

# WHY PRAY?

## Becoming God's Friend

Discussion Guide

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### "The Motivation for Prayer"

by Pastor Paul R. Martin

James 4:1-10

**Introduction:** James gives two reasons why our prayers are ineffective: the first is simply that we do not pray. The sin of prayerlessness is a key cause for failure. I do not think he means that there is absolutely no prayer at all (the context seems to suggest otherwise), but that there is no *true* prayer. The second is that when we do pray, we have wrong motives. It is this matter I want us to consider in this lesson—What is the right motive for receiving answers to prayer?

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#### Sermon Outline

#### I. The Negative: "You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives!"

*The essence of improper motivation is that our desire is purely driven by selfishness—"so that you may spend it on your pleasures." He then lists three conditions that contribute to this self-centered focus of prayer:*

- A. Friendship with the world—a focus on material wants and benefits for ourselves
- B. Pride—a focus on our own importance resulting in jealousy
- C. Contentiousness—a focus on our own will in opposition to others

*These conditions of the heart make it impossible to pray in a way that pleases God and moves Him to respond to our requests. James plainly says, "You ask and do not receive."*

#### II. The Positive: "Now the greatest of these is love." (I Cor 13:13)

*If the negative is selfishness, the opposite is selflessness. True selflessness is motivated by a love for another that causes one's own needs to become relatively insignificant. Luke 11:5-13*

- A. The parent analogy—how does a Father treat His children? (Luke 11:11-13)
  - 1. God delights to bless us and will always give us what is good
  - 2. He is grieved when we are selfish, jealous, grasping and filled with rivalry
- B. The lesson of the persistent friend (Luke 11:5-10)
  - 1. He goes on behalf of another
  - 2. He recognizes his own poverty and impotence
  - 3. He will not give up until he has what he needs *for another*
- C. When our love for others has the quality and character of God's love for people, He is pleased to come to our aid, to respond to our passion and persistence, and to grant our requests. We are most like Him when we are giving ourselves to others and seeking the Father on their behalf.

**Conclusion:** God is not disinterested in our personal needs. He delights to bless us with every needful thing and many bonuses besides. But, He is most moved when we are focused on others and come to Him on their behalf. He is deeply stirred when we will not let Him go for love of others. He will come in power to those who acknowledge their weakness and impotence. God will partner with anyone who takes up His cause in bringing full salvation to lost people, and a rich and rewarding prayer life is offered as the means of bringing heaven down to earth.



## Discussion Questions

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**MEMORY VERSES**

*"If you abide in Me,  
and My words abide in  
you, ask whatever you  
wish, and it will be  
done for you."*

John 15: 7 (NASB)

*Therefore humble  
yourselves under the  
mighty hand of God,  
that He may exalt you  
at the proper time, <sup>7</sup>  
casting all your  
anxiety on Him,  
because He cares for  
you.*

I Peter 5: 6-7 (NASB)

