

Personal Disciplines – Prayer

Pray without ceasing. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

ME

Today we are going to continue looking at spiritual disciplines and we'll be looking at **the discipline of prayer**. We'll look at **how prayer fits into the different stages of our walk with God, why and how we pray, and what might happen if we all grow in this area of our lives.**

I would like to start with some excellent **quotes** I have found on prayer, hopefully to **inspire, encourage and spur us on** to grow in prayer.

“One of the greatest definition of prayer I know is this: Prayer is co-operation with God. ...Prayer isn't bending God's will to ours, but bending our will to His. We work out the purposes which God has worked out for us.” Selwyn Hughes

I have so much to do that I spend several hours in prayer before I am able to do it.—John Wesley

Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?-- Corrie Ten Boom

When a Christian shuns fellowship with other Christians, the devil smiles. When he stops studying the Bible, the devil laughs. When he stops praying, the devil shouts for joy. --Corrie Ten Boom

"Our prayers lay the track down which God's power can come. Like a mighty locomotive, his power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails." Watchman Nee

WE

Where are we at? We have been looking at willow creeks spiritual continuum.

Where might we fit on this continuum regarding our prayer life?

Exploring Christ – if you're real show me

Growing in Christ – praying with others

Close to Christ – relational prayer

Christ centred – private prayer

GOD

So why do we pray?

“We pray because God has chosen to work out his purposes through our prayer”. Does God need us to pray to act? No, but **he has chosen to do it this way.**

Prayer obviously comes out of a **relationship**.

You don't pray to God if you don't have some idea that he exists.

Followers of Jesus are in relationship with God.

So let's look at the different ways we pray.

1. If you are real show me.....

2. Praying with others (corporate prayer) is where we can learn how to pray

Prayer triplet helps with praying – very hard on your own

Acts 1:14 (after the ascension of Jesus while the disciples were waiting in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Spirit), **“These all with one mind were continually *devoting themselves* to prayer, along with *the women*, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”**

Acts 2:42 (Of the early converts in Jerusalem), **“They were continually *devoting themselves* to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”**

Acts 6:4 (The apostles say), **“But we will *devote ourselves* to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”**

Colossians 4:2 (Paul says to all of us), **“*Devote yourselves* to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.”**

"Since the days of Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon Him for ten days, that the Spirit's power might be manifested? We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power." Hudson Taylor

3. Relational prayer, talking to God as you go about your day from time to time, **Bullet prayers**

4. Private prayer requires the most discipline

"Prayer - secret, fervent, believing prayer - lies at the root of all personal godliness." William Carey

The Lord's Prayer Matt 6

5 "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.

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. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

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

11 Give us this day our daily bread,

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

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

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

God has something for you to accomplish – he wants you to listen to what he is saying and then really call that into being.

If we don't do this, the things god wants for us don't happen.

This is the way God has ordained it.

Helpful keys to private prayer

- 1. Pray In Jesus' Name.** When we do something in somebody else's name **we act as their representative**. So when we pray in Jesus' name we are coming to God the father on behalf of Jesus. Which means we need to know what is on Jesus' agenda, not praying what we want, but praying what we know he wants. **Sense of authority – we are about God's work**. Real prayer is Christological. There are numerous New Testament references that talk about the importance of praying in the name of Jesus. Jesus even said, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you" (John 16:23)**. When we pray in the name of Jesus, God the Father hears us. **God responds to the prayer that is offered in the name of his Son Jesus.**
- 2. Pray According to God's Will.** What is our view of God, he is a kind beneficiary who gives us what we want. **Bruce Almighty – yes to every prayer. 1 John 5:14 it says, "If we ask anything according to his will he hears us."** When we pray in line with **God's will we can expect an answer.**
- 3. Scriptural Prayer.** One the best ways to pray is to pray according to Scripture. **John 15:7 says, "If you abide in me, and my word abides in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."** If God's word is in us then his desires become our desires, and we can have the assurance that he will answer our prayers. Make sure that your prayers are in line with Scripture. **Pray read the scripture.**
- 4. Keep Commandments.** **"And whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him" (1 John 3:22)**. God honours those who honour his commandments. **If we keep his commandments and do what is pleasing, then we can be assured that he will hear our prayers.**
- 5. You Must Believe.** **"And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith" (Matthew 21:22)**. The Lord wants us to have faith that he will hear our prayers. **Hebrews 11:6 says, "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".**

The Lord promises to respond to our prayer of faith.

6. **Pray in the Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. Paul tells us to pray at all times in the Spirit. **Romans 8:26 says, ²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. We don't always know how to pray or feel like praying, so we need the Spirit's power to help us.**

This is a Big deal!!

7. **Be Persistent.** Don't give up if you haven't received an answer to your prayers. Throughout the Bible there are stories of men and women who persevered in prayer. In Luke 18:1-8, there was a little old widow who did not lose heart. James tells us that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. **Push through!**

8. **Humble Yourself.** One parable about prayer is in Luke 18:9-14, where the Pharisee and tax collector come before God. The Pharisee was proud and boastful, while the tax collector was humble and asked for God's mercy. We are told that **God hears the prayer of the humble.** If we humble ourselves in the sight of God, he will lift us up.

"Prayer is a spiritual law which cooperates with the mind of God. It has more in it than merely petition. It clothes itself in reality and power, with the force of God Himself. It is an attitude of spirit and mind. Language is secondary in true prayer." Gossner.

"Time spent in prayer will yield more than that given to work. Prayer alone gives work its worth and its success. Prayer opens the way for God Himself to do His work in us and through us. Let our chief work as God's messengers be intercession; in it we secure the presence and power of God to go with us." Andrew Murray

YOU

So where do you find yourself in your prayer life. Where do you sit on the spiritual continuum?

Exploring Christ – if you're real show me – talk to people who might be at this stage.

Growing in Christ – praying with others – get along to every opportunity to pray – triplets?

Close to Christ – relational prayer – just talk to God as you go about your daily routine.

Christ centred – private prayer – diary in time, set apart time to be quiet and spend time with God.

WE

What would we look like if we really grow in this area of our lives?

What would our marriages, family life look like if we grow in this area of our lives?

What would our church look like if we all grow in this area of our lives?

What would Ascot, Sunninghill and the surrounding area look like if we grow in this area of our lives?

Prayer is the key to any change or growth in every area of life.

"The essence of prayer does not consist in asking God for something but in opening our hearts to God, in speaking with Him, and living with Him in perpetual communion. Prayer is continual abandonment to God. Prayer does not mean asking God for all kinds of things we want; it is rather the desire for God Himself, the only Giver of Life, Prayer is not asking, but union with God. Prayer is not a painful effort to gain from God help in the varying needs of our lives. Prayer is the desire to possess God Himself, the Source of all life. The true spirit of prayer does not consist in asking for blessings, but in receiving Him who is the giver of all blessings, and in living a life of fellowship with Him." Sadhu Sundar Singh

Charles Spurgeon, the great 18th century English preacher and evangelist, described prayer as the 'engine room' of his ministry.

Is prayer the engine room of our lives and of this church?