

04 | Speak Prayer



Introduction

Thousands of books have been written on the subject of prayer, and this study only barely scratches the surface of this supernatural component of the Christian's life. Unfortunately, so many of us don't realise how powerful and vital prayer is, and as a result spend very little time in prayer. May this study introduce you to this amazing subject and motivate and compel you to spend more time communing with God.

What is prayer?

Prayer is simply talking with God. Actually, it is more than just talking with Him, prayer is communing with God. Communion is communication on a deeper, more intimate level than just using words. Prayer does include talking with God, but it also involves spending time with Him, listening for Him, worshipping Him, singing to Him... being with Him.

God always answers prayer!

Believe it or not, God always answers prayer. There are three ways God answers our prayers:

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Not yet**

Whatever the answer, if your heart is right before God, He will always answer your prayers in the way that is ultimately the best for you. We must always remember that God's ways are not our ways, and while we may not always understand, we can always trust.

"God is at work in response to our prayers, whether we see something happening or not. If we are truly praying, "Your will be done," forces are at work beyond our comprehension – and often, beyond our vision. But they are working just the same." ¹ David Jeremiah

A thousand years is like a day to God (2 Peter 3:8). That means that a ten year wait to us would be about fourteen minutes to God! Don't put a time limit on His workings... be patient.

Many times we forget all the awesome prayers God has said yes to. I encourage you to buy a notebook and write your prayer requests in it. When a particular prayer gets answered, write the date it was answered beside the prayer request. Over time you will be amazed at how powerful prayers can be and how faithful God is in answering them.

Powerful and effective!

¹⁶The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.
James 5:16b

This verse promises that if we are right before God, our prayers wield great power! What a wonderful promise, yet how many of us take prayer for granted? If we really understood the power of prayer, we would pray a lot more than we are now. Everything God does in the work of ministry, He does through prayer.

- *Prayer is the way you defeat the devil (Luke 22:32, James 4:7)*
- *Prayer is the way you get the lost saved (Luke 18:13)*

¹ David Jeremiah, *Prayer: the Great Adventure*, © 2004 Multnomah Publishers Inc.

- *Prayer is the way you acquire wisdom (James 1:5)*
- *Prayer is the way a backslider gets restored (James 5:16-20)*
- *Prayer is how the saints get strengthened (Matthew 26:41, Jude 20)*
- *Prayer is the way we get labourers out to the mission field (Matthew 9:38)*
- *Prayer is how we cure the sick (James 5:13-15)*
- *Prayer is how we accomplish the impossible (Mark 11:23-24)*
- *Everything we do that's worth doing; everything God wants to do in the Church, everything God wants to do in your life; He has subjected it all to one thing: Prayer.²*

Jesus' blueprint for prayer

One day Jesus' disciples asked Jesus how to pray. He answered them with the following verses:

⁵“When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. ⁷“When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! ⁹Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today the food we need. ¹²and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. ¹³And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. ¹⁴“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. **Matthew 6:5-14 (NLT)**

There are some powerful keys for effective praying found in these verses, but please note that it is not a formula, it is a principle.

1. Alone

⁶But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. **Matthew 6:6 (NLT)**

2. Real

⁷“When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. **Matthew 6:7 (NLT)**

3. Worship

⁹Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. **Matthew 6:9 (NLT)**

4. Surrender

¹⁰May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. **Matthew 6:10 (NLT)**

Jesus prayed that God's will would be accomplished, not His will as He faced the cross. This shows surrender to God's will and His ways.

² David Jeremiah, *Prayer: the Great Adventure*, © 2004 Multnomah Publishers Inc.

5. Ask

¹¹*Give us today the food we need, Matthew 6:11 (NLT)*

6. Confess

¹²*and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. Matthew 6:12 (NLT)*

We usually need to come to God daily and ask for His forgiveness because we are all human, and humans stumble frequently.

7. Strength

¹³*And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. Matthew 6:13 (NLT)*

How many of us are struggling to be victorious Christians simply because we are not praying for strength to overcome?

8. Worship

Some manuscripts add: For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Matthew 6:13 (NLT Footnote)

It is always good to finish prayer with worship. Remember worship includes thanksgiving.

Praying in the will of God

Prayer is most effective when we grasp the concept of praying in accordance with God's will. Many people use prayer as leverage to get their own way and desires. They don't pay much attention to what God's will is, only their will. An example of this is seeing an attractive man or woman and praying hard that that person will be your marriage partner. This may be your will, but perhaps God's will is that five years from now you will meet His perfect partner for you. He knows that if you were to marry the person you think is right, it would be a very unhappy marriage. If we apply this principle to every area of our life we realise that it is very important to pray "God's will be done". We must seek God for His purposes, or else we will just waste our time praying meaningless prayers, or worse still, God may even answer our selfish prayers, and that would be a very costly lesson to learn. In prayer we must seek God's purpose and plan in an area and then pray in accordance with that. In this way, we can be assured that our prayers will be powerful and effective.

²²*You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it. Matthew 21:22 (NLT)*

This verse is not a guarantee that we can get anything we want simply by asking Jesus and believing. God does not grant requests that would hurt us or others or that would violate his own nature or will. Jesus' statement is not a blank check. To be fulfilled, our requests must be in harmony with the principles of God's Kingdom. The stronger our belief, the more likely our prayers will be in line with God's will, and then God will be happy to grant them.³

God restricts His power to our prayers

God restricts His plans and purposes on earth to the prayers of His people. For example, no revival has ever broken out without fervent, desperate prayer from God's people. I doubt that many of us would be Christians without someone praying for us somewhere. Throughout the Bible, many catastrophes were diverted because of the prayers of God's people.

"God has determined that He will use the prayers of His people to accomplish His purposes on this earth. When we do not pray, we limit what God might do in our lives. Some may not like the sound of this, but if it were not true, what could James mean when he writes, "You do not have, because you do not ask God" (James 4:2)? Both James and Paul (2 Thess 3:1-2) believed that God might well withhold His hand of blessing from them if they neglected to pray."⁴

³ The QuickVerse Life Application Bible, Copyright ©1997 Parsons Technology, Inc. All rights reserved.

⁴ Source unknown

In many cases, the Bible shows us what God's will is. It is God's will that none should perish for example, so we can confidently pray for our unsaved friends and family to be saved. Jesus said to pray for workers to be sent into the world's harvest field of souls, so we can confidently pray for missionaries to be sent on exciting adventures for God throughout the world.

Anytime, anywhere

*¹⁶ Always be joyful. ¹⁷ Never stop praying. ¹⁸ Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NLT)***

God wants us to talk with Him in the car, going for walks, doing the dishes... anytime and anywhere! God wants us to talk with Him naturally, in our own way, not using religious sounding words, or inserting His name wherever a comma should be. Be natural with Him; talk with Him as if He is your best friend. A conversation is when two people talk and interact with each other, and this is how prayer should be. During prayer, take time out from talking and wait in God's presence to see if He wants to speak to you about something. Don't get into answer-phone praying, where you do all the talking and don't give time for (or expect) God to talk back to you.

Tent of Meeting

It is essential in our fast-paced, cluttered lifestyles to establish a 'Tent of Meeting', a place where we can regularly meet with God.

*⁷ It was Moses' practice to take the Tent of Meeting^[a] and set it up some distance from the camp. Everyone who wanted to make a request of the LORD would go to the Tent of Meeting outside the camp. ⁸ Whenever Moses went out to the Tent of Meeting, all the people would get up and stand in the entrances of their own tents. They would all watch Moses until he disappeared inside. ⁹ As he went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and hover at its entrance while the LORD spoke with Moses. ¹⁰ When the people saw the cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, they would stand and bow down in front of their own tents. ¹¹ Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Afterward Moses would return to the camp, but the young man who assisted him, Joshua son of Nun, would remain behind in the Tent of Meeting. **Exodus 33:7-11 (NLT)***

Moses set up a 'Tent of Meeting' outside the camp. Outside of the busyness, outside of the stress, outside of the noise. Inside the tent of meeting, the Lord would speak to Moses face to face. If we are serious about our relationship with God, we will establish a meeting place, where we regularly meet with God. It may be a bedroom or it may be a walk around the park. It doesn't have to be a physical tent of meeting, but it should be a literal meeting place with God.

Corporate prayer

Group (corporate) prayer is where two or more people meet together to pray.

*¹⁹ "I also tell you this: If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you. ²⁰ For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them." **Matthew 18:19-20 (NLT)***

There is a very powerful dynamic in praying with two or more people. There is God-given authority in this and awesome things start happening when God's people start coming together for committed times of unified prayer! The tragedy is that many people shy away from corporate prayer times because they are too self-conscious. Do we pray to sound all educated, eloquent, and super-spiritual, or do we pray because we are passionate for God?

Fasting

Fasting is when one deliberately misses out on a physical need (like food) in order to seek the will of God. When we do so, it shows God that we are serious about our prayer request. It is during these times of prayer and fasting that people get awesome revelations from God, direction, breakthrough etc. There are right and wrong ways to fast, and I encourage you to study the topic of fasting, before you do so.

¹⁶ “And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and dishevelled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. **Matthew 6:16-18 (NLT)**

Hindrances to prayer

1. Sin

¹⁸ If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.
Psalm 66:18 (NLT)

Continuing to practice sinful ways will stop God even hearing your prayers!

¹ Listen! The LORD’s arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. ² It’s your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. **Isaiah 59:1-2 (NLT)**

2. Wrong motives/Selfishness

If we are honest with ourselves, we know that sometimes we pray with selfish motives.

Yet you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it. ³ And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure. **James 4:2b-3 (NLT)**

3. Doubt

⁵ If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. ⁶ But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷ Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. ⁸ Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do. **James 1:5-8 (NLT)**

An excellent way to become a solid stable Christian, is to spend time reading God’s Word.

4. Unresolved conflict

⁷ In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered. **1 Peter 3:7 (NLT)**

Unresolved relational conflict definitely hinders prayers.

²⁴ I tell you, you can pray for anything, and if you believe that you’ve received it, it will be yours. ²⁵ But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too. **Mark 11:24-25 (NLT)**

Conclusion

Having the opportunity to talk with the Creator of the Universe is an amazing privilege. Please don’t take it for granted. Prayer is powerful and God answers prayer. Let’s not waste our time and neglect the power of prayer.

Anything creative, anything powerful, anything Biblical, insofar as we are participants in it, originates in prayer. **Eugene H. Peterson**

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