

## What is Prayer?

- Prayer is God's ordained means for unleashing his power in our lives and in the world around us.
- Prayer is an expression of our dependence upon God. Prayer is not informing God of something he does not already know, but a request that God do something on our behalf.
- Since prayer involves two parties, it is dialogue, not monologue. Prayer is listening to God as well as speaking to God.
- Since prayer can be taught (Lk 11:1), it is therefore something that can be learned.

## Why Pray?

- Our purpose in prayer is to glorify God as we see his plan worked out in our lives (Jn 14:12-14; 2 Thess 1:11). Prayer is pursuing what God wants, not merely what we want. Therefore, prayer is a way of aligning our desires with God's (Mt 6:10; 26:42).

## Two Modes of Prayer: Petitions and Praises

- *Petition*: A sincere request or earnest plea to seek God's favor and a humble determination to rest in His answer.
- *Praise*: A genuine expression of gratitude for and appreciation of all God has done or will do for us or for others. Praise is another form of thanksgiving, which is another way of admitting that God knows better what we need than we do. Therefore, all petitions contain an element of praise (Phil 4:6; 1 Thess 5:18).

## Preparing to Meet God

Before coming to God in prayer, it is important to remember that God is more interested in us than in what we want. This is not to say God is unconcerned about our longings or desires. It is to say that our longings and desires are primarily intended to change us and not just our circumstances or surroundings.

### *What Is Involved in an Effective Prayer Life?*

- Read 2 Cr 7:14-15; Is 1:15-16. What must we do to have an effective prayer life?
- What does Zech 7:8-13 teach us about the consequences for ignoring God?
- Christian prayer is always Trinitarian. We pray to the Father, through the Son in his name (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 7:25; Jn 14:13-14; 16:23-26), and by the Spirit who guides us and presents our prayers to heaven (Rom 8:26-27; Eph 6:18; Jude 20).
- Read Col 4:2, 12 and 1 Thess 5:17. Should we be committed to prayer?

### *What Does a Practical Prayer Life Look Like?*

- Always, always, always confess your sins before making your requests
- Pray persistently. Don't give up until God makes his answer clear.
- Pray regularly. Set aside a time each day for prayer.
- Pray until you pray! Don't allow distractions to disrupt your prayer time.

## Preparing to Pray

Week 1

- Consider keeping a prayer journal (a spiritual diary; a place to record God's responses to your requests, thoughts, and feelings; a way of remembering God's activity in your life; a way of holding yourself accountable to spiritual maturity)

### *When You Pray, Remember...*

- Be reverent and humble before the Lord, choosing your words carefully.  
*Do not be quick with your mouth; do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. Ecclesiastes 5:2*
- Beware of formalities and lean upon the Spirit for help.  
*We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. Romans 8:26-27*
- Pray for other believers as well as yourself or your immediate family.  
*For I know that through your prayers ... what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. Philippians 1:19 (also Eph 6:19; Col 4:3)*
- Persevere and do not give up.  
*During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death. Hebrews 5:7 (also Luke 18:1-7). "We obey God as much when we ... try to change His will as when we bow to it." P.T. Forsyth *The Soul of Prayer**
- Walk in obedience.  
*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16*
- Trust God to answer in unexpected ways.  
*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us. Ephesians 3:20*

*Next week: Jesus's prayer life*