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PRAYER

Salvation is the first step a Christian makes, but he can only make this step if he has prayed. Prayer is then the most important activity a Christian undertakes. It can be in secret, in private or in public. It should be sincere, open, honest communication with God.

God expects us to listen as well as talk. Man must listen as he reads the scripture. He must listen with an open mind to his own thoughts as he sits in silence. He must listen to others as they discuss matters that concern the Kingdom of God, others or himself. Finally, God speaks to us through the words of others as they teach us by the spoken word or as they pass their knowledge on to us in books. Let us see what God has revealed to us about prayer.

I. What is Prayer?

A. Communication with God

B. Conversation between two people who love one another

1. Our relationship with Christ is like a marriage (Rom. 7:4, Eph. 5:22)

The end of a marriage comes when two people stop communicating. The end of a marriage comes when two people stop listening or talking.

2. In a like manner, one of the primary benefits of a friendship is that we have someone we can talk to -- we are friends. (John 15:15)

II. Why Pray?

A. We must maintain our relationship, therefore, we must have

1. Desire -- We can do nothing without Him (John 15:5). The history of Israel illustrates this.

2. Discipline (Luke 19:13 KJV)

B. Command to be in constant prayer, Matt. 26:41 / Watch and pray, 1 Thess. 5:17 / Pray unceasingly, 1 Thess. 5:17.

C. The lives of many who have gone before us illustrate desire and discipline.

1. Jesus (John 17:1, Luke 22:44)
2. Paul (I Tim. 5:17)
3. Peter (Acts 10:9)
4. St. Francis, Augustine and all the Christian mystics
5. Luther
6. Wesley wanted ministers to read the Bible and pray five hours a day

D. The Holy Spirit is in unceasing prayer (Rom. 8:26)

III. How do we pray?

A. Don't pray like the Pharisees (Matt. 6:5)

B. Certain prerequisites for confidence

1. Abide (John 15:7)
2. Ask (James 4:2, John 16:24, Matt. 7:28)
3. Believe (Matt. 21:22, 17:20)
4. Receive -- be prepared for answer (Acts 2:1)

C. Personal prerequisites: We must have a

1. Right relationship with God (John 3:22)
2. Right relationship with family (1 Peter 3:6, 7)
3. Right relationship with others (Matt. 5:23,24)
4. Right attitude toward self (James 4:3)
5. Right attitude toward our own sin (Psalm 66:18)

D. Technique

1. In the name of the Lord Jesus (John 14:13)
2. According to His will (1 John 5:14, 15)

3. In the Spirit (Jude 20, Romans 8:26, 27)

4. In faith (James 1:5-7)

5. With thanksgiving (Col. 4:2, Phil 4:6)

E. Jesus is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)

Because we know Him, we can come boldly before God (Heb. 4:14-16).

F. Final reasons

1. To glorify God (John 14:13, Jer. 33:3)

2. To fellowship with God (Proverbs 14:18)

3. To obtain results (Matt. 7:7-12, John 16:24)

Ask anything, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send harvesters.

IV. When?

A. Regularly (Matt. 6:6)

B. Spontaneously (Luke 18:1)

C. Continuously (Eph. 6:18, 1 Thess. 5:17)

V. What to include?

A. Adoration (Psalm 67:3)

B. Confession (Isaiah 59:2)

C. Thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:17)

D. Supplication (Phil 4:6)

E. Forgiveness (Eph. 4:32, Matt. 6:12, 14-15, Mark 11:25)

VI. For whom?

A. For all men, kings, and others in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-3)

B. The troubled and sick (James 5:13)

- C. Our sinful brothers (1 John 5:16-17)
- D. Our neighbors (Matt. 22:37-40)
- E. Our families (1 Peter 3:7, 8)
- F. Ourselves (James 16:23, 24)
- G. The church and its members (Luke 11:1-10, 1 Thess. 5:25)

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