

A Closer Walk With God

Principles Of Prayer

Lesson #4

INTRODUCTION:

- A. ONE OF OUR GREATEST BLESSINGS IS PRAYER.
 - 1. Through prayer, the we find FORGIVENESS(**1 John 1:9**).
 - 2. Through prayer, the we find PEACE to replace anxiety(**Phil. 4:6-7**)
 - 3. Through prayer, the we find STRENGTH from God (**Eph. 3:14-16**).
- B. FOR THESE REASONS PRAYER WE SHOULD BE DILIGENT IN PRAYER.
(**Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17**).
- C. JESUS KNEW PEOPLE WOULD BECOME SLACK(**Luke 18:1**).
 - 1. A similar concern that prompts two lessons devoted to "PRAYER"
 - 2. It is hoped that you will be encouraged to be more diligent as we examine:
 - 1) Basic PRINCIPLES of prayer taught in God's Word
 - 2) Suggestions concerning the PRACTICE of prayer in our daily lives

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

- A. IT MUST BE OFFERED "IN FAITH"(**Matt. 21:22**).
 - 1. We must have faith in God, and in His ability to answer(**Heb. 11:6**).
 - 2. Otherwise, prayer will not be answered(**James 1:5-8**).
 - 3. Is faith weak? Then increase it with the help of God's Word(**Rom. 10:17**).
- B. IT MUST BE OFFERED "IN THE SPIRIT OF HUMILITY."
 - 1. Notice the example of the Pharisee and the publican(**Luke 18:9-14**).
 - 2. Remember, (**Psa. 34:18**).
 - 3. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble"(**James 4:6**).
- C. IT MUST BE OFFERED "IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S WILL."
 - 1. God answers prayer that is offered "according to His will"(**1 John 5:14**).
 - 2. Jesus provided the example in His prayers at Gethsemane(**Luke 22:42**).
 - 3. Too often, prayers are unanswered because they are more concerned with OUR will, rather than GOD'S will!(**James 4:3**).
- D. IT MUST BE "BY THOSE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD."(**1 Pet. 3:12**)
 - 1. The prayers of the righteous person are effective(**James 5:16-18**).
 - 2. But those continuing in sin He will not hear!(**Prov. 28:9; Isa. 59:1-2**).
 - 3. To be righteous before God...
 - a. We must submit to the "righteousness of God" in Christ(**Rom.10:1-4**).
 - b. i.e., respond to the gospel of Christ(**Rom. 1:16-17**).
- E. IT MUST BE OFFERED "IN THE SPIRIT OF THANKSGIVING"
(**Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess 5:17-18**).
-- **God will help us with our PRESENT BURDENS if we take the time to thank Him for PAST BLESSINGS?**
- F. IT MUST BE OFFERED "WITH PERSISTENCE"
 - 1. Jesus illustrated this aspect of prayer through two parables
 - a. The parable of the persistent friend(**Luke 11:5-10**).
 - b. The parable of the persistent widow(**Luke 18:1-8**).
 - 2. The virtue of persistence is demonstrated in the prayers of
 - a. Jesus at Gethsemane(**Matt. 26:44**).
 - b. Paul, pertaining to his "thorn in the flesh"(**2 Cor. 12:7-8**).
 - c. The early church(**Acts 2:42**).
- G. IT MUST BE OFFERED "IN THE NAME OF JESUS."(**Eph. 5:20**).
 - 1. This means much more than simply adding a little phrase "in Jesus' name" at the end of our prayers!
 - a. Jesus is the only way by which we can approach God(**John 14:6**).
 - b. Jesus is our "high priest" who intercedes for us(**Heb. 7:24-25**).
 - 2. Through Jesus we may boldly approach God!(**Heb. 4:14-16**).

II. OBSTACLES TO PRAYER.

- A. UNCONFESSED, UNREPENTED SIN.
 - 1. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear"(**Psa. 66:18**).
 - 2. The BASIS for prayer rests upon our being in fellowship with Him; such fellowship is broken if we continue in sin!(**1 John 1:6-7**).
- B. IMPROPER TREATMENT OF OTHERS.
 - 1. How we treat others has a bearing upon whether God will hear our prayers!
 - a. How we treat the poor(**Psa. 41:1-3**).

- b. How one treats his friend(**Matt. 5:23-24**).
- c. How a husband treats his wife(**1 Pet. 3:7**).
- 2. We must correct our relationships with others (if possible) before we can expect God to hear our prayers!
- 3. Especially if we desire to receive forgiveness!(**Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-23**).

III. ANSWERS TO PRAYERS.

- A. "REQUEST GRANTED."
 - 1. God may answer "YES" , and grant the petitions we ask of Him
 - 2. Such will be the case the more we try to do His Will(**1 John 3:22**).
- B. "REQUEST GRANTED, BUT NOT YET"
 - 1. God may grant our request, but in time and according to His purpose for us.
 - 2. (**Ecc. 3:1**).
 - 3. We may think God says "NO", when He's really saying "YES, BUT WAIT."
- C. "REQUEST GRANTED, BUT NOT AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT"
 - 1. Sometimes God says "YES", but answers differently than we anticipated
 - 2. God's thoughts and methods are often much different than ours(**Isa. 55:8,9**).
 - 3. Like asking God for strength and perseverance...
 - a. He may give us trials to bear
 - b. Which in turn develops the virtues we prayed for!(**James 1:2-4**).
 - 4. We should be careful and not dictate to God HOW to answer our prayers...
 - a. Limit the "HOW" and we might be limiting the "RESULT"
 - b. For example, the way some pray for the sick, they limit God as to how He might restore them
- D. "REQUEST DENIED"
 - 1. Often God says "NO"
 - 2. But we must trust that God, who knows all and what is best, would do so only if granting our request might not be for our good(**Heb. 12:5-11**).
 - 3. We may not fully understand, but we can still fully trust Him!(**Hab 3:17-19**).
 - 4. Especially in light of the promise in(**1 Cor. 10:13**).

CONCLUSION: THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER IS TOO GREAT A BLESSING TO WASTE.