

Study Eight



The Privilege Of Prayer

Read the lesson carefully, and fill in the Bible references before coming to the study.

Prayer is an immense privilege – yet even the youngest Christian has a right to pray. It is an astonishing fact that God invites us to speak with Him, and that He works powerfully as a result of our prayers. It has been said “Not to pray is to be guilty of the incredible folly of ignoring the possibility of adding God to our resources”. Supernatural strength can be obtained only from a supernatural source.

1. Prayer is a Sign of Life

The first sign of life in a new-born child is its cry. The first sign of spiritual life in a new-born Christian is the cry “Abba, Father”. As an adopted member of God’s family, and with the help of God’s Spirit, he is able to address God as his Father.

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Romans 8:15

Prayer, then, is an expression of our relationship with God. It is through prayer that we obtain a deeper awareness of the fatherly love of God.

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Matthew 7:11

Prayer comes naturally to a new Christian. The first thing we learn about the newly converted Saul of Tarsus is that he prayed! (Acts 9:11).

2. Praying in Private

Private prayer is vital to our spiritual growth. We all need time on our own with God.

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Matthew 6:6

Being alone in prayer was a notable feature of Jesus' own life.

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Mark 1:35

Sometimes, when in public places, it is not convenient to go away and pray, yet we may be in urgent need of God's help. At such times we can reach God in silent prayer, like Nehemiah who had a special request to make of a king. God hears and answers our short and specific requests just as He does all our prayers.

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Nehemiah 2:4

3. Praying with Others

Praying with others at church gatherings, or in home prayer groups, is a great encouragement to Christians. But it is also the means of great spiritual power. The united prayer of the Early Church preceded the outpouring of the Spirit of God at Pentecost and the conversion of many. Prayer is the powerhouse of the Church.

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Acts 1:14
(cf. Acts 2:1-2
and 2:41-42)

Praying in public is an ordeal for some people, but it need not be. Pray to God as you would speak to a friend, but at the same time remember who He is. If the whole idea fills you with terror, do not despair! You can still attend prayer meetings and pray silently – God will hear you just the same.

4. The Content of Prayer

We should bring the whole of life to God in prayer, just like small children communicating with their parents.

- a) The prayer Jesus gave in Matthew 6:9-13 (cf. Luke 11:2-4) is helpful.
 - “Our Father in Heaven” reminds us of our relationship to God
 - “Hallowed be Your Name” a prayer for God's honour and glory.
 - “Your kingdom come. Your will be done” a prayer for God's work.
 - “Give us this day...” a prayer for our daily needs.
 - “Forgive us our sins...” a prayer confessing our sins.
 - “Do not lead us into temptation...” a prayer for help against Satan.
- [Note the way in which the Lord's “Model Prayer” is arranged. God's concerns come first, then ours.]

b) Another approach can be summed up by the letters A.C.T.S.

Adoration: When we pray, we should remember who God is, and bring Him our worship and adoration.

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Revelation 4:11
(cf. 1 Chronicles 29:10-11)

Confession: Sin mars our relationship with God. We should admit our faults and pray for God’s forgiveness, and His help to do better.

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1 John 1:9
(cf. Psalm 51:10)

Thanksgiving: We should remember God’s kindness and thank Him for all that He has done for us.

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Psalm 103:2

Supplication: An old-fashioned word that refers to prayers of “asking” for ourselves and for others. Both are necessary.

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Ephesians 6:18
(cf. Philippians 4:6)

5. Finally

Ask for those things that please God. Prayer is not a blank cheque. God in His wisdom and love will sometimes say “no” to our requests, as any sensible parent must do. But if we ask according to His will, we shall receive it.

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1 John 5:14

Perhaps the most important thing in prayer is sincerity. God knows our heart, so there is no point in pretending to be what we are not; nor should we use words that we do not really mean. We should always beware of putting on a performance (Matthew 6:5-8).

Prayer is something that takes effort. It is a discipline to be learned, not a “technique” to be mastered. It is consciously living in the presence of God and continuously relating everything to Him as a matter of course.

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1 Thessalonians 5:17

The best way to learn to pray is – *to pray!*