

PRAYER

In My Life

By John Duvall

Prayer in My Life

INTRODUCTION.

NOTES

- A. James, when addressing praying for one another, wrote, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” (James 5:16, ESV) As children of God, prayer should be a regular part of our daily lives.
- B. In this study, we will consider four aspects of prayer.
 - 1. We will look at the purpose of prayer.
 - 2. We will consider essential attitudes for prayer.
 - 3. We will discuss what hinders our prayers.
 - 4. We will talk about praying for our enemies.

I. THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER.

- A. Through prayer, we communicate with our heavenly Father.
 - 1. Our heavenly Father knows our thoughts. He knows our cares, desires, concerns, heartaches, joys, etc. We cannot hide our thoughts from God. (Psalm 139:2; Hebrews 4:13; Isaiah 66:18)
 - 2. All though God knows our every thoughts, the scriptures show God’s people intentionally reaching out to Him to express their cares, desires, gratitude, remorse, concerns, etc. The Bible uses the term “prayer” to describe these moments.
 - 3. Consider the following examples of people praying to God.
 - a. Abraham prayed for Abimelech’s household. (Genesis 20:17-18)
 - b. Moses prayed. (Numbers 11:2; 21:7; Deuteronomy 9:20,26)
 - c. Jesus prayed to the Father. (John 17)
 - 4. As God’s children, we have confidence our heavenly Father will hear our prayers. According to the apostle Paul, both the Holy Spirit and Jesus intercedes for us.

- a. The Holy Spirit *“intercedes for us”* according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27, ESV; cf. Ephesians 6:18)
 - b. Jesus, who is at the right-hand of God, *“intercedes for us.”* (Romans 8:34, ESV; Hebrews 7:25) This fact gives us great comfort because we know Jesus is able to sympathize with our weakness. (Hebrews 4:15)
- B. Through prayer, we praise and bless our heavenly Father.
- 1. When we pray, it is important to acknowledge what God has done for us.
 - 2. There are several examples in the Old Testament of God’s people blessing Him.
 - a. David wrote, *“I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me,, and let us exalt His name together.”* (Psalm 34:1-2)
 - b. Zacharias, the father of John the baptizer said, *“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people.”* (Luke 1:68)
 - c. Consider the prayers of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar. List a few examples from both passages of why they praised God.

Prayer of Daniel <i>Daniel 2:19-23</i>	Prayer of Nebuchadnezzar <i>Daniel 4:34-37</i>

- 3. We, too, should offer up praises as the *“fruit of our lips.”* (Hebrews 13:15)

4. Prayers of blessings often accompany prayers of thanksgiving. Let us always bless the Lord and praise the Lord for His greatness, His glory, and for all He has done for us.
- C. Through prayer, we express our thankfulness and our appreciation to the heavenly Father.
1. We are to pray with thanksgiving. (Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2)
 2. Prayers of thanksgiving require...
 - a. Recognition of what God has done.
 - b. Gratitude for what God has done. Consider the example of the leper who Jesus healed. (Luke 17:12-19)
 - c. An expression of our gratitude. (Colossians 3:15-17)
 3. What are some things for which you are thankful.
- D. Through prayer, we make intercession for other people.
1. In his letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul wrote, *“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”* (1 Timothy 2:1-2)
 2. Prayers of intercessions requires:
 - a. Concern for other members. (Philippians 2:1-4)
 - b. Selflessness towards the needs of other members. (Romans 12:16; cf. Galatians 6:10)
 - c. Listening to the request from other members, such as praying for their physical needs (James 5:13-15) and their spiritual needs (James 5:16; 1 John 5:13-18).
 3. When someone asks us to prayer on their behalf, let us do so fervently. As James wrote, *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”* (James 5:16)
 4. Consider a few examples of people who prayed for others.
 - a. Moses prayed for God to forgive Israel. (Exodus 32:30-35)

- b. Jesus prayed for those who were crucifying Him. (Luke 23:32-34)
- c. Paul prayed for those who had forsaken him. (2 Timothy 4:16)

E. Through prayer, we make petitions on our own behalf.

1. Praying on our own behalf could be viewed as making supplications to the Lord. Paul, in this letter to Timothy referred to supplications. (cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-2)
2. The apostle Paul taught Christians to address their needs and concerns to the heavenly Father. (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6)
3. In His sermon on the mountain, Jesus taught the disciples to pray for physical needs as well as spiritual needs. (Matthew 6:11-13)
4. Make a list of some things for which we are to be praying.

<i>Pray for wisdom. (James 1:5)</i>	
<i>Pray for the forgiveness of our sins. (Matt 6:12-15)</i>	

F. Through prayer, we seek the forgiveness of our sins.

1. In the Bible, we see prayers of penitence. The word penitence is the action of feeling or showing sorrow and regret for doing something that is wrong.
2. Our prayers of repentance must originate from a penitent heart. In other words, our prayer for forgiveness must come from a heart of sorrow and regret for having sinned against God.
 - a. We must be willing to confess our sin before the Lord.
 - 1) Solomon wrote, *“He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”* (Proverbs 28:13)

- 2) David talked about acknowledging one's sin before the Lord and the forgiveness of those sins. (Psalm 32:1-5)
- 3) The apostle John wrote, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)
- b. Consider David's sorrow over his sin against Uriah the Hittite as expressed in Psalm 52.
 - 1) In verses 1-2, David prayed for mercy and cleansing.
 - 2) In verses 3-6, David acknowledged his sin.
 - 3) In verses 7-13, David asked the Lord for cleansing and a clean heart.
 - 4) In verses 14-19, David pleaded for deliverance from his guilt and acknowledged the Lord was seeking a sacrifice of a broken spirit and contrite heart.
3. Jesus taught His disciples to pray for the forgiveness of their sins. (Matthew 6:12, 14-15)
4. Genuine sorrow brings the confession of our sins, the expression of our remorse, and prayers for God's mercy and forgiveness.
- G. Through prayer, we exercise our trust in the heavenly Father.
 1. We trust God to hear the prayers of the saints. (1 Peter 3:12; Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4)
 2. We trust God with our worries and cares. (Philippians 4:6)
 - a. Jesus taught His disciples not to worry about what they would eat or drink, but to seek first the kingdom of God. (Matthew 6:25-34)
 - b. Peter reminded the brethren to cast their cares, their anxieties (ESV) on the Lord. (1 Peter 5:6-7)
 - c. Jesus, our High Priest sympathizes with our weaknesses. (Hebrews 4:14-16)
 - d. Christians trust God with their worries and cares, not expecting God to solve all their problems, but to give strength and endurance. (cf. Philippians 4:10-13; James 1:2-4)

3. We trust in God, even when He does not grant our petitions.
 - a. Let us consider the following examples:
 - 1) Despite Paul praying three times, God did not remove his *"thorn in the flesh."* (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
 - 2) God did not spare Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 18:22-33)
 - 3) God did not grant Moses' request to enter the promise land. (Deuteronomy 3:23-27)
 - b. Even when God does not grant our petitions, He does comfort us in our times of troubles. (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 7:6)
4. We trust God to forgive our sins.
 - a. God has given assurance He will forgive sins when there is repentance. (Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13-14)
 - b. No matter how grievous a sin may be, God is willing to forgive and accept the repentant sinner into His fellowship.
5. We trust God to protect and guard our spirits. (Romans 8:31-39)

II. ESSENTIAL ATTITUDES DURING PRAYER.

- A. We are to have a reverent attitude when we pray.
 1. We should recognize that God is holy. This recognition should provoke us to humble ourselves before God, holding Him and His name in reverence and honor. (1 Peter 1:15-16; Matthew 6:9)
 2. We are to recognize God as our heavenly Father. (Matthew 6:9; John 17:1, 11, 25)
 3. Let us also recognize God's greatness. (Ex. Acts 4:23-31; cf. Hebrews 12:28)
- B. We are to have a humble attitude when we pray.
 1. We should humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord. (James 4:6-10; 1 Peter 5:5-6)
 2. Consider two examples:
 - a. The prayer of the tax collector. (Luke 18:9-14)
 - b. The parable of the prodigal son. (Luke 15:17-21)

C. We are to have a selfless attitude when we pray.

1. Consider Jesus' prayer in the garden. (Mark 14:32-36)
2. Jesus taught His disciples to pray that the Father's will would be done. (Matthew 6:9-10)
3. Our prayer requests should always defer to the Father's will. (1 John 5:14-15)
 - a. Consider the following examples:
 - 1) The apostle Paul wrote about his desire to return to Ephesus, saying, *"...but I will return again to you, God willing."* (Acts 18:21)
 - 2) In expressing his desire to travel to Rome, Paul wrote, "that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you." (Romans 15:32)
 - 3) It may be God's will that a Christian suffers for doing good. (1 Peter 3:17; 4:19)

D. We are to have a thoughtful attitude when we pray.

1. Let us make our prayer life thoughtful and intentional.
 - a. Make time to pray.
 - b. Maintain a list of individuals you are praying for.
 - c. Maintain a list of blessings in your life.
 - d. Maintain a list of worries and concerns.
 - e. Sometimes prayers will be spontaneous brought on by moments of joy, sadness, gratitude, worry, earnest desires, etc.
2. When possible, give forethought to your prayers. Although our heavenly Father knows our every thought, desire, and concern, giving thought to our prayers may help us to see what truly is important in our lives.

III. HINDRANCES TO PRAYER.

A. Hypocrisy hinders our prayers.

1. In Matthew 6:5-6, Jesus warned His disciples against the hypocritical prayer.

- a. The word hypocrite is translated from hypokritēs which means, “corresponding to the above, primarily denotes ‘one who answers’; then, ‘a stage-actor.’” (Vine’s)
 - b. The hypocrite desires the praise of men.
 - c. When the hypocrite is alone, he does not put forth the same effort and time in prayer.
 - d. Regarding this subject, William Barclay wrote, “When a man thinks more of how he is praying than of what he is praying, his prayer dies upon his lips.”
2. The self-righteous prayer seeks the praise of men. (Luke 18:9-14)
- B. Vain repetitions hinders our prayers.
1. Jesus spoke against useless vain repetitions. (Matthew 6:7,8)
 - a. The Greek word translated as “vain repetition” means “to stutter, i.e. (by implication) to prate tediously: — use vain repetitions.” (Strong’s)
 - b. Vain repetition suggests a multitude of words without thought. As Jesus said, “...*For they think that they will be heard for their many words.*”
 2. Consider the prophets of Baal. (1 Kings 18:26) They thought many words would get the attention of their false god.
 3. It is important to note that there are times when we are compelled by earnestness to pray for something multiple times. This is not vain repetition.
 - a. Consider the parable of the persistent widow. (Luke 18:1-8)
 - b. Consider Jesus’ example when He prayed in the garden. (Matthew 26:44)
 - c. The apostle Paul prayed three times regarding his thorn flesh. (2 Corinthians 12:7-8)
- C. Sin hinders our prayers.
1. The psalmist said, “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.*” (Psalms 66:18)
 2. Israel’s sin separated them from God. (Isaiah 59:1,2)
 3. Consider Peter’s warning to the husband. (1 Peter 3:7)

4. Too keep on sinning brings separation from God. (1 John 1:5-6; 3:7-10, ESV)
 - a. Walking in darkness separates a person from God's fellowship. (1 John 1:5-6)
 - b. John also wrote, "*Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil.*" (1 John 3:7-10, ESV)
 - c. Hebrews 10:26 reads, "*For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.*" (ESV)

4. Being unforgiving hinders our prayers.

1. We must forgive others in order to be forgiven by God. (Matthew 6:14,15)
2. How many times should we be willing to forgive? Jesus said, "*...up to seventy times seven.*" (Matthew 18:21-35)
3. We should seek to be reconciled to our brethren. (Matthew 5:23-24; Romans 12:14-18)

E. Selfishness hinders our prayers.

1. James warns against asking with selfish reasons. (James 4:1-6)
2. We should not view our heavenly Father as a means to an end; someone to grant our every desire.
3. Jesus serves as the greatest example of one who was truly selfless in attitude. (Matthew 26:36-46)

F. A lack of faith can hinder our prayers.

1. James warns of asking without having faith. (James 1:5-8)
2. Without faith, we are not pleasing to God. (Hebrews 11:6)

IV. PRAYING FOR OUR ENEMIES.

- A. Jesus said, "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*" (Matthew 5:43-44, NKJV)

1. In this context Jesus is instructing the disciples to love their enemies and pray for those who would persecute them.

2. While this may seem like an impossible challenge at times, it is what God desires of us.
3. Before we consider how we are to pray for our enemies, let us first consider who are our enemies.
 - a. There are enemies of our country.
 - b. There are spiritual enemies.
 - 1) Those of the world who have not turned to Christ.
 - 2) Those who profess to believe in God but stand against the body of Christ, teaching error and the doctrines of men.
 - 3) Our enemies in spiritual places. (cf. Ephesians 6:10-12)
 - c. There are personal enemies.
 - 1) Those who hate us.
 - 2) Those who have done us harm.
 - 3) Those who have gossiped and lied about us.
 - 4) Those who have sinned against us in any form or fashion.
- B. Let us consider God's standard regarding how we view our enemies.
 1. We are to love our enemies. (Luke 6:27; Matthew 5:44)
 2. We are to be kind to our enemies.
 - a. Be willing to feed our enemies if they are hungry. (Romans 12:20; Proverbs 25:21-22)
 - b. Do good to those who hate you. (Luke 6:27-31, 35)
 - c. Seek to do good to everyone. (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15)
 3. We are not to retaliate against our enemies. (Romans 12:14-21)
 - a. Bless those who curse you. (Luke 6:28)
 - b. Do not seek to repay evil. (Proverbs 20:22; Romans 12:17; 1 Peter 3:9)
 - c. Bless those who persecute you. (Romans 12:14; 1 Peter 3:9)
 - d. Give thought to do that which is honorable. (Romans 12:17)

- e. Seek to live peacefully with your enemies. (Romans 12:18)
- f. Overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)
- 4. We are to pray for our enemies.
 - a. Pray for those who abuse you. (Luke 6:28)
 - b. Pray for those who persecute us. (Matthew 5:44)
- 5. We must leave vengeance to the Lord. (Romans 12:19)
- C. How should we pray for our enemies?
 - 1. God's standard for how we treat our enemies, directly affects how we pray for our enemies.
 - 2. We are to love our enemies and seek what is best for them.
 - a. We should seek God's judgment in all matters pertaining to our enemies.
 - 1) David seemingly prayed against his enemies (Psalms 69:4, 22-24). However, David was praying for God's judgment against his enemies.
 - 2) Consider the repentance of Nineveh and Jonah's lack of understanding. (Jonah 3:10 - 4:11)
 - 3) It is better to rely upon God's righteous judgment than our own judgment when dealing with situations of hurt feelings, emotions, harm to our well-being, etc. God will judge rightly the other person.
 - b. When we seek God's judgment, we are also seeking God's grace and mercy. While God is just, He is also gracious and merciful. God will show mercy to whomever He chooses. (Romans 9:14-16)
 - c. We should seek God's forgiveness for our enemies.
 - 1) Jesus and Stephen serve as two great examples. (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60)
 - 2) This is not to say God will instantly forgive our enemies of their sins against us. Our enemies must still repent and do the "*fruits worthy of repentance.*" (cf. Luke 3:7-8)
 - 3) Compare this to John's instructions regarding us praying for a sinning brother. (1 John 5:16-17)

- d. We should pray the person will have the time necessary to repent.
 - 1) Just as we pray God will grant us time to repent, turning away from sins, we should also pray God will grant time for our enemies to turn away from their sins.
 - 2) God desires salvation for all mankind, including our enemies. We should have the same desire. (2 Peter 3:9)

CONCLUSION.

- A. How is your prayer life?
 - 1. Are you praying daily in a way that is pleasing to God?
 - 2. Are you praying with the right attitudes?
 - 3. Are you avoiding those things that can hinder your prayers?
 - 4. Are you remember to pray for your enemies?
- B. Let us all seek to improve our prayer life. Through prayer we talk to our Father who is in heaven.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

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