
Readying Ourselves for Prayer

© 2002, *Discipleship Tools* www.discipleshiptools.org

John 15:4-5; Romans 8: 18-30; James 5:13-18

For real prayer to function at its apex, we need to acknowledge who God is, and see Him as Lord Supreme over all things, including our very lives (Col. 1). We must have this mindset to see God as worth our prayers and surrender, and this worship as "worth" ship. We must seek Him out for all occasions in life so that in all situations, we have a *first response* of praising and adoring Christ for who He is, and because He is worthy of eternal praise (Isa. 6:1-8, Rev. 4-5). We then develop those great traits of love, faith, and hope that Colossians 1 tells us about. This fuels our attitude of praise and helps produce our attitude of prayer! Prayer requires us to have a mindset and attitude of pursuing our communication with God.

But, do we do this? We have to ask ourselves, *what are we to do first in all situations? Is it to complain, or argue, or be stressed out?* Usually, we do all three! In conjunction, we quickly skip prayer and venture to the art of squabbling and complaining with one another, while blaming God. We then worry, and get anxious and frustrated! What should we have been doing? The answer should be obvious! We are called to *pray*; prayer not only sets a tone for us in our behaviors and insights, but it also brings Christ into the picture with us more powerfully and effectively. Then, we are centered where we should be spiritually as well as in our thoughts and emotions. It is not about getting what we want, as we may get a *yes*, or a *no*, or maybe a call to wait for the right timing. Prayer is also not about seeking God selfishly, and asking, "What have you done for me lately?" forgetting the magnitude of what He has already done for us! God calls us to pray in all situations we face, the good times and the bad.

In James 5:13-18, we have a series of calls to prayer. It is a call to get ready and align ourselves with God and His interests so we can apply His best for us. We are all indeed called to prayer; it is not a talent, a special ability, or a spiritual gift. It is not for specific times or with certain postures. Rather, it is the communication of an encounter with our loving, living Lord! Prayer is a call, and we need to know the veracity and importance of it.

Prayer is not about compulsory formulas. Rather, it is the encouragement for us to pursue God! When we seek Him, we are ready to engage in the appeals and requests for those who are in need and sick, including ourselves. Being ready in prayer means we can see beyond ourselves to the work of God around us and in others so we can pray effectively. Prayer is not only about what we see in front of us; it is about moving ourselves into God's plan and purpose, and living in His Kingdom (Psalm 119).

How do we ready ourselves? First, we must have a yearning and desire to commune with our Lord and Savior. The Spirit must persuade us to be yielded and to

respond and seek Christ out so He can mold us, indwell us, motivate us, empower us, and shape us to His will—inside and out (Ps. 27:8). We must seek to converse with God so we can have a real, personal relationship with Him.

It all comes down to our willingness and desire. If we do not desire to pray, we will not pray and we will not grow spiritually. No matter whom we are in Christ or our position in the church, if prayer is not our number one personal priority, our desires are skewed and our attention to Christ is amiss! Prayer must be a passion for us, and when it falls away, we should miss it and seek to rekindle it. The first thing we need for a great prayer life is a great desire to pray! We must give our priority and our time to prayer (Daniel 6:1-3, 10; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; 22:39-46).

Do you passionately seek God? If not, then do it! If you do it, do it more! Make an appointment with God and keep it regularly and consistently! Remember, this does not just happen; it is a result of sometimes years of Christian practice and efforts. We must make the determination and commitment, and then stick with it. Real, authentic Christian formation is developed when we give up the rights to ourselves, and hand over our Will to Christ. In so doing, we begin to understand what is important in life, and experience true freedom as the chains of slavery formed by our self-willed actions and thinking are broken. We become transformed and renewed by what He has done; this works deeper and more powerfully as our devotion increases, and we become more aware of whom we are in Him.

We can take great comfort that God is concerned and cares about what we have to say. We can have the expectation that God will be there to receive us (Luke 11:13; Heb. 4:16). We can come to know and enjoy Him and to be with Him for He is already with us. God is gracious and good; He has promised and is eager to respond to us!

A pastor I worked with once told me why he does not pray. He said, “Why should I pray since God is all knowing; why waste my time?” Sadly, this pastor was missing the point of what prayer is all about. His personal life was in ruins, his wife was leaving him, his kids were in rebellion, and his church was in dysfunction. Yet, he refused to see and commune with God in his life and church. It was not that he did not believe God. He just thought *why should I when God already knows*. Thus, he left God out of his life.

Yes, God is all-knowing; He knows what will come from your heart and mouth eons before you say it, but He still wants to hear it! We can never say we do not need to pray because God already knows. Prayer is not about what God knows; it is about our learning and leaning on Him! Our heartfelt prayers reflect our dependence on, and our trust and love of Him. Prayer is obedience and communion! This is the reason we are on earth—to know Him, to learn about Him, and to share Him with others. This cannot happen if we are not communing with Him (Rom. 8:27; 15:18 Eph. 1:4, 5, 11; Heb. 13:21; 1 John 5:14)!

Questions to Ponder

Read John 15:4-5; Romans 8: 18-30; James 5:13-18

1. How is your prayer life? Would you like it to be better? How so? What gets in your way of His Way?
2. For real prayer to function at its apex, we need what?
3. Why must seek God out for all occasions in life?
4. Why should prayer be a “first response” all occasions in life?
5. How does our praising and adoring of Christ for who He is improve our prayer life?
6. How can you increase your praise of Christ more, so you see Him as worthy of eternal praise?
7. What are we to do first in all situations? Then, why do so many of us complain, or argue, or be stressed out?
8. Why do so many of us Christians seek God through the art of squabbling and complaining with one another, while blaming God?
9. How does our worry, being anxious and getting frustrated get in the way of our prayers?
10. How does prayer set a tone for us in our behaviors and insights?
11. How does prayer bring Christ into the picture with us more powerfully and effectively?
12. How does prayer center us where we should be spiritually as well as in our thoughts and emotions?
13. What do you do when you are facing hardships? How is prayer a part of these experiences?
14. How does prayer align you up with God and His interests so you can apply His best for your life now?
15. Why is prayer not about compulsory formulas?
16. How does prayer help you be encouraged more to pursue God?

17. How does prayer move you more into God's plan and purpose, and living in His Kingdom?
18. How do we ready ourselves for prayer? What should be your willingness and desires?
19. How do our misguided desires get in the way of real effectual prayer?
20. How will our attitude to not have the desire or time to pray effect how we will not grow spiritually?
21. Do you passionately seek God? If not why not?
22. Do you passionately seek God? If not, then what can you do to do it more? How will you make prayer more real in you and your church?
23. How does the fact that God is concerned and cares about what we have to say empower you to make the time for Him?
24. Some people think I do not need to prayer when God already knows. How do we reason and respond to that?
25. Our heartfelt prayers reflect our dependence on, and our trust and love of Him. So what are you going to do this week to improve your prayer life?