

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

LESSON 1: PRAYER

How often should one pray? Once or twice a day? Read on to find out what the Bible says about the frequency of prayer. Prayer is a powerful tool for transformation. This lesson shows you how prayer can transform your life and also impact the world.

From the day God created human beings, He provided us with a direct means of communication with Him: prayer. This lesson looks at the important role of prayer in a life of following Christ.

“...I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.” 1 Corinthians 14:15

Prayer is not just something spiritual; it involves our heart, mind, and soul, too.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 encourages us to “pray without ceasing”. God is waiting to hear from us and he never gets tired of listening to us.

There is something so reassuring about being able to run to a loving, protective parent and to share your thoughts and feelings, knowing that parent will understand, and even intervene when necessary. Our Heavenly Father has given us this very opportunity through prayer.

Many of us lose out on this opportunity because we have many misconceptions about prayer. Prayer is not reciting a formal sounding report filled with difficult words, ancient phrases we would never use in regular speech, and an ‘amen’ at the end. Prayer is simply talking to God. Prayer is communicating our feelings, wants, and needs to God, so that we can build a relationship with Him. True prayer is conversational and comes from the heart. 1 Corinthians 14:15 says “...I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.” Prayer is not merely a religious ritual; it involves our mind and spirit and our body. Prayer is an effective, real conversation with the Living God – an intimate dialogue with our loving Father.

Although prayer is conversational, it usually consists of four aspects: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication (you can remember those aspects with the acronym A.C.T.S.) When Jesus taught us to pray, He taught us that we should first praise God for who He is and what He has done for us. This is adoration. We should then offer thanksgiving by thanking Him for our lives, and for blessing us with all that we have. After that, we ask God to show us our sins, confess and repent for them. We also pray that God will keep us away from evil. Only after that do we move to supplication, which is presenting our needs to God.

We should never forget that though God is our Father and friend, He is still the Almighty Creator and we should approach Him with respect and reverence. God is holy and we can approach Him only through Jesus Christ whose sacrifice washed away our sins. When we pray, we should pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ.

Since Prayer is an act not only of fellowship but also of reverence, we should humble ourselves before the Almighty God in our posture, too. You may personally find it best to kneel, or maybe you prefer to sit or stand while you pray. However we shouldn't kneel just because you feel that you are 'supposed to:' your posture

should be a reflection of your heart attitude because God doesn't look at your outward appearances; rather, He looks at your heart.

While God is really looking for the intention and purpose of our prayers, we often get stuck with the superficial details. People wonder whether they should pray aloud or silently. We can pray loudly and softly, or even silently, in our mind. But usually, when we pray in groups, we pray loudly so the others can hear, and agree with what we are praying for.

Another frequently asked question is: how often should we pray? There is no standard formula to how many times you should talk to God just like no one can tell you how often you should speak to a good friend. You may have witnessed young people spending hours in conversation even after spending all day together in school. There might be absolutely nothing important to talk about but young people love to share every moment and every boring detail of their lives with each other. The Bible tells us something similar about prayer: 1 Thessalonians 5:17 encourages us to "pray without ceasing." God is waiting to hear from us and he never gets tired of listening to us.

God is glorified through our prayers. In John 14:13, Jesus says, "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." This is very important to us as followers of Christ, because now that we are identified with Christ, our first purpose in this world is to glorify God. Prayer brings victory in our lives, too. Jesus commanded us in Matthew 26:41 to "watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." God knew our vulnerability to sin and that only a strong relationship with Him could keep us from the temptations of the devil. Prayer therefore protects us from the attacks of the evil one and gives us victory over sin.

Prayer is a significant agent of change. It unleashes the power of God to impact the world. A simple prayer can rewrite history. (James 5:16) God tells us in His Word that When Hannah prayed God blessed her not only with a son, Samuel, but blessed Israel also with a mighty prophet who mentored the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David. When Esther prayed God not only saved her own life when she approached the King but also paved a way to protect all Jews from being exterminated. Today, when the world seems to be swayed by the power and riches of the corrupt may we find strength in an observation made by the English Poet,

LOOKING DEEPER

Examine the following verses to see what the Bible has to say about prayer:

Mark 11:24

Philippians 4:6-7

1 John 5:14-15

James 1:6

Romans 8:26

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William Cowper: "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest Christian on his knees."

IN REVIEW

- Prayer is the act of talking to God. We can pray about anything.
- We should pray to God the Father in the Name of Jesus Christ with the Help of the Holy Spirit.
- We can either pray silently or loudly, and our posture does not matter. What matters is if our heart is right with God.
- Prayer is important because God commanded us to pray and it develops a relationship between us and God.
- Prayer is important because it unleashes God's power to bring about change in this world

HAVE YOUR SAY

- The Bible is filled with instances where Jesus prayed. If Jesus was God Himself, what was He trying to show us by praying?
- Is praying without ceasing possible? How would you implement this in your life?
- Can you recall instances where prayer has changed your own life or impacted people you know?

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