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I. Beginning of Prayer

The first mention of prayer in the Bible is in Genesis 4:26. Man felt his need for God and began to call upon Him. Prayer to God should be as natural an action as a child talking to its Father and Mother. There is no specific position for prayer; kneeling, standing, prostrate, etc.

Now we pray because:

- Jesus commanded us to pray (Matt. 26:41).
- It is the only way to get things from God (James 4:2).
- There is joy in prayer (John 16:24).
- Prayer is a channel of power (Jer. 33:3).
- Sinners are saved by prayers (Rom. 10:13, 14).
- Jesus, Himself prayed (John 17).

II. What is Prayer?

Prayer is communion between God and man. It is talking with God. It is making your request known unto Him in faith (Matt. 7:7). Prayer is asking and receiving, knowing the will of God (1John 5:14, 15). Prayer is seeking and finding (Col. 3:1). Prayer is knocking and opening (Matt. 17:14-21). Prayer is the highest privilege of mankind to talk with God. It is a form of worship and is vital to our daily spiritual growth. There are ***two kinds of prayer***: prayer that reaches God and prayer that does not reach God (Luke 18:9-14).

A. ***Petitions or Supplications***. Supplication – earnestly seeking God’s blessings. Prayer always springs out of a sense of need, either oneself (petition) or for others (intercession). (Heb. 11:6).

B. ***Thanksgiving and Praise***. Praise and thanksgiving reflect one’s grateful attitude toward God. “But in everything by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:1). “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you ward” (1Thess. 5:18).

III. Conditions for Effective Prayer

God has laid down certain conditions which man must meet, before God will answer his prayers. Here are a few of those conditions.

A. ***Pray with pure hearts and clean hands.*** “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Ps. 66:18; 1 Tim. 2:8).

God is a holy God. There is no sin in Him and He will not tolerate sin in those who come into His presence through prayer. This does not refer to prayer for forgiveness; prayer out of a heart of repentance. God has promised to answer that prayer (1 John 1:9; cf. Acts 8:22). (Isa. 59:1-2). One of the best guarantees that God will hear our prayers is to begin them with a sincere request for forgiveness.

B. ***We must hear and do God’s will.*** (1John 3:22; Prov. 28:9). One should make sure that he is honestly trying to do the will of the Father before he asks for His blessings and benefits. John 9:31

C. ***Pray humbly in harmony with God’s will.*** The Father’s will must always be first in our prayers. (Matt. 26:39; 1 John 5:14). Paul admitted, “We know not how to pray as we ought” (Rom. 8:26). We do not always know what is the Father’s will.

D. ***Pray fervently and with persistence.*** The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16b). A sincere prayer pleases God.

Jesus said, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). “...pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph. 6:18).

E. ***Prayers must be unselfish.*** “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures” (James 4:3, ASV). Ask yourself “Do I need this to forward God’s kingdom? Will I be a better Christian and will Christ’s kingdom be blessed if I receive my petition?” God keeps our spiritual welfare and His kingdom first in mind. We would be ruined if God answered every selfish request that we made. In His love and wisdom, however, He chooses the things that we need and will help us grow spiritually. This is another reason why we should always pray, “Thy will be done.”

F. ***Pray in the name of Christ.*** Jesus told His Apostles, “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do,” (John 14:13-14; John 16:24).

1. **Our access to the Father was made possible by the sacrifice of Christ.** (Heb. 9:8; 9:11-12; 10:19-20). Through Christ, our High Priest, we may enter God’s presence through prayer.

2. **Jesus is our mediator.** For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). Christ is a two-way channel between earth and heaven.

3. **Christ is our intercessor at the throne of God.** Christ “who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:34; Phil. 2:9). As one of Christ’s redeemed ones, I can come boldly to the throne of God through Him (Heb. 4:14-16).

4. **My sins have been washed away in the blood of Christ.** It means that I have been cleansed and made worthy by Him to Stand in the presence of God (Rev. 1:5; Heb. 9:14).

Because of these and other reasons, our prayers to God should always be presented in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ our High Priest, Mediator, Savior, and Lord.

G. ***Pray in faith.*** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will (Mark 11:24). (James 1:6,7). But without faith it is impossible to please him... (Heb. 11:6).

Caution: Keep in mind that God’s will and wisdom will direct God’s answer. Even when God in His wisdom says no to our requests, He still has answered it. Another thought to keep in mind is that we may ask for one thing, but God may give us something else which may, for the moment seem to be a rejection of our request. In the end, we may see that God has given us what we really needed and desired but not what we had requested.

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H. ***Prayer with a forgiving Spirit.*** This condition cannot be overlooked. In Matthew 6:12 we ask God to forgive us in the same way and to the same extent that we forgive our fellow man.

Jesus goes ahead to state “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15).

I. ***Pray without pretension or vain repetition.*** Jesus pronounced condemnation on hypocrites of His day with a sevenfold “woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (Matt. 23) An insincere, pretentious prayer is always an abomination to God. Luke 18:9-14. God is not deceived; He is impressed only by sincerity. Our prayers then must be simple, direct, and sincere. (Matt. 6:7; Luke 9:28; Mark 1:35). Jesus does, however, forbid needless repetition of the same thing as though God could not hear or had to be begged to hear His children’s prayers.

IV. Fasting (with Prayer)

Fasting (abstaining from food and/or other delights of the flesh)

The purpose of fasting is: (Matt. 6:16-18)

- to shut off the influence of the flesh to be in tune with the spirit
- not to influence God into acting in our behalf (He is not impressed)
- to help us bring our flesh under subjection

Fasting helps us to receive from God. The problem is our spiritual density – our inability to receive what God has already done for us.

Fasting is a tool we use that puts us in a position to be more spiritually aware and “tuned in” to God. (Mark 9:29; 1 Cor. 7:5)

V. The Holy Spirit's Assistance in Prayer

“And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).

For these and other reasons, our heavenly Father has given us His Holy Spirit to assist us in prayer. He takes our petitions and praise and presents them correctly to the throne of God. The Christian's prayer is addressed to God the Father, in the name of or by the authority of Christ and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is a wonderful privilege that the Christian enjoys and should always use.

VI. God has promised Answers to Prayer

God does answer prayer! God's word is filled with the promises of answered prayer (Exod. 32:14; Josh. 10:10-14; 1 Sam. 1:9-20; 1 Peter 3:12; James 1:5).

God does not answer all prayer. Conditions must be filled: “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7; Matt.7:7; Luke 11:9,10; Rom. 12:1, 2; Col. 3:16, 17).

If a man will meet the conditions that God has laid down for acceptable and effective prayer, he can rest assured that his prayers will be heard and answered according to the will and wisdom of God.

QUESTIONS – PRAYER

TRUE-FALSE

- _____ 1. Man began to pray when God commanded him to do so.
- _____ 2. If we ask in faith God will grant our petition whatever it may be if it is in His will.
- _____ 3. The Holy Spirit assists the Christian to pray correctly.
- _____ 4. God does not refuse to hear anyone's prayer.
- _____ 5. God may answer prayer and still not give what is requested.

FILL IN THE BLANKS

- 1. Prayer is composed of two basic parts: _____ and _____.
- 2. List three conditions for effective prayer.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
- 3. List two reasons why the Christian should pray in Christ's name.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
- 4. If I regard _____ in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. (Ps. 66:18)
- 5. What type of faith results in prayer not being answered? James 1:6,7 _____
- 6. Promises of answered prayer in Luke 11:9 states:
 - a. Ask _____
 - b. Seek _____
 - c. Knock _____
- 7. What type of prayer did Jesus pray in Matthew 14:19? _____
- 8. How often should we pray? 1Thess. 5:17 _____
- 9. What command did Jesus give in John 16:24? _____

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