

Chapter 18: Prayer

Why does God want us to pray? How can we pray effectively?

Definition: *Prayer is personal communication with God.*

A. Why Does God Want Us to Pray? (376)

1. Prayer expresses our trust in God (Mat 6:8)
2. Prayer expresses our acknowledgment of dependence upon God as a loving and wise Father (Mat 6:9; Luk 11:9-13; Mat 21:22)
3. Prayer brings us into deeper fellowship w/ God
4. Prayer allows us to be involved in activities that are eternally important

B. The Effectiveness of Prayer (377)

1. Prayer changes the way God acts (Exo 32:9-14; Luk 11:9-10; 2Ch 7:14; 1Jo 1:9; Jas. 4:2)

What kind of prayer is most effective? (What kind of prayer is God most pleased with?)

a. Prayer that interacts personally with God

(1) Examples: Moses (Ex. 32); Abraham (Gen 18:22-33); Jacob (Gen 32:24-32); Hezekiah (2Ki 19:14-20); Jesus (Mat. 26.36-46, note vs. 44)

(2) P.T. Forsythe, *The Soul of Prayer*. "Prayer is will against will."

(3) Example: different ways to ask someone for dinner

(4) Note the personal interaction pictured in Heb. 4:16: drawing near to throne of grace w/ confidence (προσερχώμεθα οὐκ ἐν παρρησίας τῆς θρόνου τῆς χάριτος).

(5) D. M. MacIntyre, *The Hidden Life of Prayer*, "Pray until you pray."

(6) Note the activity implied in James 5:16 ("confess your sins...pray for one another")

(7) Example from Jesus' life: (perhaps Gethsemane, perh. whole life): Hebrews 5:7

(8) Sometimes that sense of being in God's presence, a strong "atmosphere" of prayer, comes on us -- and prayer is very effective

b. Prayer that asks for what is pleasing to God (1Jo 5:14-15)

2. Effective prayer is made possible by our mediator, Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5; Hebrews 10:19)

3. What is praying "in Jesus' name"? (John 14:13-14)

a. It does not simply mean adding the phrase "in Jesus' name" after every prayer (no prayer in Scripture has this phrase at the end) (Mat 6:9-13)

b. Praying in Jesus' name is prayer made on his authorization (Act 3:6, Act 4:7)

c. It is also praying in a way that is consistent with his character and reflects his manner of life and his own holy will.

d. It is not wrong to add "in Jesus' name" to the end of our prayers, as long as we understand what is meant by it and that it is not necessary to do so.

e. To avoid misunderstanding, it would probably be wise to frequently express the same thought in other words: "Father, we do not come on our own merits but on the merits of Jesus Christ, who has invited us to come before you...."

4. Should we pray to Jesus and to the Holy Spirit? (Acts 7:59; Acts 1:24; 1Co 16:22; Rev

22:20; 2Co 12:8; Joh 14:26; Joh 14:17)

5. The role of the Holy Spirit in our praying (Ju.1:20; Rom 8:26-27; Luk 10:40; Eph 6:18; Jud 1:20)

C. Some Important Considerations in Effective Prayer (382)

1. Praying according to God's will (382) (1Jn 5:14; Mat 6:10; Mat 26:39; Joh 15:7; Act 4:25; Jam 1:5-8; 2Co 12:9-10)

2. Praying with faith (384) (Mat 21:22; Heb 11:1; Jas 1:6; Mark 11:24: Compare: Joshua 8:1)

3. Obedience (385) (Psalm 66:18; Prov 15:8; 1 Pe 3:12; 1Jo 3:21; Eph 2:13)

4. Confession of sins (385) (Mat 6:12; 1Jo 1:9; Psa 19:12; Jas 5:16)

5. Forgiving others (385) (Mat 6:12; Mat 6:14-15; Isa 59:1-2)

6. Humility (386) (Jas 4:6; 1Pe 5:5; Mat 6:5; Luk 20:46-47)

7. Continuing in prayer over time (387) (Luke 6:12; Luke 5:16; Mark 14:39; 2Co 12:8; Mar 14:36; Mar 14:39; Mat 6:7; 1Th 5:17; Col 4:2; Act 6:4)

8. Praying earnestly (387) (Heb 5:7; Dan 9:19)

9. Waiting on the Lord (388) (Psa 27:14; Psa 38:15; Psa 130:5-6)

10. Praying in private (Dan 6:10; Luke 5:16; Mat 6:6; Act 12:5; Act 12:11-12)

11. Praying with others (389) (Mat 18:19-20; Acts 4:24; Mat 6:11-13)

12. Fasting (390) (Neh 1:4; Joel 2:12; Act 13:2-3; Acts 14:23)

Benefits from Fasting (Mat. 6:16; Mat. 9:15)

(1) Increases our sense of dependence on the Lord

(2) Allows us to give more attention to prayer

(3) Reminds us of our need to continually sacrifice all of ourselves to him

(4) It is a good exercise in self-discipline

(5) Expresses earnestness and urgency in our prayers

13. What about unanswered prayer? (391)

a. God keeps hidden his own wise plans for the future

b. We do not always know how to pray as we ought (Rom 8:26)

c. We do not pray according to God's will (Jas 4:3)

d. We do not always ask in faith (Jas 1:6-8)

e. We think that one solution is best, but God has a better plan (Gen 37:23-36; Gen 50:20)

f. We must continue to pray (Rom 8:28; 1Pe 5:7; Heb 13:5; 1Sa 1:19; 2Cor. 12:8)

D. Praise and Thanksgiving (392) (Phil 4:6; Col 4:2; 1Th 5:18)