

PRINCIPLE & PURPOSE OF PRAYER: THE IDEA & REASONING BEHIND PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Many Christians today don't give a second thought about prayer. They've been through numerous Sunday school classes, heard countless sermons, and have read that it's how we talk to God. Many know that it's because of Jesus Christ dying on the Cross, the free gift of salvation, that enables us to pray any time we wish. However, it's because of this thoughtless repetition (before meals, before bedtime, during church, etc.) that has caused Christians to view prayer as somewhat of a trivial task that needs to be done because that's what we're *supposed* to do. To break that, we're going to take a look at the principles of prayer – why some people pray more than others and the idea that fuels people to continually seek God in prayer.

BREAKING THE HABIT

- #1 Think about the times you tend to pray. When are they? Are they significant? Is it a steady pattern of predictable times or a day filled with spontaneous appointments?

- #2 Observe how you relate and interact with people. How do you maintain a relationship with others in your life? What actions do you take to keep your relationships with others interesting, fun, and constant?

The first step to a deeper understanding of prayer is a willingness to break old habits of repetitive drivel from our brains and lips. If God wanted to listen to the same prayers from your mouth day in and day out, He might as well record you one day and play the same recorded message over and over again.

Imagine having a relationship with a friend or family member like that. Everyday you would say the same thing, at the same time, with the same attitude. I would be inclined to bet that you probably don't have a very good relationship going on there. Your friend might grow tired and find someone else eventually whereas your family members may tend to try to avoid you.

But don't you see? As Christians, we claim to have a relationship with the living God, a God who can hear and respond to our prayers and inquiries. It's not just a religion where we worship a statue or have to practice set rules; it's a *relationship*. In prayer, it's not just a task we perform because the Bible tells us to. It's an act to help us build up our relationship with God. How you pray and how you enter into prayer is indicative of how your relationship with God is coming along.

PRINCIPLE OF PRAYER

So what is the idea behind prayer? Why should we pray and why do we pray? Let's take a look at Matthew 21:12-13.

Here, we read about the story of Jesus clearing out the temple courts. There's a lesson in here that concerns greed, not the market in the temple, where the money changers were selling sacrificial animals at inflated prices in hopes of profit instead of for true worship. But instead of focusing on that point, take a closer look at verse 13 and the cross-reference to Isaiah 56:7.

#3 What exactly is the house of prayer? Where do we find it today?

We think of the house of prayer as our church or Christian fellowship. But Jesus says "my house will be called a house of prayer." (Matthew 21:13, NIV) What is He referring to? A quick look at 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 tells us the answer: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (NIV)

Christ made it clear that His house shall be called a house of prayer. We, as Christians, are members of the body of Christ, a living temple in which the Spirit dwells. How can we honor God with our bodies? Live in purity, flee from sin, and worship Him daily. One way to do this is to live a life of prayer.

PURPOSE OF PRAYER

There are many reasons people pray, but the main purpose is the most obvious one – the need to maintain communication with God, to keep that relationship healthy and fulfilling.

It goes deeper though. To begin our trek into the purpose of prayer, let's take a look at what happens when we pray by reading and analyzing Psalm 17:6-8:

- We are able to tell God everything that is on our mind: the joys, the sorrows, the fears, the hopes, the questions, our past, the present, the future – anything. In this sense we are humbling ourselves before God. (verse 6)
- We are able to listen to what God has to say. Prayer is a way for God to reveal a bit of Himself to us, to let us know His will for us. (verse 7)
- We are able to have fellowship with the Lord, to enter into His presence of present our confessions, requests, and praise. (verse 8)

prayer is seen like bowls of fresh incense to God in Revelation 5:8

Other things to consider when talking about the purpose of prayer that I won't go into detail about, but rather let you research in the Bible and think about:

- moves us into humility
- leaves us vulnerable to God, allowing intimacy
- reveals your deepest desires and wishes
- builds faith
- gives great courage
- battles Satan
- enables angels to fight
- examines our hearts
- draws us closer to God and the people we pray with
- bear one another's burdens
- gives rest and peace
- delivers us from temptation
- protects us
- soften hearts, changes minds, and stirs the spirit

APPLICATION

It is often said that it's easier to learn about something than to actually carry through and act upon what is learned. It is my hope that you not only take the principle and the purpose(s) of prayer to heart, but to also commit yourself to keep these thoughts in mind whenever you approach prayer. The foundations of prayer begin with your heart's desire to understand and act upon the principle and purpose of prayer.