

Prayer, the Lifeline to Our Creator

A great portion of living involves communication — with family, friends, and others in our day-to-day living — and for this purpose our heavenly Father has given us a mouth, vocal cords, lungs, brain, ears, and all the equipment we need to create vibrations in the air, which can be received and interpreted by others. This process of speaking and listening is truly miraculous in the physical realm, one that has generated much research and wonder over the millennia.

We as Christians appreciate the great value and power of words in everyday life, and God has much to say about speaking. For instance, “The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil” (Proverbs 15:28), “Do not be rash with your mouth ... [but] let your words be few” (Ecclesiastes 5:2), and “So we stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able

also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2). Moreover, Jesus Christ is the “Word” (John 1:1, 14), and He tells us “That every idle word that men shall

speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). We are told that “If you have faith as a mustard seed you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’, and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20).

The Power of Prayer

How much more powerful and miraculous are our communications with our Father in heaven! Jesus Christ did not say, “... whatever you ask the Father in thy name He may give

you” (John 15:16) for no good reason. Christ did not say, “ask and it will be given to you...” (Luke 11:9) without meaning just that. You need to ask in order to receive.

Prayer is communicating with God ... speaking to him. He listens, and He answers. However, in the process of His answering He does not necessarily answer right away, or when we think He should. He answers in the time and manner that are best for us, because He deeply cares for us, His chosen vessels (1 Peter 5:7), and He has a special plan and design in life for each of us. In the process of these prayers it is critical to understand who we are — Elohim’s creation in His image (Genesis 1:27) — and who God is, the Maker and Designer of all that is. Consequently, we owe everything that we are to Him, and to Him alone. His care for us exceeds our wildest imaginations: He wants the very best for us, in particular obedience to the

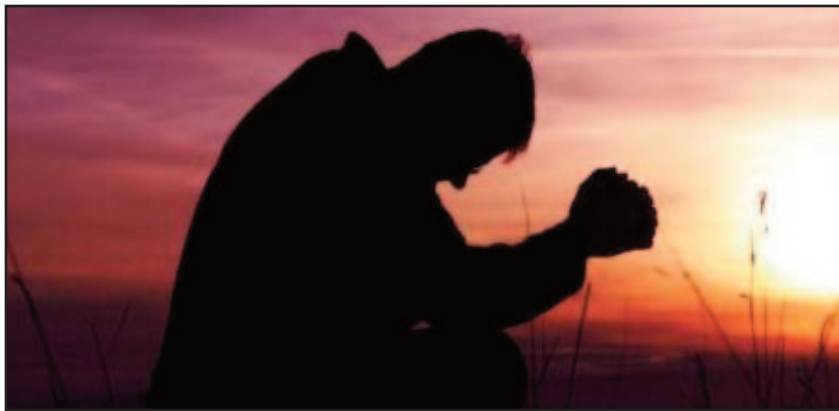
Laws that yield abundant, vibrant, joyous living!

The Importance of Prayer

None of us as Christians need to be re-

minded that talking to our Creator is critical. We spend considerable time each day communicating our deepest needs and ideals, as a little child often does to a loving father. If an average total of one hour per day is spent in prayer, then 365 hours per year equals 15 24-hour days each year talking with our heavenly Father! If a person begins this prayer life at age 30, and continues to age 80, then 2.1 years of one’s life will have been spent in communication with the Father!

A note of caution: as we will verify later, unless you are striving to serve God while praying



day by day, God will not hear your pleadings to Him. He is open to those who diligently seek Him, who put down their personal carnality and put on the spirit.

Prayer Defined

In the King James Version, **pray** is found 310 times. It is translated as follows:

Old Testament

naw (4994), the usual word, “enticement and intensity.”

palel (6419), “to pray, intervene, mediate, judge.”

New Testament

proseuchomai (4336), the usual word, “always used in prayer to God.”

erotao (2065), “the petitioner is on a footing of equality or familiarity that lends authority to the request with the person whom he entreats.”

parkaleo (3870), “to call to one’s side, to call to one’s aid.”

deomai (1189), “to beg or petition.”

The word **prayed** is used 65 times throughout the King James Bible.

Old Testament. *palel* (see above)

New Testament. *proseuchomai*, *parkaleo*, *erotao*, and *deomai* (see above)

Some other Hebrew and Greek words are translated as **prayer** in the King James Bible; it is used 114 times.

Old Testament

tephillah (8605), “prayer (the most general Hebrew word for it).”

palel (see above)

New Testament

proseuche (4335), “prayer to God.”

deesis, (1162), “prayer for particular benefits (versus *proseuche*, which is prayer in general).”

enteuxis, (1783), “a lighting upon, a meeting with, and then a conversation with, so a petition (as with a king); boldly approaching God in intimate intercession and prayer, seeking the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others.”

euche(2171), “a prayer or vow.”

The words **prayers** (24 times), **prayest** (2 times), **prayeth** (7 times), and **praying** (20 times) in the King James Version are all translated from *tephillah*, *proseuche*, *proseuchomai*, *deesis*, *palel*, or *deomai*. It is clear from these definitions that prayer is conversing with God in some way, asking Him to intercede for oneself or for others, or thanking Him for blessings and other intervention. Like Enoch (Genesis 5:22-24) and Noah (Genesis 6:9), we *walk* with God (*halak*, “to go, walk, behave”) continually, for the Creator is the very essence of who we are.



Where to Pray

If we are to “pray without ceasing” (I Thesalonians 5:17), it is obvious that anywhere at any time we can, and ought to, send petitions to God. The keys here are (1) to remove distractions so we can concentrate on our messages,

and (2) to avoid being seen, if possible, so as to avoid the accolades of others. Jesus Christ made clear that we are to avoid standing in meeting places or street corners to be seen of men, but should go into a room and shut the door, to be alone in our petitions and avoid the temptation of human pride.

“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.” (Matthew 6:5-6).

Paul and other Christians at Philippi walked out to the riverside “... where prayer was customarily made...” (Acts 16:13), and spoke to the women who met there. Christ likely frequented a high mountain where He, Peter, James, and John observed Jesus transfigured, with Moses and Elijah; it was a private and peaceful place. Thus, having a private, beautiful place in which to pray, surrounded by the Eternal’s creations that move one’s attention towards the Creator, is an admirable asset. Not always is a person so blessed to regularly enjoy such a special private niche, but be sure that anywhere is an appropriate place to talk with God. Doubtlessly many astronauts were obliged to speak with God (in their own way) while orbiting the earth. Sam Walter Foss, a somewhat obscure American poet, hit the nail on the head in “The Prayer of Cyrus Brown.”

The Prayer of Cyrus Brown

By Sam Walter Foss (1858-1911)

“The PROPER way for a man to pray,”
Said Deacon Lemuel Keyes,
“And the only proper attitude,
Is down upon his knees.”

“No, I should say the way to pray;,”
Said Reverend Doctor Wise,
“Is standing straight, with outstretched
arms,
And rapt and upturned eyes.”

“Oh no; no, no,” said Elder Slow,
“Such posture is too proud:
A man should pray with eyes fast closed
And head contritely bowed.”

“It seems to me his hands should be
Austerely clasped in front,
With both thumbs pointing toward the
ground,”
Said Reverend Doctor Blunt.

“Las’ year I fell in Hodgkin’s well
Head first,” said Cyrus Brown,
“With both my heels a-stickin’ up,
My head a-p’inting down;

“An’ I made a prayer right then an’ there —
Best prayer I ever said,

The prayingest prayer I ever prayed,
A-standing on my head.”

How Should We Pray?

The typical posture seen in many paintings and texts — of Jesus Christ on His knees with folded hands in prayer — is highly overplayed but certainly not objectionable. Kneeling with folded hands does show incapacitation of human efforts, allowing one to focus on God’s power and goodness, not one’s own. Indeed, some of the patriarchs prayed at times on their knees, for example Solomon (he also raised his hands to heaven; I Kings 8:54), Daniel (Daniel 6:10), and Peter (Acts 9:40). However, praying while head-down in a well, as the poem above describes, is just as effective in getting a message through to the Creator ... maybe more so.

In line with the knowledge that we must “pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17), it is instructive to note that Paul spoke to Timothy of praying with “upstretched arms” (I Timothy

2:8). Enoch and Noah “walked with God” (Genesis 5:22-24; 6:9), implying that they communicated with Him while traveling by foot, and followed His laws in all aspects of their lives, 24 hours a day. Were prayers as affective in getting messages to God while walking, or standing on one’s head, as kneeling with folded hands? Of course!

It is imperative that we put our whole energy, our whole heart into our prayers, for it is then that we will be heard by our Father in heaven. Notice Jeremiah 29:12-14.

“Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. **You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.** I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore you from captivity and gather you from all the nations and places to which I have banished you, declares the Lord. I will restore you to the place from which I sent you into exile.”

The captivity referred to here is from the army of a foreign invading nation, but there is a captivity to the forces of evil in this world — Satan and his minions — and their subjugation is just as real as that of a physical army. By seeking the Eternal with all of one’s heart this power will be utterly deposed, but the key is pursuing the Eternal with one’s entire being. Our prime example is the prayer offered by Jesus to the Father when He was about to be crucified; His prayer was so intense that “... in His anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:44). We may not always be that fervent, but we can strive to put our entire being into our messages to God.

Praying while driving down the road, hoeing the garden, cutting cabbage on the kitchen

counter, or mowing the lawn will get a message to the Father ... as long as one puts his heart and soul into it. The key to being heard by the the Creator is to be living righteously in service to Him, and as Matthew 22:36-40 says, “... love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind ... [and] you shall love your neighbor as yourself”. These facts imply the spirit of Elohim dwells in you, of course, for “... if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9).

As for everything we do in life, attitude is of utmost importance. The focus of that attitude is humility, as so vividly related in Scripture.



“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”, (II Chronicles 7:14).

“ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up” (James 4:7-10).

Note also the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14. Though the Pharisee gave tithes of all he possessed, seeking to aggrandize himself, the tax collector, genuinely confessing his sins, asked for God’s mercy and received it, “... for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

We must implore our Father with our whole heart!

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you” (Jeremiah 29: 11-13).

“... and when they [Israel] return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, saying ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong, and have committed wickedness’; and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity where they have been carried captive, and pray toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and toward the temple which I have built for Your name, then hear from heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive Your people who have sinned against You.” (II Chronicles 6:38-39).

Note also Deuteronomy 4:29 and 30:1-3, I Kings 8:48, I Chronicles 8:29, II Chronicles 15:15, 22:9, and 31:21, Psalm 119:10, Jeremiah 29:13, and Isaiah 55:6-7. One must be righteous in God’s eyes, his sins washed away, for his prayers to be heard: “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but He loves him who follows righteousness” (Proverbs 15), and one who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination (Proverbs 28:9).

We must approach our heavenly Father with faith that He will answer our requests.

“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” (James 1:5-6).

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (I Timothy 2:8).

It is also imperative to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, for as Christ stated in John 14:13-14, whatever we ask in Christ’s name He will surely do it, “... that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” What a grand testimony to Jesus Christ’s power and forgiveness that the Father wants Christ’s name to be announced in our prayers!

How Often to Pray

If we are to “pray without ceasing” (I Thessalonians 5:17), how is it possible to not be actively communicating with God throughout the day? This is certainly the intent of Paul’s statement here, and of the prayers offered up “night and day” in I Thessalonians 3:10, I Timothy 5:5, and II Timothy 1:3, as well as the situation of Cornelius who “prayed to God always” (Acts 10:2), and the disciples who gave themselves “continually in prayer” (Acts 6:4). Does this mean they never attended to physical needs that required attention in normal daily living? Hardly, but they were ready at any time to contact the Father — instant in prayer” (Romans 12:12 — besides their usual, more programmed times of prayer.

Daniel and David had a habit of approaching the Father “formally” three times a day (evening, morning, and noon; Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10), and morning prayers are mentioned in Psalm 5:3, 88:13, and Isaiah 33:2. Twice daily prayers are revealed in Psalm 88:1, and Jesus Christ prayed all night before choosing the twelve disciples (Luke 6:12).

The parable of the judge and the widow in Luke 18:1-8 reveals that “... men always ought to pray and not lose heart”. In this parable the unjust judge was repeatedly approached by a widow who wanted justice from an adversary. Rather than face the prospect of continued harassment from the widow, he finally gave her justice. This emphasizes the fact that “... shall

God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?” (verse 7) Christ stated that He will avenge the elect speedily ... infinitely quicker than did for the unjust judge.

Therefore, it is appropriate to pray repeatedly about an issue that is pressing and desperately needs an answer: a need for healing, for income, for friends, for a suitable mate, for the Kingdom to come, to name a few instances.



One must not repeat idle words like the Catholic rosary — those are vain repetitions which God abhors (Matthew 6:7) — but get into the habit of praying at appointed times during the day. That may be when you arise from bed, at noon, and in the evening before bedtime. Reserve time, a block of time at least once a day for formal prayer, and then be ready for contact with God throughout the day as situations arise. Our lives ought to be a constant dialogue with our heavenly Father. Remember, the *quality* of time you spend with Him is just as important as the *quantity* of time.

The Subject of Our Prayers

Virtually every subject involved with life is fair game for communications with our Father, if it is truly needful to present and lifted up in humility. The subjects we ought to emphasize have been itemized by Jesus Christ in Matthew 6:9-13.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed by Your name. Your kingdom come. Your

will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Notice the subjects here.

- 1. Pray directly to the Father.** Remember that the door of separation to the Holy of Holies has been removed at the crucifixion and resurrection, and we have direct access to the Father through the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the remitting of our sins (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:12-21; Ephesians 2:14). We no longer have sin imputed to us (Romans 4:8), and we are washed clean of all sin (Acts 22:16; Hebrews 12:23), allowing us to revel in the Father’s presence!
- 2. Ask for the Kingdom (government) of God to come on earth.**
- 3. Ask that the heavenly reality be brought to the earth’s physical plane.**
- 4. Implore the Father to grant our physical needs for the day:** food, clothing shelter, transportation, and work to sustain those needs.
- 5. Plead for forgiveness of our sins.** Without this forgiveness through Christ’s sacrifice we are dead (Ezekiel 18:4, 20).
- 6. Ask for deliverance from Satan the devil.**

Nearly every prayer we can imagine fits into one of these categories, and we can use them as an organizational template. The prayers recorded in Scripture are about as many and varied as there are people on earth. Note a few of these subjects, with some scriptural references.

Asking for blessings upon food (Matthew 14:19; feeding the 5,000; Matthew 15:36, feeding the 4,000; Matthew 26:27, the last Passover; Acts 27:35;

Romans 14:6)

Giving thanks for blessings (Daniel 6:10; Luke 17:16)

Asking for healing (Genesis 20:17; James 5:14-15)

Helping others among the elect (Romans 1:9; Ephesians 6:18)

Getting wisdom (James 1:5-6)

Casting out demons (Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29)

Receiving deliverance from distress and wicked people (Genesis 32:11; Matthew 26:36-42; John 12:27; Hebrews 5:7)

Requesting relief during suffering (James 5:13)

Escaping the tragedies to come and to stand before Christ (Luke 21:36)

Asking for the demise of one's enemies (Numbers 16:15; Psalm 83:13-17; 109; Job 3:1-10; etc.)

Requesting help for oneself (Romans 15:30)

Needing deliverance from God's wrath (Judges 10:15; I Samuel 12:19)

Pleading for conception and bringing up of a child (Judges 13:8; I Samuel 1:10-26)

Speaking right words (Colossians 4:3)

Jesus Christ's Part in Our Prayers

Our Elder Brother Jesus Christ has performed amazing wonders for us, first of all by setting the example of prayer in its fulness. The outline for prayer in Matthew 6 has already been discussed, but the comprehensive prayer in John 17 summarizes His last thoughts before enduring the crucifixion. His incredible love for us in this final prayer is shown by the statement, "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them" (John 17:9-10). Through prayer to the Father He cast out demons, healed the sick and maimed, and received strength and direction to preach the good news of the coming Kingdom of Elohim

Secondly, Jesus Christ performs the awesome job of interceding for us to the Father. He expedites the understanding of our prayers directly to the Father, for we find it difficult or impossible to relay our messages in the form they ought to be received by Him.

"Likewise the spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit itself makes *intercession* for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now it that searches the hearts knows what the mind of the spirit is, because it makes *intercession* for the saints according to the will of God.... Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:26-27, 34).

intercession (1793) = *eutugchano*, "fall



in with, meet with in order to converse; then to make petition especially to make intercession, and plead for a person for others such as the holy spirit for the saints, etc.”

“For there is one God and one *Mediator* between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (I Timothy 2:5).

mediator (3316) = *mesites*, “a go-between; one who mediates between two parties with a view to produce peace.”

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25).

“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;” (Hebrews 9:24).

Putting these ideas and definitions together, Jesus Christ, at the throne of the Father in heaven, hears our prayers and helps them to be understood by the Father, since “we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.” He in no way stands between us and the Father, but expedites the understanding of our words, since He Himself came from heaven, experienced life in the flesh, but never sinned (Hebrews 4:15), so is able to make clear to the Father our needs. Christ has deep empathy for us and vouches for our needs before His Father, and our Father. Christ meets with and talks with the Father concerning our needs, and pleads for us (*eutugchano*). He is the One who mediates for us to produce wonderful peace with our true spiritual Daddy. Is there a better reason, then, to pronounce the name of the great Mediator when we petition the Father for our needs, or give Him thanks?

Answers to Prayers

One thing can be said for certain: our Father does answer our prayers! Moreover, He answers them in a way that maximizes good for us. Those answers may take the form of yes or no, or an altered version of what we ask for. The timing of those answers is totally up to Him.

Delayed answerers (Psalm 22:1-2; 40:1; 80:4; 88:14; Jeremiah 42:7; Habakkuk 1:2; Luke 18:7).

Answers that are different than requested (Deuteronomy 3:23-27; II Corinthians 12:8-9).

Answers that exceed what is prayed for (I Kings 3:7-14; II Chronicles 1:10-12).

You can be sure that the prayers of the wicked and disobedient are *not* answered. The example of such failures are extant throughout Scripture. Note Proverbs 1:24-28, 15:8, 29, and 28:9; Isaiah 1:11-15 and 59:2; Jeremiah 11:9-11,; Lamentations 3:7-8, 42-44; Micah 3:4; John 9:31. Lamentations 3:42-44 gives a vivid description of how wickedness shrouds you like a cloud so that prayer will not pass through.

“We have transgressed and rebelled; you have not pardoned. You have covered Yourself with anger and pursued us; You have slain and not pitied. You have covered Yourself with a cloud that prayer should not pass through.”

The truth that God does not hear sinners is common sensical, understood well by the blind man whom Jesus healed and was questioned by the Pharisees. He answered, “Now we know that God does not hear sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31).

How Not to Pray

We are cautioned to avoid the sins of the heathen and vain pretenders to the faith, such as the Pharisees. These cautions include the following:

1. Avoid vain repetitions (Matthew 6:7-8), such as the Pharisees and certain other groups used with the idea that they would be heard of God because of their “much speaking.” God hears the genuine, heartfelt prayers of the righteous spoken humbly and in private. The Roman Catholic rosary will not be heard by our Father in heaven, not only because it is a vain repetition, but because it deifies Mary, the physical mother of Jesus, as being the “mother of God” and sinless herself. Mary, of course, was a good mother but certainly not sinless.

2. Do not make a show of prayer to others (Matthew 6:5). This means appearing before others to pray for the sake of self-aggrandizement, rather than shutting oneself in one’s room so as not to be seen. Of course, this is not referring to group prayers of the elect.

3. Refrain from verbosity (Ecclesiastes 5:2; Matthew 23:14). Say what needs to be said. Speaking many words and trying to sound superior or great is vanity and pride, certainly to be avoided. The humble, sincere, heart-felt words of a righteous person are heard by our heavenly Father. “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16).

4. Remain selfless in prayer, just as you ought in living each day (James 4:3). The entire plan of God is one of selflessness, of looking upon one’s fellow saint as better

than oneself (Philippians 2:1-5). Remember that the Creator made and sustains all that is, yet is not puffed up or proud of it, just thankful and joyous. We must follow in those footsteps (1 John 2:6).

In Conclusion ...

Our amazing and awesome God knows our needs even before we ask anything of Him (Matthew 6:8)! Yet, we still need to ask, and we need to ask in Christ’s name.

We need to communicate with our Creator every day, establishing the habit of talking with God regularly. We must be ready at any moment to cry out to Him in times of distress, or give thanks for the many blessings He bestows upon us. It is imperative that we live in righteousness, for then our prayers will be heard, but His answers will be given in the manner and at the time that He desires for our greatest good, and for the fulfillment of His plan for each of us. He has a specific design upon each one of His ecclesia, a place in the heavenly city that is awesome beyond comprehension, and He has plans for us to be there (Revelation 21:2-3; John 14:2). We have eternity in our futures.

Let us cry out to the almighty God in humility and power, for we have a Father who really cares for us. Let prayer be the centerpiece of our lives alongside reading His word, meditating, fasting, and fellowshiping regularly. Praise be to Him!

