

# **21 Days of Prayer**

1/12/20 Week 1 What is Prayer? Why should I pray?

**Plug Reminders:**

Newcomer Rally Today

Connect Groups Launching in February – start a group or sign up

## **What is prayer?**

Talking to God

Speaking with God

A way of relating to God

It's a line of communication between us and God

Communing with God

A personal, communicative response to the knowledge of God

Pouring out our heart to God

Dictionary - A devout petition to God

Dictionary - An address to God in word or thought

Westminster Catechism - An offering up of our desires unto God

David Wraight – Communion and communication with God

B.M. Palmer – the language of creaturely dependence

Francis Chan – a way of walking in love

Richard Foster – an ongoing and growing love relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

John Piper – intentionally conveying a message to God

Tim Keller - Continuing a conversation that God has started through his Word and his grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with him

Fellowship with God.

Don't make it complicated. Don't be intimidated. Don't feel that it is outside of your ability. It's something we all can, and need to do. We do it all the time with each other.

Illustration Opportunity of getting to know someone.

We can all get better at praying, because fellowship, communication, etc. can be learned.

Luke 11:1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord teach us to pray..."

We're going to spend the next 3 weeks on learning to pray.

## **Why Pray? A cry of the heart.**

To help us learn how to pray, let's ask "why should we pray"?

We tend to answer "why pray" with "get" reasons. What are "get reasons"?

- we get to please God when we pray
- it's how we get things done spiritually
- we can get direction or understand God's will
- we get our needs met
- we get God's work accomplished
- to get revival and spiritual awakening to my family and community

While all of these 'gets' are true and there's many more – the limitation of answering "why pray" with a "get reason", is that we're only motivated to pray to the extent that I can get.

When I understand that prayer is about fellowship, then the reason why we should pray, is centered around relationship with God. Our heart is motivated because God initiates this opportunity for relationship as prayer begins with an understanding that God extends an invitation to fellowship.

God initiates fellowship with man in Genesis. Gen 1:28 "God blessed them and said to them...", 29 "Then God said...", 2:16 "And the Lord God commanded them saying...", 2:18 "Then the Lord God said"

Genesis 3:9 Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

God is initiating the fellowship. Prayer is motivated by a cry from the heart, from God's heart to ours. Prayer moves from wanting to get something from God, to wanting to get more of God.

Prayer is a response to the fellowship God offers us.

Why Pray? 3 cries of the heart

1. Relationship – I want to know you
2. Dependency – I need you
3. Purpose – I want to be like you

### **1) My Heart's Desire: Relationship – I want to know you**

Paul's principal concern in prayer for the Saints, is that we would know Him.

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

"I keep asking ..... that you may know Him better"

In all of Paul's writings for the Saints, he does not pray for a change of circumstances. Not protection from the Emperor, overthrow of the government, protection from marauders,

improvement in health conditions, prosperity of a community, better schools, better transportation, not finances, nor bread for the next meal. He prays we would know Him.

Why does he pray that we would know him?

To know him – not an intellectual knowledge of Him, but an invitation to personally, experience an encounter with Him.

To know him – to have a more vivid sense of the reality of God's presence and of shared life with Him.

Paul has had an experience, a personal encounter, with God, and he values it above all else. Philippians 3:8 ... I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,...

Paul concludes that nothing is to compare with knowing him. Vs 10 - "I want to know Christ"

We have the potential for our love relationship with Christ to become not only personal knowledge, but personal experience.

How do we experience this real love relationship? Prayer!

Romans 8:15-16

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!". The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.

The Spirit helps us to pray so that we can

cry – urgent scream, cry aloud, shriek

Abba – daddy, papa – "a term of tender endearment by a beloved child"

Numerous theologians have written of this prayer as:

"a profound experience of God's reality"

"a religious experience that is ineffable"

"mystical in the best sense of the word"

"we must not underemphasize the emotional ground of experience"

"we cannot exclude the mystical and emotional dimensions of Christian experience"

"get an experience of the power of the gospel in and upon your own hearts, or all your profession is an expiring thing"

Illustration opportunity of personal experience of an encounter through prayer.

Through prayer, the Holy Spirit helps us to experience what we believe.

If prayer is the means by which we have an experiential relationship, the means to know Him, and Paul's principle concern is that we would have this personal experience of knowing Him - then Paul's principle concern - is that we would pray!

"I keep asking ..... that you ~~may know Him better~~" would pray!

When motivated to know Him, we pray with a heart's cry that does not desire to get more from God, but to get more of God. The resulting commitment of our lives to prayer is not founded upon technique, effort, striving nor discipline – but upon a desire to know him.

Prayer is conversation and encounter – practice and experience

Nothing is better than to know Him. Prayer is motivated by a hearts' desire to know him.

## 2) My Heart's Attitude: **Humility** - I need you

As we pray from a hearts' desire to know him, we recognize a change we need in our heart's attitude: Humility. An attitude of humility recognizes my full dependency upon him.

Philippians 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus

10 Dependencies found in just 4 chapters from John 5 to 8

"The Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing" (John 5:19).

"I can do nothing on my own initiative. My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 5:30).

"I do not receive glory from men " (John 5:41).

"I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me" (John 6:38)

"I live because of the Father" (John 6:57)

"My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent me" (John 7:16).

"I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me" (John 7:28).

"I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me" (John 8:28).

"I have not even come of My own initiative, but He sent Me " (John 8:42).

"I do not seek My glory" (John 8:50).

How would Christ fulfill his dependency upon God? Prayer

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:16

Humility is the heart attitude which responds to God's offer of fellowship.

But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word. Isaiah 66:2

We are to have an attitude of humility – an attitude of dependency – just like Christ. Christ was absolutely dependent upon God and his dependency was met in prayer.

### 3) My Heart's Motivation: Purpose – I want to be like you

As we adopt the hearts desire to know him with personal experience, and the hearts attitude to humbly depend on Him for everything, our heart is motivated with a purpose to be like him.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children

All 3 principles wrapped up in the final illustration Jesus provided us in John 15

John 15:5 “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

Abides in me – Relationship

Apart from me you can do nothing – Humility

Bears much fruit – Purpose

As we desire a relationship with Him through prayer we come to know Him. As we know Him we depend upon Him. As we depend upon Him we grow fruit and are motivated to be like Him, we want to be conformed to His image, His ways, we want to do his works, we want to bear fruit for Him, we want to be used by Him, we want to see his purpose in the spheres of influence he's given us:

- Relationships – Family and Friends
- Habitation – Nation and Community
- Vocation – Work and Calling

### Application: Commit to 21 Days of Prayer

This week:

Day 1 - We want to learn to pray with the right heart. Lord, Teach us to Pray.

Day 2 - A hearts desire for Relationship with Him – I want to Know You

Day 3 - A hearts attitude of Dependency upon Him – I need You

Day 4 - A hearts inclination of Purpose in Him – I want to be like You

Day 5 – Our hearts cry for our Family and Friends

Day 6 – Our hearts cry for our Nation and Community

Day 7 – Our hearts cry for our Work and Calling

Encouragement to pray together

- 21 Days of Prayer
- Prayer after Service
- Prayer Chain
- Monday Morning Prayer
- Connect Groups

## From Duty to Delight

John Packer calls the journey of prayer a journey “from duty to delight”

There is nothing great that is also easy. You are not alone in struggling to pray. One of the first things we learn when we pray is how spiritually shallow we are. We struggle with what to say. We don't know what words to use, we don't have the right heart yet. We're so accustomed to living in a state of spiritual shallowness that we don't recognize how shallow we are until we begin to pray. This is a necessary and important first step. A step that examines our motivations to pray as we learn to have the heart cry “Lord teach us to pray”. If we learn to see prayer as an invitation for fellowship which is extended from our loving Father, if we will endure and pray, we will move our time in prayer “from duty to delight”.

Illustration opportunity of learning a musical instrument – duty to delight

Do we see it as an absolute necessity? We will always make room for the absolute necessity. Example of a diagnosis of life threatening illness and a cure for prevention. Do we view Prayer as something that we must have or we aren't going to make it?

Pray whenever you can. Pray in the car. Pray in the shower. Put down the screen and make it a priority to respond to the fellowship that God offers you so that you can get to know him.

“Prayer is the only entryway into genuine self-knowledge. It is also the main way we experience deep change – the reordering of our loves. Prayer is how God gives us so many of the unimaginable things he has for us. Indeed, prayer makes it safe for God to give us many of the things we most desire. It is the way we know God, the way we finally treat God as God. Prayer is simply the key to everything we need to do and be in life. We must learn to pray. We have to.” - Tim Keller, *Prayer*