



WHAT IS PRAYER AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

“Prayer is simply talking to God...”
Jerry Falwell¹

Why is prayer important?

Prayer helps
us grow in our
relationship
with God

Matthew 6:9

Prayer causes
us to trust in God in
all situations²

1 John 5:14-15

Prayer is a way
in which we can
worship God

Matthew 6:9

Prayer allows us
to confess our sins
to God

Matthew 6:12

Prayer
humbles us

2 Chronicles 7:14

Prayer helps
when fighting
spiritual battles

Ephesians 6:18



THE LORD'S PRAYER

MATTHEW 6:9-13

“Our *Father* in heaven,

God is our heavenly father. When we pray, we are communicating with a father who loves us, not an impersonal and distant being.

This phrase indicates the importance of praising and worshipping God in our prayers.

hallowed be your *name*,

your kingdom come,

your *will* be done,

God has a plan for His people and if our prayers are contrary to God's plan, we need to yield to His will. Our desires must take a back seat to God's.

We can and should make requests for daily provisions. Trusting God to provide for us strengthens our relationship with Him.

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Jesus told His followers to forgive others before seeking forgiveness from God or else God will not forgive us (Mark 11:25).

And *forgive us* our debts,

Prayer is a time to confess sins and ask God to forgive us. We obey God out of love so when we sin we need to humbly ask forgiveness.

as *we also have forgiven* our debtors.

And lead us not into *temptation*,

God can help us conquer our desires to sin. We can come to God when we are struggling with sin and ask Him to remove those temptations.

but *deliver us* from the evil one.”

Satan is on the prowl trying to lead people astray (1 Peter 5:8). Through prayer, we can ask God to help us resist the devil.



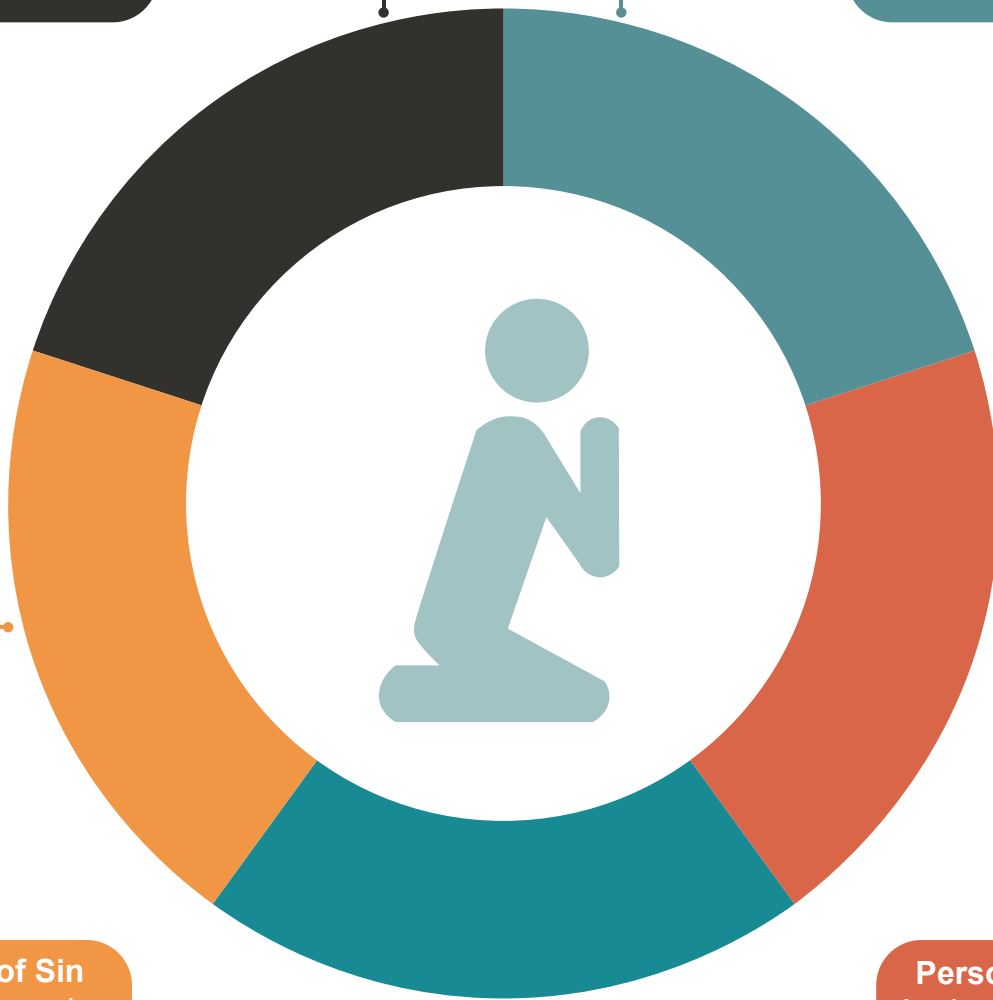
COMPONENTS OF PRAYER

Praising God

Be sure to spend time praising God through prayer. We have an incredible God, and He deserves for us to tell Him how much we love Him and why we love Him.

Thanking God

We are quick to ask God to do things for us but we tend to forget to even thank God for all that He has already done for us.³



Confession of Sin

By confessing our sins to God, we can restore our relationship with Him. Sin separates us from God, being forgiven of sin restores that relationship.

Requests for Others

There are so many people in need. We can pray for spiritual awakening in people's lives, for daily provisions to be provided for them, and many more requests.

Personal Requests

As Jesus revealed with "the Lord's prayer", there is nothing wrong with praying for our own needs. However, we should not only pray for ourselves, but also for other people's needs.⁴



PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PRAYER

Private Prayer...

- ...gets rid of distractions
- ...avoids hypocrisy
- ...is from the heart
- ...is a more intimate time of fellowship with God
- ...is convenient and can be done at any time

- ...can be difficult to stay on topic (easily distracted)
- ...requires self-discipline

Public Prayer...

- ...helps us find comfort and strength from other believers
- ...teaches others how to pray by example
- ...increases our faith
- ...increases the effectiveness of prayer
- ...can be a testimony to non-Christians

- ...can cause us to try to sound “spiritual” rather than praying from the heart
- ...can make us distracted by being aware of other people’s presence
- ...can be intimidating to less mature believers

BENEFITS

WARNINGS



THE PRAYER LIFE OF JESUS

Jesus Prayed...

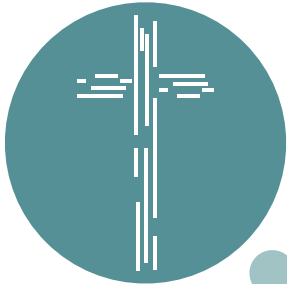
Before Big Moments



In Times of Sadness



Before and During His Crucifixion



Before Eating



By Himself



With Others



For Other People



And Taught His Disciples How to Pray

“If Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, needed to pray, *how much more* do you and I?”

*Dave Earley*⁵



THE PRAYER LIFE OF JESUS

Jesus Prayed Before Big Moments

- Before Jesus began His earthly ministry He prayed and fasted for 40 days in the desert (Matthew 4:1-2)
- Jesus prayed before choosing His 12 disciples (Luke 6:12)
- Jesus prayed before and during His transfiguration (Luke 9:28-29)
- Jesus spent His final moments before His arrest in prayer (Matthew 26:39,42,44)

Jesus Prayed In Times of Sadness

- Jesus prayed following John the Baptist's death (Matthew 14:23)

Jesus Prayed Before Eating

- Jesus gave thanks for food before eating it (Matthew 14:19, 15:36, 26:26-27, Luke 24:30)

Jesus Prayed for Other People

- Jesus prayed for children that were brought to Him (Matthew 19:13)
- Jesus prayed for His disciples and all future followers (John 17:6-26)

Jesus Taught His Disciples How to Pray

- Jesus' prayer life sparked one of His disciples to request for Jesus to teach him to pray (Luke 11:1)
- Jesus taught His disciples the importance of persistent prayer (Luke 18:1)

Jesus Prayed With Others

- Jesus prayed with His disciples (Luke 9:18)

Jesus Prayed By Himself

- Jesus would go off very early in the morning to pray in solitude (Mark 1:35-39)
- Jesus prayed alone often (Luke 5:16)

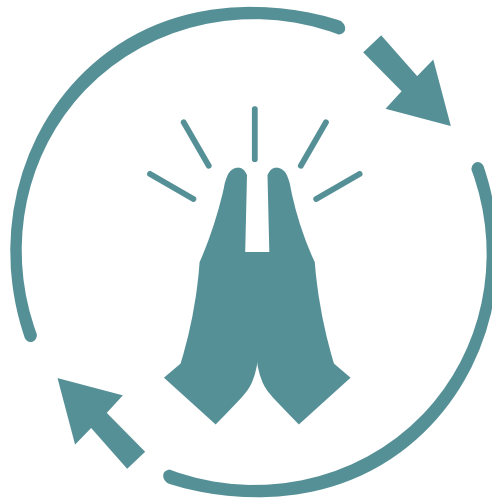
Jesus Prayed Before and During His Crucifixion

- Jesus prayed with the disciples in the Upper Room prior to His arrest (John 17)
- Jesus told His disciples to pray that they would not fall into temptation while He was praying the night of His arrest (Luke 22:40)
- Jesus talked with God while on the cross (Luke 23:34)



UNCEASING PRAYER

“Pray without ceasing”
1 Thessalonians 5:17 (ESV)



What does this NOT mean?

To pray without ceasing does not mean that we are expected to be praying every single second of every day.

What does this mean?



Be Aware of God At All Times

God is always with us. By praying on a regular basis each day, we are reminded of our allegiance to God and our constant relationship with Him.



Continually Be in the Presence of God

We are encouraged to pray throughout the day. This means that we are continually in the presence of God and constantly making our relationship with Him a priority.



Pray in All Circumstances

What will we do when we are scared, happy, angry, jealous, tempted, thankful, or sad? We will pray. Prayer should be our natural response to all circumstances.



UNANSWERED PRAYERS

There is no such thing as an unanswered prayer. God answers all prayers, just not always how we want Him to.

God's
Answers:

- ① Yes
- ② No
- ③ Not yet

① Yes

When we pray according to God's will, He carries out our prayer requests. As we mature in our faith, we become more in-tune with God's will and pray accordingly. As much as we might want Him to, God does not answer every prayer with a "yes". This is not even possible. For example, what happens when 2 people pray for opposite things? Some people take Bible passages out of context to argue that God will answer every prayer with a "yes" if we have enough faith, but that is not the case.

② No

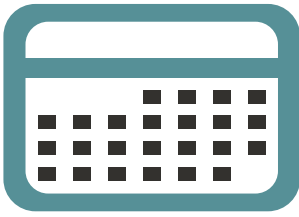
Sometimes God says no to our requests. This is what happened to Paul which he recorded in 2 Corinthians 12. Paul was given a "thorn" to humble him (nobody is completely sure what this thorn was but many Bible scholars believe it was a physical illness) which he pleaded with God to take away (vs. 8). But God refused to take the thorn away (vs. 9). In these times, we must trust that God, in His infinite wisdom, is in control and take comfort in that.

③ Not yet

God may choose to have us wait for a designated period of time before our prayer request is answered with a yes. God might have us wait in order to make us aware of our need for Him, show us the benefit of persistent prayer, or countless other reasons. We draw closest to God in our times of need. If God immediately carried out our prayer requests, we would lose our respect for Him and would only come to Him as though He were a wish granting genie rather than a loving father.



DEVELOPING A STRONG PRAYER LIFE



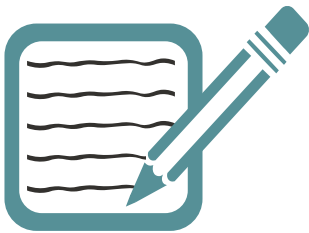
Consistency

Prayer needs to be consistent. We need to pray every day and it is helpful (but not necessary) if we pray at similar times each day in order to get into a routine. It does not matter what time we pray, just so long as we are prioritizing our time with God.



Find a Quiet Place to Pray

It is important to find a quiet place to pray so that we do not get interrupted while communicating with God. Common places to pray include a quiet place in the house, in the car on the way to school / work, in the shower, and places in nature.



List

It can be helpful to have a prayer list where we can write requests along with the date we began praying for each thing and how they were answered by God. This can also help keep us from becoming distracted while praying.



Prayer Variety

As mentioned previously, there are various components of prayer. We are not expected to pray in a one-dimensional way. We can and should combine all of the aspects of prayer into our communication with God.



Pray with Others

While praying in solitude is essential, we should also pray with other believers. This will help us grow closer to God as well as with our family in Christ. This could be as simple as a family prayer time or more formal such as a weekly prayer group.



Rely on Prayer

So many of us pray out of habit or conviction and not out of a need or unceasing desire to pray. We sometimes feel that prayer is unnecessary but that is caused by our lack of faith, perspective, and devotion to God. Prayer should be a vital part of our lives.