

to have a modest estimation of yourself, acknowledge your own faults, and recognize the supremacy of God.

Boldness. Boldness is not at odds with humility. Rather, boldness is being unreserved, courageous, and confident. This is precisely how we are taught to approach the throne of God in prayer (Hebrews 4:14-16). We can have the confident assurance that God desires to hear our prayers and that they are not a burden to Him if we are truly striving to seek Him in our lives (1 Peter 5:7). But, the only way we can have this boldness in prayer is because Jesus Christ serves as our High Priest!

Gratitude. God has blessed every person on this earth in some way (James 1:17). So, rather than seeing prayer as just a way to ask this God for more favors, you should view prayer as a way to express your thanks for how God has already blessed you. Certainly, no matter how much or little God has blessed you with physically, God has given you the greatest gift possible by offering salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross! Therefore, you should have an attitude of gratitude to look for the various opportunities to tell God “thank you” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17).

Selflessness. While God certainly gives you the opportunity through prayer to ask for various things, we are still taught that we must *not* be selfish in our asking! So, we must not treat our opportunities to come before the throne of God in prayer as if we are asking a genie for whatever our hearts desire. And, we must not use prayer as an opportunity for people to see and praise us (Matthew 6:5-8). Rather, while we are invited to ask God for His favors and blessings, we should do so in a way that is focused on His will above our own and not in a way that is focused on our selfish pleasures (Matthew 6:10; Luke 22:42; James 4:2-3)!

Conclusion

It is important that you learn how to offer prayer in a way that pleases God. For, unless you learn how to pray, you will not take advantage of the wonderful blessing that prayer affords! Now that we have considered many principles that are involved in learning how to pray, you should carefully meditate on them and develop good prayer habits and practices.



Most Christians know that prayer is something that should be an integral part of their lives. Yet, not every Christian knows how to pray as he/she should. Is there even a right and a wrong way to pray? The Scriptures show that prayer is something that is learned through the proper teaching (Luke 11:1). Furthermore, Jesus (generally) taught that true worship involves the two elements of spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). So, it is important that you take some time to evaluate what the Scriptures teach about how to pray.

The purpose of this lesson is to learn how to pray by considering some elements of prayer, mechanics of prayer, and attitudes of prayer.

Elements Of Prayer

Addressed to God. The normal pattern of prayer seems to be to address our prayers to the Father. For example, this is how Jesus taught His disciples to pray (Matthew 6:6, 9; Luke 11:2; Matthew 7:11; John 15:16; John 16:23). This is also commonly expressed in the letters. (Ephesians 1:15-17; Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; Colossians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; James 1:5). But, while this common pattern is seen repeatedly in the Scriptures, we must not diminish prayer into some kind of meaningless formula. For example, the Bible teaches the concept of people praying to Jesus (who is also God) in various places (John 14:14; Acts 1:24-25; Acts 4:24, 29; Acts 7:59-60; 1 Corinthians 16:22; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10; 1 Timothy 1:12; Revelation 22:20). So, we cannot restrict the Bible’s pattern so as to cause it to be in conflict with these passages.

Message communicated to God. Prayer is not an empty meditative and zen-like state of mind. Instead, prayer involves communication from the person (or people) praying to God (Luke 11:1-

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4). However, we should note that this communication can happen in two ways. First, this communication can happen verbally (through spoken words, Luke 11:1-4; Acts 4:24). Second, this communication can happen nonverbally (through thoughts directed in prayer to God, 1 Samuel 1:12-15; Genesis 24:45; Matthew 6:6).

In the name of Jesus. There are many Scriptures that teach the importance of praying in the name of Jesus (John 14:13-14; John 15:16; John 16:23-24; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17). But, again, this truth must not be diminished into an empty formula. Instead, praying in Jesus's name refers to praying with His authority. For, it would be impossible for our prayers to be offered up to God in a way that is pleasing to Him without Jesus Christ. Thankfully, the Scriptures demonstrate that Jesus is the Mediator between us and God (1 Timothy 2:5-6), the Advocate who pleads our case to the Father (1 John 2:1-2), and our great High Priest through whom we can approach the throne of God (Hebrews 4:14-16). So, when we pray, we must bring them in Jesus's name! This is commonly expressed at the end of a prayer. Then, "amen" (so be it) is a typically ending expression (Romans 11:36; Romans 15:33; 1 Corinthians 14:16).

With the help of the Holy Spirit. When we pray to God, all three members of Deity are involved (though I do not always understand how all of this works on God's part). Romans 8:26-27 teaches the Holy Spirit helps God's people in prayer. Although I cannot explain exactly what is involved in this, it is a wonderful blessing and comfort to know that the Holy Spirit works on our behalf in prayer so that our prayers are properly expressed to God!

Mechanics Of Prayer

Contexts. Consider the three contexts in which it is appropriate to pray. First, it is appropriate to pray in private when no one else is involved in the prayer (Matthew 6:5-6; Luke 5:16). Second, it is appropriate to pray in an assembly of the church with all the people involved in offering the same prayer (Acts 12:5, 12; 1 Corinthians 14:16). Third, it is appropriate to pray with others outside of a church assembly (Luke 11:1-4; Acts 20:36).

Postures. As we read about a great many examples of prayer in the Bible, one thing that is noteworthy is how many different physical postures are involved. For example, we can see people bowing (Psalm 95:6), kneeling (Acts 20:36), falling facedown (Ezekiel 11:13), standing (1 Chronicles 23:30), sitting (2 Samuel 7:18), looking up at Heaven (John 17:1), looking down (Luke 18:13), and raising hands (1 Timothy 2:8). So, we may

conclude that there is not a single posture that is acceptable to God when we pray; but many that we can choose from.

Timing. It is important for you to utilize the avenue of prayer by making the proper time for it. Thankfully, the Scriptures demonstrate some things about when people in the Bible prayed that can help you establish some good prayer practices. First, it can be appropriate to schedule certain times when you pray (like Daniel, Daniel 6:10), perhaps praying about specific things at each scheduled time. Second, it is appropriate to use specific circumstances to cause you to pray (Matthew 14:19; Acts 27:35; Acts 14:23). Third, it is appropriate to pray whenever and wherever you have the opportunity to do so, as you should have a constant disposition that looks for any opportunity to pray (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Acts 16:25). Therefore, following these points, we should also recognize that any time of the day or night is appropriate for prayer to be offered (Psalm 55:16-17)!

Length. Some are intimidated when they think about offering prayer to God because they believe their prayers must be long and eloquent. However, the Bible demonstrates prayers being offered to God in all different lengths and styles. For example, Jesus taught a very short prayer when He taught His disciples to pray in Luke 11:1-4. Furthermore, He teaches a short and simple prayer in the parable He taught in Luke 18:13. However, we also see Jesus spending all night in prayer (Luke 6:12) and offering extended prayers (John 17:1-26; Matthew 26:36-46). Therefore, prayer is acceptable to God in all different lengths and is not dependent on one's eloquence or style (consider the variation in the book of Psalms).

Contents. What people ought to pray about has often been summarized using the acronym "ACTS." First, we should express adoration (praise, reverence) for God in prayer (Luke 11:2). Second, we should confess our sins to God in prayer (1 John 1:9). Third, we should express our thanksgiving to God in prayer (Ephesians 5:20). Fourth, we should present our supplications (requests, petitions) to God in prayer (Philippians 4:6-7).

Attitudes Of Prayer

Humility. God plainly demonstrates that the attitude of your heart matters when you come before His throne in prayer. For one, God demonstrates that humility is an essential attitude for your prayer to be acceptable to God (Luke 18:9-14). It is the humble and broken spirit that is pleasing to God (Psalm 51:17). And, while God resists the proud, He gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5-7). To be humble in prayer is