *this concept may take time* to take root.

3. One element of Christianity that brings these concepts together is the privilege of prayer. This is one of *the greatest blessings of being a Christian*.

### ***II. The purpose and scope of prayer is shown in the scriptures.***

A. There are four basic elements in prayer.

1. Thanksgiving and Praise – a focus on who God is and what He has done.

2. Confession – a appeal to God for help based upon the acknowledgement of one's own weakness and sin.

3. Petition – an appeal for God's help based upon His personal promises to us.

4. Intercession – an appeal to God to help others based on His promises.

A. Sadly, some may only focus on *asking only for themselves*.

1. Even an immature prayer is acceptable to God. However, there is a real danger in *praying out of pride* and treating God like a "servant boy." (Jas 4:2-4)

2. Our God is not a "divine vending machine" as you *pull the right levers* and get what you want. Jesus described one that "prayed thus with himself." (Lk 18:11)

### **III. The Power of Thanksgiving and praise in prayer**

- A. Praise is not an elaborate process. We are simply acknowledging the hand of God in our lives. **(Ps 9:1; 28:7)**
1. This essentially is a focus on God and not on us.
  2. How many times have we slowed down and thanked God for His creation? **(Ps 8:3-4, Isa 40:26-31)**
  3. In both joy and pain we can be thankful to God. **(1 Thess 5:18; Acts 5:41)**
- B. Seeing God's hand will give us proper perspective and peace.
1. How many times have we been caught up in worry because of things that do not matter? Let us open our eyes and see God! **(Phil 4:6-7)**
  2. Neglecting thanksgiving is the first step to a corrupt heart. **(Rom 1:20-21)**
  3. A thankless heart will become alienated from God. **(Eph 4:17)**
  4. Remember singing this song? "Count your many blessings .... and it will surprise you what the Lord has done".
- C. Praise will let us come to know God better. **(Rom 8:29)**
1. Praise is on a higher level than thanksgiving because we are out of the picture. Only God is in view!
  2. This will bring you to God's presence in a powerful way. How long could you pray with nothing but thanksgiving and praise? What limits us?
  3. Do we really know God? Let us run from the path of the hypocrite. **(Jer 2:8; 9:3)**
  4. We each need to be humbled that we might see!

### **IV. Examples of prayers of thanksgiving and praise**

- A. Please take note of the many prayers recorded in scripture and imitate them!
1. The apostles learned from the prayers of Jesus and so can we!
  2. As with any prayer, make it a true expression of your own heart based upon what God has done for you.
- B. Consider David's prayer after deliverance from his enemies. **(2 Sam 22:2-4)**
1. It is always good to begin your prayers with this focus upon God alone.
  2. When we know the consistent character of God, we then will have great confidence in the future. **(Rom 15:4)**
- C. Consider the prayer of confession led by the Levites in the days of Nehemiah. The prayer begins with praise to God for many things! **(Neh 9:5-6)**
- D. Consider some of the psalms of David. **(Ps 103:1-2, 19-22)**
1. Knowledge of the character of God encourages us to pray!
  2. What do you need to know about God that will cause you to confess your sin?
- E. Consider those in the presence of God. **(Rev 4:11; 5:9-10, 12-13)**
1. Remember, God does not need our praise. It is good for us!
  2. Do we want to go to heaven? What will we be doing there?

**Conclusion:** Praise the Lord!