

Abundant Life Lesson 6 - Prayer

Introduction

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

Most Christians know that they should pray, but most think that it is much more complex than it is. A simple word study reveals that prayer is nothing more or less than communicating to God:

proseuchomai (proseu/xesqe, Greek) - "to speak or ask toward God."

Palal (Hebrew) - "to intervene, get involved, or ask; a two way conversation."

There are *many* scriptures that deal with prayer so it is impossible to cover everything about prayer in one lesson. In this study, we will look at some basic and extremely important points revealed in the Word of God about prayer.

Effects of Prayer

Here are the basic effects of prayer found in scripture. Every time that we pray, we should be praying with a specific purpose in mind. Prayer . . .

1. Draws us closer to God and thus causes God to become closer to us.

James 4:8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Jerimiah 29:12-14 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, 14 I will be found by you, declares the Lord,

2. Can change the way God deals with us.

2 Chronicles 7:14-15 if my people who are called by my name 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. 15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.

3. Changes our mindset and attitude.

Philippians 4:6-7 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

John 16:24 Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

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4. Affects others.

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

There are many examples of prayer changing the lives of others in scripture. One excellent example is when Peter was cast in prison to be killed, and when the church got together and began to pray for him, God sent an angel to deliver him (Acts 12).

5. Affects the enemy

Ephesians 6:12, 18 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places... **18** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Hindrances to Prayer

There are some things that can cause God not to respond to our prayer at all! Here are some things which cause our prayers to go unanswered that we want to avoid:

1. Unrepented sin -

Psalms 66:18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

Isaiah 59:2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

2. Refusal to listen to and obey God's Word -

Proverbs 28:9 If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

3. Praying out of learned ritual -

Isaiah 29:13 And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men,"

Matthew 6:7 "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

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Ecclesiastes 5:2 Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

4. Praying to be seen of others -

Matthew 6:5-6 And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

5. Lack of Faith -

Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

James 1:5-8 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Promises of Prayer

There are examples in scripture of prayer accomplishing many things. Here is an abbreviated list of some of the things that we can receive through prayer:

1. Freedom of Fear - Psalms 118:5-6
2. Spiritual Strength - Psalms 138:3
3. Guidance and Satisfaction - Isaiah 58:9-11
4. Wisdom and Understanding - Daniel 9:20-27
5. Protection from Harm - Psalms 34:15-22
6. Good Things (literally a reward from the Father) - Matthew 6:6
7. The Holy Ghost - Luke 11:13
8. Fullness of Joy - John 16:23-24
9. Peace - Philippians 4:6
10. Healing - James 5:14-15

Types of Prayer

Most prayers can be categorized into the following categories:

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1. Dedication - This is prayer to draw closer to God. It is verbally committing ourselves to God's perfect will and asking His help to be all that we should be.
2. Repentance - Asking God for forgiveness and telling Him that we want a change of God in our lives.
3. Inquiry - Asking God for specific answers, blessings, help, or things in our life.
4. Worship - Telling God how great and wonderful that He is. Worship can take many specific forms such as: Thanksgiving - thanking God for what He has done in the past; Praise - Outward actions of worship such as leaping, shouting, clapping, running, dancing, singing, etc...!
5. Intercession - Praying on the behalf of others.
6. Faith - Praying the Word of God and asking Him to help us believe it and step out and receive what He has promised!

Special Forms of Prayer

1. With Fasting - Daniel prayed and fasted together in Daniel 9:3 and changed the direction of an entire nation!
2. With oil by the ministry for healing - We often obey this scripture in church. The oil reminds us that it is the Holy Ghost that heals and not the humans involved.

James 5:14-15 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

3. Prayer in Tongues - Speaking in tongues during prayer is common after a person receives the Holy Ghost and we should be sensitive to allow God to use us in this area of prayer. By praying in tongues you build up your faith in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Jude 20 But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit;

1 Corinthians 14:14-15 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also;

4. With Handkerchiefs or Napkins to be sent to the distant sick - This was a special way to pray for the sick when they could not be brought to the ministers for prayer.

Acts 19:11-12 And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12

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so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them.

5. Intercessory Prayer – Whether praying in a known language or overcome to the point that you are unable to utter words and the Spirit intercedes for us with groans too deep for words.

Romans 8:26-27 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

The Lord's Example of Prayer

The greatest lesson on prayer was taught by Jesus in Matthew chapter 6:

Matthew 6:6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

You should be somewhere that you are not fearful of someone hearing you and can be completely honest with God.

Matthew 6:7 And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Do not say the same thing over and over again like "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, etc..." but make a list of things for which to pray. Here is a sample prayer list:

- Personal needs
- Your marriage/children/family members
- Church needs
- The Pastor, Pastoral staff, and neighboring ministers and their families
- Specific needs in church member's lives
- Lost friends and loved ones

Don't be afraid to make a list of each category and read the names in prayer.

Matthew 6:8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

God already knows what we need, the reason that He wants us to pray is so that we will develop a close, trusting relationship with Him and realize that He is working in our life!

Matthew 6:9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

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A good way to begin your prayers is with praise and worship!

Matthew 6:10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Always pray according to God's Will. Ask that His will be done, not your own! That means if it is not God's Will for you to receive what you ask, then you are asking Him not to give it to you! God's Will is always best for our lives anyway!

Matthew 6:11 Give us this day our daily bread,

Don't just ask God for great big needs, but ask Him for the normal things as well. Ask God to give you the power, wisdom, and strength to handle whatever may happen that day. Notice that we should pray daily!

Matthew 6:12 and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Ask God for forgiveness even if you cannot think of anything that you have done wrong. Then ask God's help to help you forgive others.

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Ask God to help you never fall back to the sinful lifestyle that He delivered you from, and then end your prayer with praise and worship again! "Amen" simply means "let it be."

If you will follow these simple steps and pray for specific needs in your life and others, then you will find that it is no problem to pray 20 minutes, 45 minutes, or even an hour. Remember that we must pray with complete submission and devotion and with our whole heart. Quality of prayer is more important than quantity. As your relationship with God grows, you will find yourself looking forward to spending time talking to Him!