

Communication 5 *to God—Prayer*

Central Truth:

Following Jesus Christ is not about pursuing a religion, but rather growing a deep relationship with God through consistent communication with Him.

INTRODUCTION:

When introduced to a new friend, there are intentional things done to grow that relationship. Conversations are had on the phone and through email, time is spent hanging out, and there is usually an effort to introduce him or her to other friends and family members. All of this sums up the point that new acquaintances take time and effort to grow into healthy relationships. This same concept is true regarding a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Moving from a surface-level understanding of God to a healthy, maturing relationship with Him takes time—time hearing *from* Him through the Bible and time communicating to Him through prayer.

1 THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

The necessity of spending time alone with God in prayer is vividly illustrated in the life of Jesus Christ. He serves as the perfect example of seeking times of silence and solitude in order to communicate with and hear from God the Father. There are numerous accounts in the Gospels illustrating this. Consider the following accounts as you seek to follow Christ in this way...

Finding time to be alone with God characterized the life of Jesus.

Read Luke 5:16.

How does Luke communicate the pattern of solitude in the life of Jesus?

What implications can be drawn in your own life regarding times of solitude with God?

Why seek quiet moments of prayer to God?

The Gospels give several reasons why this time was so crucial in the earthly life of Jesus and so imperative for you to follow...

1. Prayer keeps you God-centered in life.

Read John 6:15.

After seeing Jesus miraculously multiply a few fish and loaves into enough food to feed thousands, the people wanted to make Him king by force. In order to avoid political and social chaos instigated by a possible mob of people, Jesus withdraws to be alone with His Father. Why? In order to remain focused on God's will rather than the will of man.

*Devote yourselves to prayer
(Colossians 4:2)*

Everyone is devoted to something. Most of us are devoted to many things. When you make something a priority, when you will sacrifice for it, when you will give time to it, you know you are devoted to it. God expects Christians to be devoted to prayer. *

—Donald Whitney

2. Prayer gives clarity in decision-making.

Read Luke 6:12-16.

What major decision does Jesus make here?

3. Prayer is an opportunity to simply refuel.

Read Mark 1:35.

In the few passages before this, what does Mark account Jesus as doing before He is alone with God?

What connections are drawn here between serving God and spending time alone with Him?

When finding time to be alone with God, Jesus had an intentional time and place.

Look at Mark 1:35 again.

What do you notice about the time and place Jesus chooses for the purpose of solitude and prayer?

Drawing from this example of Jesus, what time and place would be the best opportunity for you to be alone in order to communicate to Him uninterrupted?

How do these implications of prayer from the example of Jesus contrast with the way prayer is generally viewed within culture?

Prayer is more than asking God for help or for other things in life. Prayer is the tool God has given you to effectively communicate to Him with the purpose of growing a deep, loving relationship with your Creator. Praying consistently keeps you God-centered in your life and gives you clarity in decision-making on a daily basis. In the midst of serving God with your life, prayer is also an opportunity to refuel and refocus your life in submission to Him. When seeking times of consistent prayer, it is crucial to find intentional times and places to be alone with Him—places where distractions are at a minimum.

2 BIBLICAL TEACHINGS ON PRAYER

As a follower of Christ, Jesus is the mediator between you and God.

Read 1 Timothy 2:5 and Hebrews 4:14-16.

As a result of Jesus Christ mediating between God and man, how does the writer of Hebrews describe the way in which believers in Jesus Christ may approach God in prayer?

In an earlier session of this study, you saw the separation between Holy God and sinful man. Therefore, you have no right on your own to come before God in prayer. It is only through faith in Jesus Christ, the Mediator, that you may come before the throne of God in prayer. Through Christ, you can come before God with confidence.

You are to pray in Jesus' name.

Read John 14:13-14.

What promise does Jesus make if you ask for anything in His name?

For what purpose does Jesus do this? (v. 13)

Based on the definition of "praying in Jesus' name" in the box, what is the connection between Jesus being your Mediator and praying in His name?

You are to pray according to God's will.

Read 1 John 5:14-15.

According to John, there are two results of praying in accordance to God's will. What are they?

Read John 15:7.

According to Jesus, what are the major ingredients to praying according to God's will?

You are to pray with an attitude of humility.

Read Luke 18:9-14.

In this parable from Jesus, describe the attitudes of prayer from these two men.

What promise does Jesus give regarding these two attitudes?

SUMMARY: Within the pages of Scripture, there are several teachings on prayer and the role of Christ in it within the life of the believer. First, Jesus Christ is your Mediator who ushers you into the throne room of God—He is the reason you can pray directly to God. Therefore, as you pray, you are to pray in Jesus' name because it is through Jesus you have access to God. In addition, you are to pray according to God's will. One of the major ways to know the will of God is to know His Word. At all times, your prayers should come from a heart of humility—a heart that recognizes the worth of God and your dependence on Him.

3 WHAT SHOULD YOU PRAY FOR?

Not only does the Bible give several important teachings in regards to your approach to prayer, but it also gives some practical input regarding what to pray.

Read the following passages of Scripture and identify the types of prayer you can pray:

*Psalm 145:1-2

*Psalm 38:8

*Psalm 107:1

*Philippians 4:6

Praying in Jesus' Name & According to God's Will...

To come in the name of someone means that another person has authorized us to come on his authority, not on our own...Praying in Jesus' name is therefore prayer made on his authorization.

In a broader sense the "name" of a person in the ancient world represented the person himself and therefore all of his character. To have a "good name" was to have a good reputation. Thus, the name of Jesus represents all that he is, his entire character. This means that praying "in Jesus' name" is not only praying in his authority, but also praying in a way that is consistent with his character, that truly represents him and reflects his manner of life and his own holy will. In this sense, to pray in Jesus' name comes close to the idea of praying "according to His will. *

—Wayne Grudem

Coming before God in prayer is so much more than simply naming a list of needs. In the Bible, you see examples of prayers of praise—praising God for who He is, for His character, or for His perfect ways. You can also pray prayers of thanksgiving—thanking God for His provisions in your life. Prayer should always be a place of confession—confessing to God the known sins in your heart. Confessing your sins to God and being sorrowful over them keeps your relationship with God unhindered. Prayer is also an opportunity to bring your anxieties or prayer requests before God—these are prayers for wisdom and understanding, prayers for healing in the midst of sickness, or any other burdens you or loved ones may have. Many people understand the latter very well, but it is crucial to see that prayer is so much more than naming requests. It is an opportunity to worship and thank God for His perfect ways and to restore your relationship with Him through the confession of sins.

The Holy Spirit also guides you in prayer.

Read Romans 8:26-27.

According to Paul, what is the Holy Spirit's role in your prayer life?

There may be times when you just do not know what to pray. There may be other times when your prayers are weak and out of focus. The Holy Spirit ministers to you by bringing to mind the heart of God in order for you to pray more effectively.

Force yourself to pray. Make yourself go down on your knees. Do whatever it takes to get before God daily. You will never be stronger and your enemy will never be weaker than when you pray. *

—Ronnie Floyd

Roadblocks to prayer

In addition to giving concrete ways to pray, the Bible also gives a couple of hindrances to prayer as well. Read the following Scriptures and identify the roadblocks of prayer.

*Psalm 66:18

*Mark 11:25

*James 1:5-8

Although Jesus Christ gives believers in Him the ability to come before God in prayer with confidence, there are some things that hinder that approach. First, the Psalmist makes it clear that unconfessed sin puts a roadblock between you and God. So, when coming to God in prayer with unconfessed sin, take the opportunity to confess them. Second, Jesus says that strained relationships on earth can hinder your prayers; therefore, seek to make that relationship right before seeking to worship God through prayer. Third, James says that a doubtful heart can affect your prayer life. As a result, you are to pray in faith. This is not so much a “working up enough faith to believe” as it is believing in the character of God to do that which He said He would do.

CONCLUSION: Following Jesus Christ is so much more than just believing in a set of doctrines or going to church. It involves growing a deep relationship with the very God who has created you and given you new life through His Son, Jesus Christ. This relationship is propelled through the setting aside of time to communicate with Him. During this time, He communicates with you through His Word, the Bible; you, then communicate to Him through prayer. This serves as your spiritual nourishment as you seek to be more like Jesus Christ.

NEXT TIME...

“Communicating Your Relationship with Christ”—A relationship with Jesus Christ is not a private possession. Instead, we are called to share with others what God has done in our lives so they may know the power of God in salvation.