

## Six Elements of Prayer

(preached in two parts)

How much have you actually studied about prayer?

How does prayer work?

We think it must be spontaneous (or else it must be fake)

But, in Luke 11:1, the disciples asked Jesus “Teach us to pray”.

It does not happen naturally and automatically.

Great teachers of the past taught their disciples special ways to pray.

(They were recognized by their techniques, like school colors)

Jesus taught His disciples, and we can learn too:

Matthew 6:5-13

John 17

Luke 18:1-5

We can learn six aspects of prayer which will help us. They are:

Praise; Confession; Supplication; Thanksgiving; Intercession; and Persistence.

To have a well balanced prayer life, we must understand how these things combine to make prayer a powerful force in our lives.

### I. The Power of Praise

A. We neglect “praise” in our prayers because of the negative aspects of Pentecostalism.

1. Heb 13:15 a command

2. I Pet 2:9

We say, “I’ll praise him with my life” - it takes our lips too!

If we do good deeds - but don’t praise God - who gets the glory?

God wants people to know why we are nice.

It is because God is in our life.

B. Praise is the most difficult part of our private prayer life.

1. Sometimes I felt that praise in prayer was like flattering God in order to get what I wanted.

2. I thought, “God should be above wanting this”.

3. This is what kids do: “I love you” - “What do you want?”

C. Suggestions:

1. Begin prayer with a psalm of praise or a song from the hymnal.

2. Suddenly - I realized that God must love it - He must be thrilled.

3. It would be like having a kid who says, “Dad, you must be the best hunter in the whole world.”

(Are we above wanting that? Is that too hoaky?)

D. That praise helps me too.

1. It reminds me of God’s strength, power, love, mercy.

2. It focuses my attention on God’s attributes.

John 5:19 (We can’t follow God without knowing Him.)

3. It directs the way I think . . . and . . . feel.

When I submit to praise, even when I am hurting, it changes the way I think and feel.

4. It's like Fritos - the more you Praise, the more you want to.

## II. The Power of Confession.

- A. I John 1:9 "If we confess our sins - he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins . . ."
  1. God forgives if we confess.
  2. Heb 8:12 "He will be merciful to our iniquities and remember our sins no more."
  3. I know - if I ask - I am forgiven.
- B. But, there is a power in confession we must not cheat ourselves out of.
  1. What must an alcoholic do to overcome alcoholism?  
"I am an alcoholic".
  2. If we have to confess the same sin day after day after year after year - we know we have a problem!
  3. Confession focuses my attention on things that need to change.  
It confronts me with repeated sin.  
It keeps me aware of my dependence on God.
- C. Have you ever thought you had a demon because you could not repent of a besetting sin?
  1. If every time you repented, you never did it again - in a year you would be perfect . . . and would not need God!
  2. It is my sin and my weakness that makes me aware I can't make it without God.
  3. One thing that makes me unique before God is the way I sin(we all sin with our own unique weaknesses)
  4. God forgives me of my sin (not just sins of the world).
- D. Confession has a purging effect.
  1. Momma said I needed a spanking every 3 months.
  2. I could feel it coming on. (I'd push the boundary just a little farther and farther).
    - a. Finally - I'd get my spanking and feel so good
    - b. It was like I was punished for all the stuff I'd done that momma didn't know about.
  3. When we confess our sins - it's like a purging effect.  
Psalm 51 - David purges himself.  
He couldn't go onward in life unless his sin was specified and confessed.

## III. The Power of Supplication.

- A. Phil 4:6-7
  1. In the Lord's Prayer - Jesus said God knows what I need.
  2. So . . . why should I have to ask Him?
  3. Yet - this is the most frequent form of prayer we use.
  4. So - why do we ask if He already knows?

- B. Asking - reminds us who ultimately controls our lives.
  1. Our life is comfortable - but God gave it to us.
  2. Talking to God strengthens my relationship and faith.  
(You can't have a close relationship with anyone you don't talk to)

IV. The Power of Thanksgiving

- A. I Thes 5:18 "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
  1. What is "God's will for you"?
    - a. Praying? Yes.
    - b. Thanksgiving? Yes.
    - c. Is Every situation God's will? Dare we say it?  
No. For some situations are not God's  
But giving thanks in every situation is.
  2. Thanksgiving in prayer keeps life's situations in balance - Pollyanna.
  3. When joy is missing in life - it is probably because we don't practice thanksgiving.
- B. Three things rob your joy as you walk with God:
  1. When you're trapped in a sin you can't get out of
  2. When you're not doing the things you know you should do.
  3. When you don't know how to practice Thanksgiving
- C. Thanksgiving changes the way you look at things.
  1. When I got married, I had some misconceptions
    - a. I thought my girl would always look like she did on dates (have you ever seen a "mud mask"?)
    - b. I thought she was always going to agree with me
    - c. I thought she would always tell me how lucky she was to find me
  2. I had some adjustments to make until I learned about Thanksgiving  
**Thank God for a woman who:**
    - a. Sits beside me every single Lord's day.
    - b. Disciplined my children when I spoiled them.
    - c. Tells me when I'm wrong so I don't look like a fool.
    - d. Has worked her head off alongside me for 20 years.
  3. We don't fight too much any more. I value my wife too much for that.  
Thanksgiving changes the way we look at things.
  4. Thank God for your kids  
If you think your kids drive you crazy - move someone else's kids in for one month.  
All presumed deficits can be offset with a "Thanksgiving".

5. Even in the face of terrible tragedies, countless blessings are evident.  
Every “Thank You” you utter offsets the pain of the problem.

V. The Power of Intercession.

- A. This is the most frequent prayer mentioned in the N.T.
  1. Jesus often uttered this type prayer.
  2. It is our gift to one another.
  3. It is when I pray for you - you pray for me - we pray for others.
- B. It has Power - it is more than just a nice thing to do.
  1. Numbers 14:11-19 Moses interceded for Israel
    - a. God was ready to wipe them out and make from Moses a great nation
    - b. Moses’ prayer influenced God.
    - c. The Prayer of Intercession has Power.
  2. And - it diverts my attention off of me
    - a. “Oh Father - I’m so sinful”
    - b. “Oh Father - I’m so weak, sad, needful, . . .”
    - c. This is kind of selfish - isn’t it?
  3. Other people have pains, troubles, struggles too.  
We need to be attuned to that!
  4. The prayer of Intercession diverts my focus from self and makes me realize that others have trials and burdens too.

VI. The Power of Persistence

- A. This is the one lesson that Jesus pointedly taught about prayer.
  1. Luke 18:1-8
  2. The dishonest judge didn’t care if the woman got justice or not;  
But, she wore him out.
  3. Do not give up in prayer.  
Unlike the judge, God does care. God is not evil.  
Ask Him - Ask Him - Ask Him.
- B. This practice develops an earnestness and perseverance in me.
  1. It makes me evaluate my request.
  2. Phil 1:19 - Paul had prayed again and again to get out of prison;  
But then, he realized the benefit of being there:  
“the whole guard knows why I’m here”  
vss 12-14 “people are preaching who wouldn’t be otherwise”
- C. Persistence keeps me alert and focused on the situation
  1. It gives me opportunity to do all I can to help that situation.
  2. It keeps me focused on God’s power.

Now, let’s stop and make some personal application about the prayer of:

Praise - Confession - Supplication - Thanksgiving - Intercession - Persistence

Answer to yourself - “I pray approximately . . .

Once a week - Three times a week - Daily - Several times a day

Your answer will reveal how much you believe these things we’ve said today.

Do you have a regular time to pray, or is it just when you’re in a certain mood?

Does it seem God grants your prayer requests . . .

Never - Rarely - Occasionally - OR  
Regularly - Frequently - Always?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you evaluate your prayer life?

This is self analysis.

Now - we shall enter a study of specific teaching of Jesus about prayer.

We shall look at some of the promises of Jesus about prayer that actually seem “too good to be true”.

This was a side of prayer I had often shied away from because I was afraid to explore it.

It was just too wonderful for me. I didn’t know how to deal with it.

But we had better save that lesson for another time!

I hope you will be as excited to continue our study of this subject as I am.