

WHY PRAY?

Becoming God's Friend

Discussion Guide

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Sermon Title

How, Then, Should We Pray?

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Ephesians 1: 15-23 and 3: 14-21

Sermon Outline

Introduction: In the Bible we have many models for prayer. Some are quite specific, as when Jesus said, "Pray then in this way: ..." Others may be gleaned from example. The Apostle Paul is a great prayer warrior, so his prayers are good models from which to learn. For what did he pray in the lives of those whom he had discipled and the churches he had established? First, some general background:

I. The Context of Our Lives in this World as Followers of Jesus Christ

- A. We are both spirit and matter, and we have needs and limitations imposed by our very physical nature. God is well aware of these needs, but urges us to place our priority upon the spiritual nature of the Kingdom. (Matthew 6:33—whole context is prayer)
- B. We are going to have tribulation because of our very relationship with Jesus Christ. This will come in the form of persecution, physical needs and illness, attacks on our loved ones, and temptations. (John 6:33—context is also prayer)
- C. Both this world and our temporal, physical lives are passing away. The long view is eternity, when the battle is over and we are home at last. (I John 2: 15-17)
 1. We live in a hostile environment—a battle field.
 2. The prize is salvation—God's wants people with Him eternally.

II. God Has Declared Specific Goals for Our Lives

- A. He desires to have fellowship with us in a personal relationship through Jesus Christ. Who we are to Him and in Him is more important than what we do.
- B. He has determined to make us over into the image of His Son.
- C. He has promised to bring us safely to His heavenly Kingdom.
- D. He desires us to be His ambassadors, witnesses to His love expressed through the cross, resurrection, and glorification of believers.
- E. God is MOST concerned to bring about those things that will result in the accomplishment of His plans and purposes for us individually and for the Church.

III. Intercession Which Arises Out of this Context and Which Has These Goals in Mind is Most Effective:

- A. It aligns our goals and desires with God's goals and desires.
- B. It gives us a new perspective on specific circumstances—"Why is this thing happening?" "What does God want MOST to do in this situation?"
- C. What are the opportunities for?
 1. deepening the relationship with God and strengthening one's faith
 2. growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ in spiritual maturity
 3. witnessing to those who do not know God and sharing the good news
 4. bringing glory to God and exposing His Kingdom and His Truth
- D. "You ask and do not receive because you have the wrong goals in mind when you pray ... you are more interested in your own comforts and desires!"

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints,¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1: 15-23
(NASB)



Discussion Questions

1.) Based on what you have learned about God's goals, can you infer some of what Satan's goals might be? Name some things he might be doing to oppose the saints:

2.) In the midst of all kinds of trials and difficulties, how does one focus on God's goals and desires in each situation? (See James 1: 1-7)

3.) What kinds of questions can you ask about any given situation needing prayer that help you become aware of what God might want to do in that circumstance?

4.) This is the eleventh message in this series. Based on all you have learned, why do you think we are, or are not, very effective in intercessory prayer (both individually and also in a group context)?

5.) Has this study (#11) changed your perspective on intercessory prayer? Explain. In what ways will you pray differently?

6.) List six things that you have learned about prayer in this series that you feel are the most important things God has shown you and that you want to remember always.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.
Ephesians 3: 14-21 (NASB)

