



Prayer



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INTRODUCTION

Prayer is fundamental to the Christian life. *“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing”* (Martin Luther King). We often recognise the importance of prayer yet, for many reasons, struggle to begin. Through prayer we can speak with God and He with us. This leaflet is an encouragement to get started. Remember, prayer is not a demand but a gracious privilege, and to *“pray as you can, not as you can’t”* (John Chapman).

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is two way conversation with God. It is an activity in which we co-operate with God in bringing His will into being in the world [Matthew 6 vs 10]. Effective communication means speaking and listening and the same is true of prayer. So we can say that:

Prayer is a way of life. We build prayer into the routine of daily life so that it is as natural as breathing. We can pray anywhere at any time [Nehemiah 2 vs 4].

Prayer can be said aloud or quietly in the mind. It can be helpful to pray aloud even when alone if the circumstances allow it.

Prayer should be from the heart [Psalm 103 vs 1]. In [Nehemiah 1 vs 4] prayer was accompanied by tears and fasting.

Praying regularly at certain times of the day or week can be helpful, when we speak with God about many matters and in many different ways. Three times a day may be more than most can achieve, but once a day? See [Daniel 6 vs 10].

HOW TO PRAY

[Luke 11 vs 1-13] and [Matthew 6 vs 5-15] **Jesus prayed**, and He taught His followers to do the same, helping them with a ‘model’ prayer, often called the ‘Lord’s prayer’, as a basic guide:

Father. In Luke the word used is ‘Abba’ which is the intimate way a child speaks to their father. Prayer is speaking personally to a Father God who wants to hear and answer.

Your name ... your kingdom ... your will. Prayer is co-operating with God in His will for our lives and for the world. When we pray God is able to work through us with love and power in others, in society and in His mission to the world. **Prayer begins with what our Father wants, not what we want.**

Give us ... forgive us ... lead us. We can then pray for what we need in daily life to enable us to do God’s will and see His kingdom come in our lives and within society. There will be times when we have to ask for God to show us His will in specific situations so that we can do it or pray for it.

Pray with faith. We pray with faith, **believing** that our Heavenly Father desires to answer and bless us, providing us with all we need to do his will.

WHAT TO PRAY

The acronym ‘ACTS’, representing adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication (or intercession), gives one structure for prayer:

Adoration is to adore God, to worship Him and to fulfil the commandment to love Him with all our heart, mind and soul (Matthew 22 vs 37. Mark. 12 vs 30. Luke 10 vs 27). As we spend time in adoration, we praise God for who He is, our Creator, our Sustainer, and our Redeemer.

Confession [1 John 1vs8-10]. We need to keep short accounts with God, confessing our sins and receiving His forgiveness. If we are to do this then we need to be ready to **forgive others** when they sin against us [Matthew 6 vs 14-15].

Thanksgiving [Colossians 3 vs 15-17] and [Ephesians 3 vs15-17]. Learning to live a life of gratitude is a key to Christian living, when we give thanks ‘for’ every blessing and ‘in’ every situation. Gratitude springs from our knowing God’s grace in forgiveness and acceptance.

Supplication (or intercession) finally we come to ask God for the needs of others and for our needs. **Pray for others** [1 Timothy 2 vs 1-3]. We need to pray about every situation. For one another, family, friends and those in special need. For

the church, its ministry, its leaders and those on mission. For the government, the nation and world situations ... etc. **Pray for yourself.** When we want to do God's will, Jesus taught us to ask in His name and we shall receive [John 14 vs 13, 15 vs 16 and 16 vs 23-24]. **We can bring everything to God in prayer; even argue with God about things we do not like.** [Jeremiah 20].

LISTENING

Speaking can be easier than listening. How do we listen to God?

Reading the Bible [2 Timothy 3 vs 16-17]. God will speak to us inwardly through His Holy Spirit when we read the Bible.

Meditation [Joshua 1 vs 8], [Psalm 48 vs 9] and [Psalm 119 vs 27]. To meditate is to give time to dwell on a passage of the Bible, to allow the Holy Spirit to bless you and cause that word to enter you more deeply than just reading or thinking it through academically. It can enter your spirit and you can know God's love that surpasses knowledge' [Ephesians 3 vs 16-19].

Silence. God speaks to us in many ways - through circumstances, friends and worship services but at times we need to be still and silent to hear the Spirit of God speaking to us inwardly and personally, with 'a gentle whisper' [1 Kings 19 vs 12-13] and [Psalm 46 vs 10].

Caution. When listening inwardly to the voice of God we need care. There are times when we need to 'test' what we think we have heard to see if we have heard correctly, especially in regard to guidance requiring action or words for other people. Use the Bible; speak to a trusted friend and to a member of the Leadership Team.

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

Prayer is not always answered in the way we expect or we may struggle with prayer because of a hindrance on our part:

- **Unconfessed sin** [Matthew 6 vs 12].
- **Unwillingness to forgive others** [Matthew 6 vs 14-15].
- **Unbelief** [Mark 11 vs 22-25].
- **Not seeking God's will in the matter** [Matthew 6 vs 10].
- **God did answer but it was not the answer we wanted.** God may have said 'wait' or 'no'.
- **We did not persist** [Luke 18 vs 1].

If you feel that any of these are an issue for you, you are encouraged to talk with a member of the Leadership Team.

PRAYING WITH OTHERS

We encourage praying with others as a help to praying through issues.

- **With a friend on a regular basis** ... or form a '**prayer triplet**' when three get together regularly to pray.
- **With your husband or wife** if you are married.
- **With someone else** at the end of a service in Church when God prompts you through that time.
- **At small group or prayer meetings.** There are a variety of prayer meetings held in TBC, sometimes accompanied by fasting. Fasting means laying aside time from other activities, like eating, in order to pray and seek God for church, society or some specific need. There are also people who meet to pray for a specific subject, such as our schools. Sometimes we also go out of the church building to walk and pray around the town for the things that God brings to our attention.

AND FINALLY

We may all carry the classic image of prayer being hands held together and eyes closed whilst kneeling down in extreme silence, arms resting on the edge of the bed just before we turn in for sleep. It is an endearing image but don't be afraid to experiment with different ways

of praying, particularly if you feel your prayer-life has become stale or predictable. Using written prayers, meditating on a piece of scripture or the beauty of creation, using symbols and visualising the things for which we are praying, writing down what you think God is saying to you, or drawing a picture can all add a new dimension to our encounters with God through prayer.