

Sharpen Your Faith



Prayer

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What is Prayer?

- Prayer is cultivation of our relationship with God.
- "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."—John Wesley
- In real prayer, we begin to think God's thoughts after Him, desire the things He desires, love the things He loves, and will the things He wills.



“Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to the Word of God, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the will of God.” —John Bunyan

Two Misunderstood Words in Prayer

"In Jesus Name"

- Praying "in Jesus' name" is praying with His authority (Acts 3:3-7).

"Amen" (Hebrew root *aman*)

- It is affirming truth, or illustrating something is said that is of absolute certainty. (Revelation 3:14)
- Contemporary ways to translate amen can be:
 - "It is finished." - "We agree."
 - "Let it be so." - "It is as we say."

Listening in Prayer

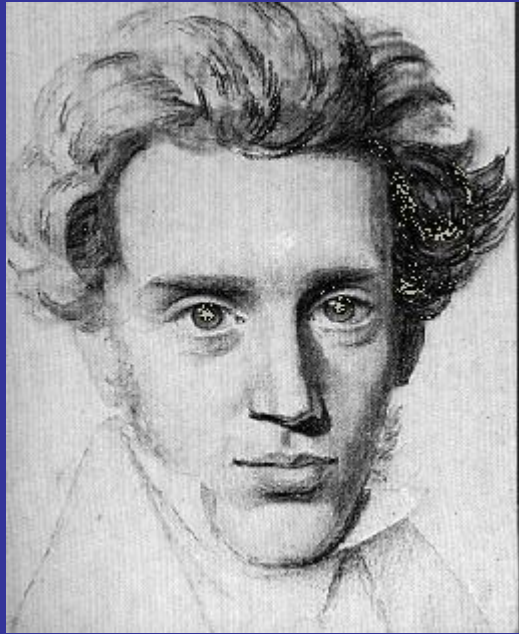
- Prayer is two-way communication with God.
- Often for us, it is us talking to God. We must take time to listen.
- What God is saying to us in prayer is far more important than what we are saying to Him.





"The value of consistent prayer is not that He will hear us, but that we will hear Him."

—William McGill



"A man prayed, and at first he thought that prayer was talking. But he became more and more quiet until in the end he realized that prayer is listening."

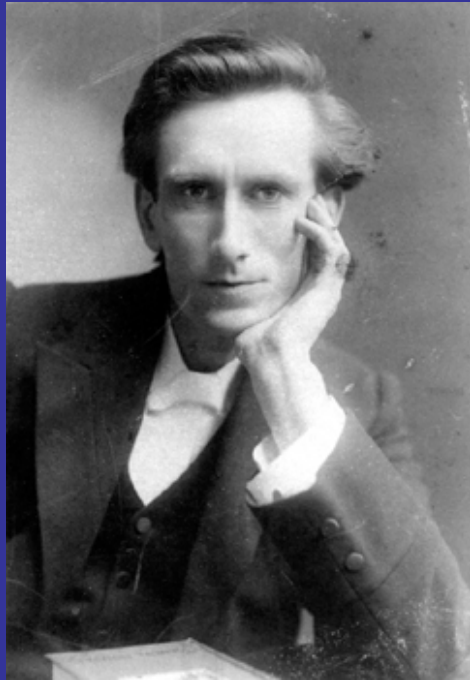
—Søren Kierkegaard

Learning to Pray (Luke 11:1)

- The disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray.
- We must understand that prayer is a learning process.
- God wants us to grow in prayer and not give up.

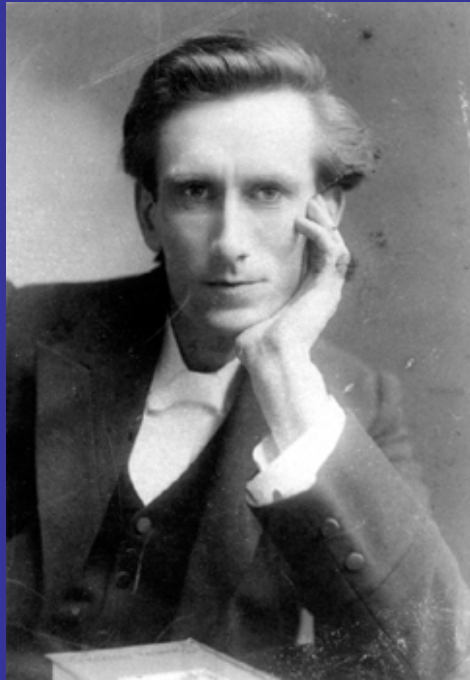


Learning to Pray



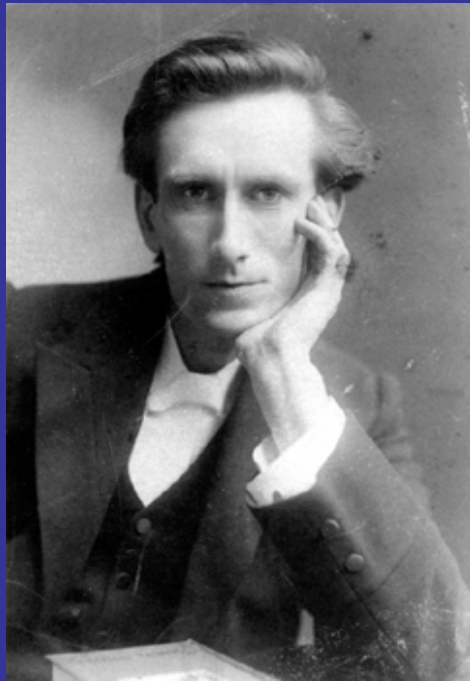
“It is not part of the life of a natural man to pray. We hear it said that a man will suffer in his life if he does not pray; I question it. What will suffer is the life of the Son of God in him, which is nourished not by food, but by prayer. When a man is born from above, the life of the Son of God is born in him, and he can either starve that life or nourish it. Prayer is the way the life of God is nourished.”—Oswald Chambers

Why to Pray



"Whenever we stop short in prayer and say—'Well, I don't know; perhaps it is not God's will,' there is still another stage to go. We are not so intimately acquainted with God as Jesus was, and as He wants us to be - 'That they may be one even as we are one.' (John 17:21) Think of the last thing you prayed about—were you devoted to your desire or to God? Determined to get some gift of the Spirit or to get at God? 'Your Father knows what you need of before you ask Him.' (Matthew 6:8) The point of asking is that you may get to know God better."—Oswald Chambers ¹⁰

What happens in Prayer



“It is not so true that ‘prayer changes things’ as that prayer changes *me* and I change things. God has so constituted things that prayer on the basis of Redemption alters the way in which a man looks at things. Prayer is not a question of altering things externally, but of working wonders in a man's disposition.”

—Oswald Chambers



"To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives."

—Richard Foster

Preparing our Heart for Prayer

1. We must confess our sins, which blocks our intimacy with God (1 John 1:9).
2. Ask God with a clear conscience (1 John 3:20-22).
3. Ask God out of a pure heart, or else God will not hear (Psalm 66:18).



Components of Good Prayer

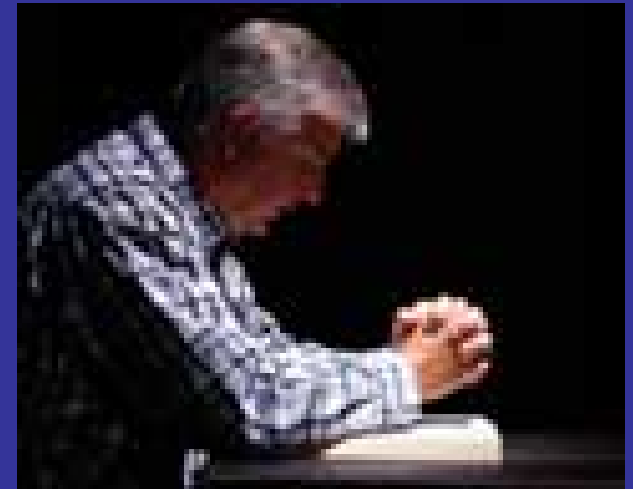
1) Focus on God's Person

2) Focus on God's Purposes

3) Focus on God's Provision

4) Focus on God's Pardon

5) Focus on God's Protection



How do we Petition God?

- Read Luke 11:11-13.

What does God want to give to us when we pray?

- God wants to bless us! He wants to give us the best gifts.

What blocks Him from doing that?
(James 4:2-3)

- We don't ask!! Or we ask with the wrong motives. We don't receive if our hearts are full of selfish desires.

Praying in the Spirit

- Read Romans 8:26-27.

What comfort is there in knowing that God "searches our hearts" (v27)?

- Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our prayers are limited to our own reason and intuition.
- The Holy Spirit convicts us to pray fervently for the things that He shows us, which are God's perfect will.
- The fact that God lays a burden of prayer on our hearts is evidence that He purposes to grant us the answer.



"In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart."

—John Bunyan

Right Motivations in Prayer



- Read Matthew 6:5-8

Who were the Pharisees actually praying to (v5)?

What does it mean to "close the door" when we pray (v6)?



"There is a mighty
lot of difference
between saying
prayers and
praying."

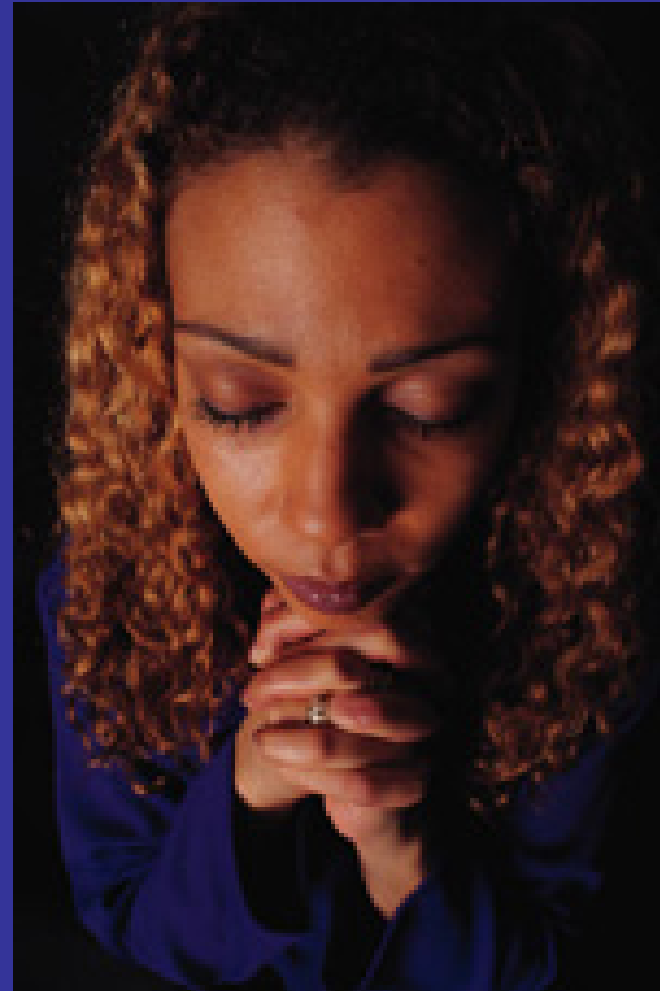
—John G. Lake

How are we to Approach God in Prayer?

- Read 1 John 5:14-15.

Why is it significant that we can now "approach God with confidence"?

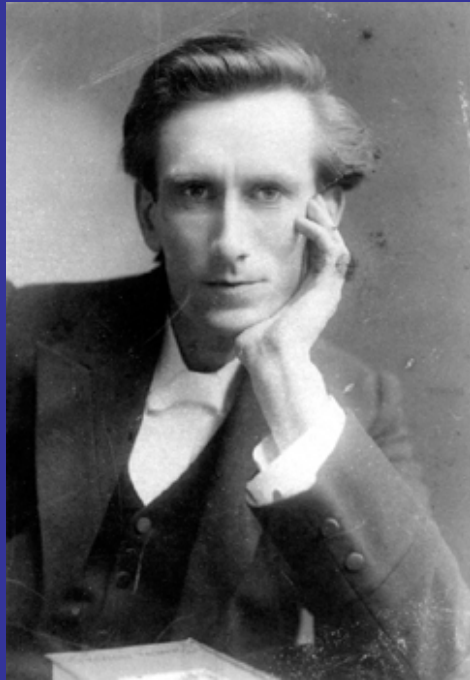
Will God give us anything we ask for in prayer?



Does God Answer Prayer?

- When we pray, we are writing the script of life along with God. We are “colaborers with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9).
- God does change His mind in accordance with His unchanging love. (e.g. Exodus 32:14 and Jonah 3:10)
- We must expect God to answer our prayers in faith. Keep watchful (1 Peter 4:7).
- Jesus never prayed, “If it be thy will.” He, along with the apostles, always believed that they were praying in the will of God and prayed in faith.





"Jesus never mentioned unanswered prayer, He had the boundless certainty that prayer is always answered. Have we by the Spirit the unspeakable certainty that Jesus had about prayer, or do we think of the times when God does not seem to have answered prayer? 'Every one that asks receives.' (Matthew 7:8) We say—'But..., but...' God answers prayer in the best way, not sometimes, but every time, although the immediate manifestation of the answer in the domain in which we want it may not always follow. Do we expect God to answer prayer?"

—Oswald Chambers

What are God's possible responses when we pray?



God may show you that you didn't really need what you were asking for!

*Keep seeking God's face and you will build faith. Then you will be **READY** to receive what God really has wanting to give to you all along.*

Prayer → Yes

No

Wait →

Keep praying

Praying without Ceasing

- 1 Thessalonians 5:17,
Acts 1:14
- Continual prayer is not the articulation of words but the posture of the heart.
- We all can have an inner dialogue with God throughout the day.





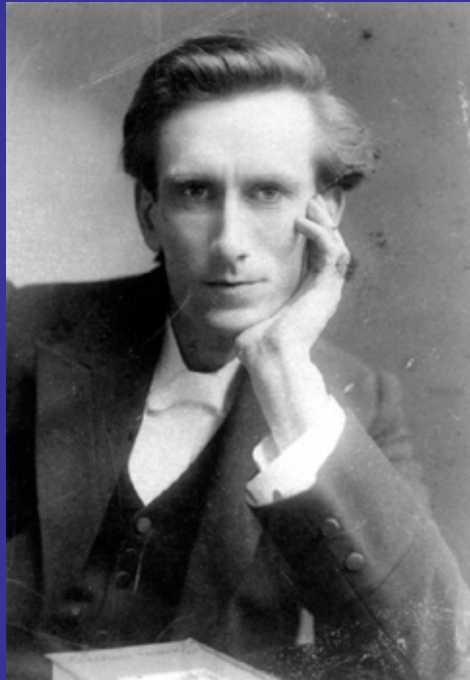
"One single grateful thought raised to heaven is the most perfect prayer."
—G.E. Lessing



“The time of business does not differ with me from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were on my knees.”

—Brother Lawrence

Discipline in Prayer



"But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.—
Matthew 6:6. Jesus did not say—
Dream about thy Father in secret,
but pray to thy Father in secret.
Prayer is an effort of will. After we
have entered our secret place and
have shut the door, the most
difficult thing to do is to pray; we
cannot get our minds into working
order, and the first thing that
conflicts is wandering thoughts. The
great battle in private prayer is the
overcoming of mental wool-
gathering. We have to discipline our
minds and concentrate on willful
prayer."—Oswald Chambers

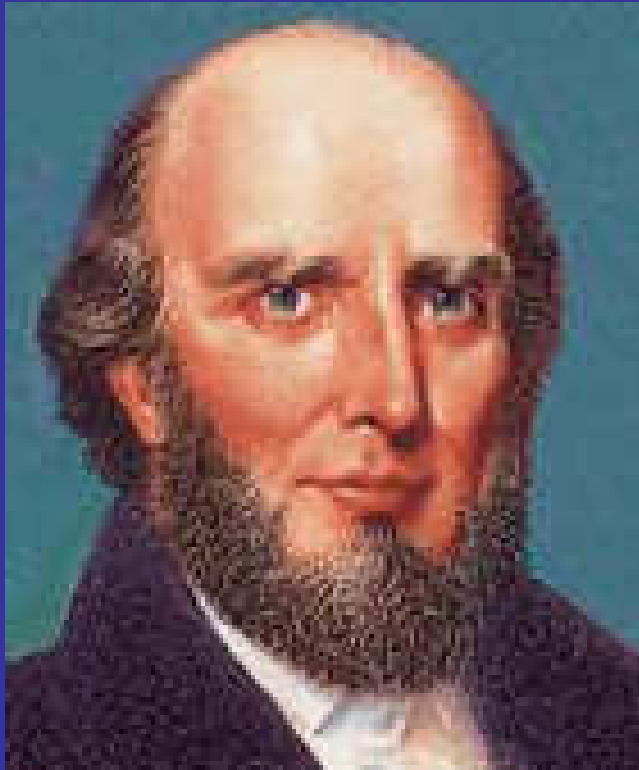
The Passion of Prayer: Practical Suggestions

- If you do not have a prayer journal, get one and keep one. This will allow you to record answers to prayer from God.
- Keep a prayer list. This allows us to see when prayers are answered. Also "I'll pray for you" will mean something.
- Prayers must be specific. God always spoke and answered in specific ways.
- Find a quiet place to pray. It is a discipline, but as a result, God will have us to Himself. The focus will be on Him.
- Find a sacred place where you and God can regularly meet.
- Set aside the best time of your day for prayer. God wants our very best.
- Figure out what posture works best when you pray. Let it be an outward sign of an internal reality in your heart.
- Keep your prayers short and passionate. This will help you focus to be effective.



“Look to it that you do not try to do all of it, do not try to do too much, lest your spirit grow weary. Besides, a good prayer mustn't be too long. Do not draw it out. Prayer ought to be frequent and fervent.”

—Martin Luther



“Prevailing prayer is that which gets an answer. Saying prayers is not offering prevailing prayer. The effectiveness of prayer does not depend so much on the quantity as the quality.”

—Charles Finney

Intercessory Prayer

- This is to make a worthy petition for another believer in Jesus Christ.
- This is to pray on behalf of another, also called the prayer of faith.
- Listening to God must precede intercession.
- In intercession, we must always be under the guidance of God.





“The inner sense of compassion is one of the clearest indications from the Lord that *this* is a prayer project for you.”

—Richard Foster

A Word on Corporate Prayer

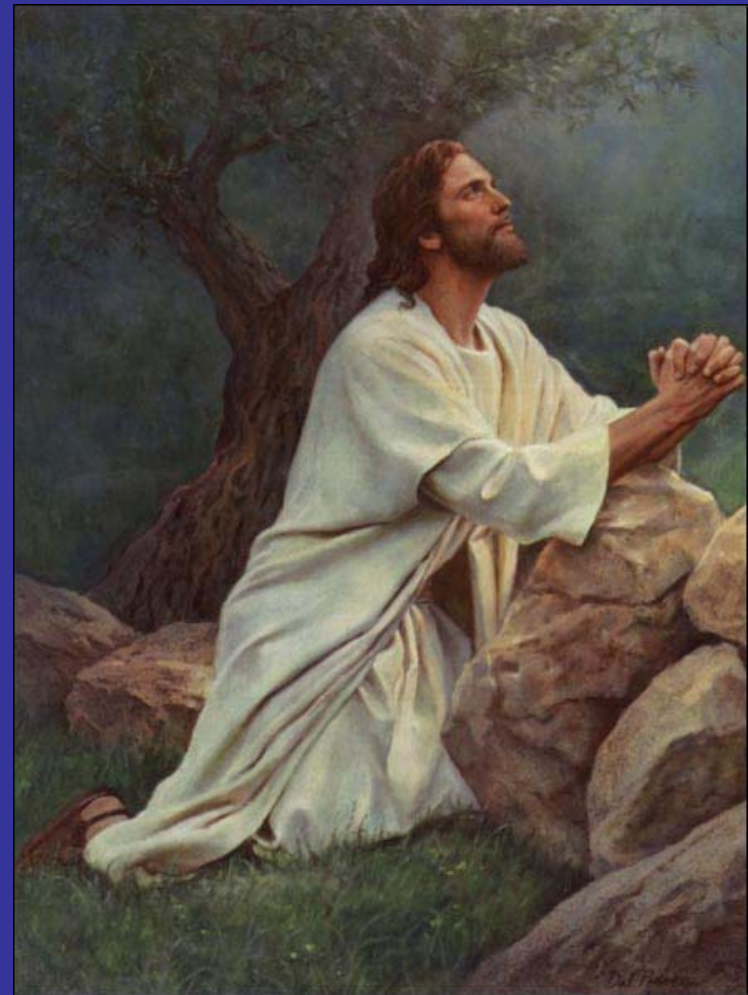
- James 5:16.
- Even Jesus prayed corporately (e.g. for Lazarus, John 11:41-42).



Jesus' Prayer Times

What time of day did Jesus usually withdraw? Why do you think this was?

How important were the decisions He made after prayer (see Luke 6:12-13)?



If God already knows what we need, then why do we need to ask Him?



I got up early one morning
and rushed right into the day
I had so much to accomplish
that I didn't have time to pray

Problems just tumbled about me
and heavier came each task
'Why doesn't God help me?' I wondered
He answered, 'You didn't ask'

I wanted to see joy and beauty
but the day toiled on gray and bleak
I wondered why God didn't show me
He said, 'But you didn't seek'

I tried to come into God's presence
I used all my keys at the lock
God gently and lovingly chided
'My servant, you didn't knock'

I woke up early this morning
and paused before entering the day
I had so much to accomplish
that I had to take time to pray

-- The Difference



"I have so much to do that I spend several hours in prayer before I am able to do it."

—John Wesley

Weekly Sharpening Session

Commit to seeking God's face each day through prayer. Find a quiet spot and take time to listen to Him and talk to Him. Record your thoughts on paper and bring them to class next week.

