

unceasing prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:16 - 18 - Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

God's will is that we always pray and offer praise to Him, in everything that we do. We should be communicating with God *all* the time!

Hebrews 4:14-16 - Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Philippians 4:6-7 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

-When in need, we are able turn to God for guidance, and He *will* take care of us.

Luke 11:5-13 - And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

It is hard sometimes for people to understand how to go about praying, and rightly so, it seems to be a complicated matter. Luckily, it isn't and we have some examples to go by in the Bible.

James 1:5-8 - If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Faith is one of the most important aspects of prayer. We must always pray for everything in faith, knowing that God will hear us and answer our prayers. Also, God's will must take priority over our own at all times.

Mark 14:36 - And He said, "Abba, Father, all things *are* possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*."

So many times I have caught myself **only** praying when I need something. We cannot do this. We just read that it is pleasing to God and His *will* that we pray all the time about everything. So if we

aren't asking for something, what do we do? Is prayer more than asking for things? *Yes, it is.*

Romans 8:26 - Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

It is comforting that the Holy Spirit can help us when we don't know what to pray for, or how to communicate it. Jesus disciples asked Him how to go about praying, and he gives them a model. This is a good outline for the focus of our prayer: (explanations in parenthesis have been added)

Matthew 6:9-15 - In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name. (we should offer praise and thanks to God)

Your kingdom come. (has now *already* been established - see **Colossians 1:13-14**, pray that the kingdoms of this world would become congruent with His kingdom, that our rulers would commit themselves to the One who has given them authority **1 Timothy 2:1-4**)

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven. (we should pray that His will be done, *not ours* and that our will could be congruent with His through our sanctification)

Give us this day our daily bread. (pray that He will take care of us, physically and spiritually)

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors. (forgive others and ask for forgiveness)

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one. (help us to stay free from sin)

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Praise and Glory be to God!) For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Look through **Matthew 6** and reflect on what Jesus says about prayer.

Does God not hear my prayers? *Why doesn't He answer?*

It may seem sometimes like God isn't listening... the truth is He *always* listens. There are several reasons why we may think this, the majority of the time it's just the Enemy getting in our way. But, there are some things that can get in the way of our communion with God, which we will look at in a minute. This could be a legitimate reason why a prayer is not answered. Otherwise, God does answer our prayers, if not always in the way we expect. God cares too much about us to answer all of our prayers exactly as *we* think He should. We do not always know what is best for us, *but He does.* "No" is still an answer.

So what can get in the way of our prayers?

John 9:31 - Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. (be sure to look at this *in context*)

First of all, what we ask should be congruent with the will of God. Also, we should be doing the will of God and worshiping Him, or He will not hear us. If we refuse to repent of our sins, He will not hear us. I don't mean to say that He doesn't listen, He knows and sees all. The hearing mentioned is different than how it's typically used in modern language, think about it not as a literal hearing or listening, but as a judge hears a court case, or a plea in the courtroom. It's not that He doesn't hear us, but there's no guarantee that He'll honor the request.

Proverbs 28:9 - One who turns away his ear from hearing the law,
Even his prayer *is* an abomination.

Isaiah 59:1-2 - Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened,
That it cannot save;
Nor His ear heavy,
That it cannot hear.
But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
And your sins have hidden *His* face from you,
So that He will not hear.

God cannot look upon sin. When we sin we are cutting ourselves off from God, being separated. Of course, when we repent He will hear us, but as long as we are living in sin, He will not hear our requests.

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Any time that sin finds its way into our life, we must repent of it with a humble and sincere heart, and pray that God will forgive us. Sin creates a barrier between us and God, and we must give everything to Him because only He can cleanse us from sin.

James 4:3 - You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

If we ask out of selfishness, for our own will, we will not receive anything from God. Our prayers must always be selfless. Jesus does not teach us to focus our prayer on obtaining material things. Try instead to focus on the more important spiritual things. We trust in the Lord to give us all that we need (which doesn't mean we do not ask). Make the distinctions between what you need and what you want. Don't ask amiss! I'm not trying to say material things are inherently evil, but remember who provides all things, remember who we serve, and use that which we have been given accordingly.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Now we know that we can pray for wisdom and knowledge, and it will be given to us freely. But we should not ask for anything that has already been given to us. Do we expect God will give us a different answer than He already has in His word? It is our responsibility to use the Bible and be familiar with it. It is a complete guide for us, and contains knowledge and wisdom. Now we *should* pray for understanding, but do not try to ask God a question that has already been answered.

Okay, so what do we say, how do we *really* go about praying?

Luke 18:9-14 - Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

We see here that a simple prayer is quite sufficient. *What* we say in not as important as **how you say it**. Again the spirit helps us when we do not know how to say something.

We should always go to God in reverence and humility. When I started to really read the Bible, I kept seeing the description of a "God-fearing" man (or woman) used as an example that we should follow. We should always acknowledge God as all-powerful, the Creator of the ends of the earth, and give Him all the respect, glory, praise, and honor that is due.

Matthew 6:5-8 - And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do*. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

Mark 1: 35 - Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.

Prayer is not just about asking for help, but is a way to get to know God. It is a vital aspect of our relationship with Him, and communion with Him is the only way we can grow closer to Him. In all things that we do, we should be communicating with God and letting Him guide us day by day.

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