

# **THE PRAYER PRIORITY**

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June 9, 2013

**Sermon in a sentence: More than anything else, our lives must revolve around prayer.**

**Scriptures: Acts 12:1-12; Matt 6:5-15; Rom. 8:26-27**

**We live in a complex world.**

**The information age has shown us how little we really know, and we can easily be overwhelmed by the barrage of voices telling us things the world says we *must* know.**

**In the quest to keep up, be informed, current and relevant, there is little or no space for Quietness. Contemplation. Meditation. Vision. Observation. Analysis. Understanding.**

**However, we do need to remember that we have full, unrestricted access to One who is totally complete within Himself and is the source of all knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Our access to Him comes through prayer.**

**Prayer is the word we use to describe communication with God. We allow God to speak to us through His Word and Spirit and we respond to Him with our words and spirit. We make the time to develop a relationship of love and intimacy with God, with the objective of becoming more like Him. Therefore, most of our prayers are private and extremely personal as God opens Himself up to us and we open ourselves up to Him. We *must* spend much time alone with God, (as modeled for us by Jesus), if we truly want to know Him.**

**Matt. 14:23; Matt. 26:36; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16;  
Luke 6:12; Luke 11:1**

**Matt 14:23 NASB** After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

**Mark 1:35 NASB** In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

**Luke 5:16 NASB** But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.

**Matt 26:36 NASB** Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, **“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”**

**Luke 11:1 NASB** It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.”

**So, Jesus taught His disciples *how* to pray and how *not* to pray, and gave them a sample prayer that we still use to this day!**

**Matt 6:5-15 NKJV** "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. 7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the

things you have need of before you ask Him. 9 In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

A couple of quotations will help us understand the characteristics of prayer a little better:

***"Prayer is surrender--surrender to the will of God and cooperation with that will. If I throw out a boathook from the boat and catch hold of the shore and pull, do I pull the shore to me, or do I pull myself to the shore? Prayer is not pulling God to my will, but the aligning of my will to the will of God." (E. Stanley Jones, Liberating Ministry From The Success Syndrome, K Hughes, Tyndale, 1988, p. 73.)***

***"Far away from the Bible's example are most people when they pray! Prayer with earnestness and urgency is genuine prayer in God's account. Alas, the greatest number of people are not conscious at all of the duty of prayer. And as for those who are, it is to be feared that many of them are very great strangers to sincere, sensible, and affectionate-- emotional--pouring out of their hearts or souls to God. Too many content themselves with a little lip-service and bodily exercise, mumbling over a few imaginary prayers. When the emotions are involved in such urgency that the soul will [exhaust] itself rather than go without the good desired, there is communion and***

**solace with Christ.** And hence it is that the saints have spent their strength, and lost their lives, rather than go without the blessings God intended for them." (John Bunyan, Pilgrim's Prayer Book).

United prayer is also a powerful force *against* the power of darkness in our world!

Is. 56:7 NASB Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."

Matt. 18:19 NASB **"Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.**

Acts 1:14 NASB These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the* women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Acts 4:24a,31 NASB And when they heard *this*, they lifted their voices to God with one accord....  
31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.

As New Testament Christians, filled with the Spirit of the almighty God, our prayers take on an incredible new dimension as we now have the privilege of 'praying in the Spirit'! The Holy Spirit of God actually prays *for* us and

*through us, in perfect harmony with the divine will of God, as it is His own Spirit praying and interceding on our behalf! He prays through us in silent groaning and also with 'unknown tongues' at times, as we ourselves join in with prayer in our own native languages. The apostle Paul gives us some insight into this 'Spirit prayer'.*

*Rom 8:26-27 NKJV Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

Of course, we do not know what the Spirit is saying as He prays through us, but in spite of this, we are still being strengthened and renewed:

**1 Cor. 14:4 NKJV He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...**

**Jude 20 NKJV But you, beloved, [build] yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit**

**1 Cor. 14:14-19 NKJV ... if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. 15 What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit [only], how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? 17 For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. 18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; 19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding,**

that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Therefore, let us remember that praying and praising God in other tongues is a personal interaction with Him, “for he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God....” (1 Cor. 14:2a).

**Additional quotations and illustrations:**

Speak to God as you would speak to your parent, spouse, employer or friend. We certainly do not need to yell and scream at God, but commune with Him as our heavenly Father. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much. (James 5:16)

When people do not mind what God speaks to them in His Word, God doth as little mind what they say to Him in prayer. (William Gurnall (a saying of a Puritan preacher))

**It is strange that, while praying, we seldom ask for change of character, but always a change in circumstance.** (Baptist Challenge, December 1981)

When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do; when we rely upon education, we get what education can do; when we rely upon eloquence, we get what eloquence can do, and so on. Nor am I disposed to undervalue any of these things in their proper place, but when we rely upon prayer, we get what God can do. (A.C. Dixon, Evangelism, A Biblical Approach, M. Cocoris, Moody, 1984, p. 108)

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