

"Let Us Pray"

We have the right and the privilege to pray to our Father in heaven. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today we explore the value of prayer. Stay with us.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. God always means what He says. And He speaks what is best for us, because He loves us. For this reason we can trust God to tell us the truth and to keep His promises. Believing God's promises also challenges us to take His commandments seriously, His ethics and His teaching and His morals, all of these, seriously. The blessings of God come to those who walk in His ways. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

We enjoy the great privilege of prayer to our God and Father in heaven who created us and sustains the universe. We can pray to our Father in heaven any time with our praise, our thanksgiving, petitions and requests. Prayer allows us to draw close to God and to speak from our hearts. Daniel chose to spend the night in the lion's den rather than go one day without prayer.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples in Luke 18:1, "that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart"; and so should we. When the church began at Pentecost, the disciples "were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). Colossians 4 and verse 2 says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving." 1 Thessalonians 5:17 simply says, "Pray without ceasing." Now this simply means to just keep on praying. And don't give up.

Faithful Christians pray fervently because they see the value in prayer. Prayer opens the door to the greatest power in the world, the power of God. And they realize that God will respond to their prayers. David said in Psalm 34 verses 4, he said "I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." Do you pray? Do you seek the Lord?

We offer this study free on prayer. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website, www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Matthew 7:7 to 11, and explore the fact that life in God's will, and praying to Him, matters.

The scripture reading today is from Matthew, chapter 7, verses 7 to 11, part of the Sermon on the Mount, and here gives a wonderful promise of God. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" That's a great promise of God to answer our prayers.

Let's pray. "Father we're thankful that You hear us when we pray, that our prayers matter to You, and that You can answer them and help us. And Father we pray that our hearts will be centered upon serving You always. In Jesus name, Amen."

The Lord Jesus was the Son of God; but while He walked on this earth, He devoted Himself to prayer. He needed to be close to His Father, and so do we. Jesus saw the value in prayer to keep His heart focused on His task and to keep free from sin. Mark 1:35 says, "And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and He went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there." Luke

5:16 says, that "He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray." Before selecting the twelve people to be apostles, Luke 6 and verse 12 says, "And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God."

The Lord Jesus prayed over the bread and the fruit of the vine when He was instituting the Lord's Supper. Later that night, Jesus prayed at the Garden of Gethsemane for three hours with great sorrow and loud crying. He prayed, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22, verse 42). Now this must have been a very hard prayer to pray, but Jesus was more devoted to obeying His Father and saving us than He was to avoiding suffering and death.

The Lord endured much pain, suffering at the hands of the chief priests and the Romans. They beat Him, mocked Him, spit on Him, lied about Him, scourged Him, and falsely condemned Him. They forced Him to carry His own cross to Golgotha. Even while they were nailing His hands and feet to the cross, He prayed in Luke 23:32, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Such love and mercy reveal His grace. And though He felt forsaken at one point, He never stopped relying on the Father. His last words were "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23, verse 46). Now if Jesus needed to pray in every circumstance of life and in facing death, how much more do we?

Prayer can indeed make a difference. Let's take a look at what prayer can do for you. First, prayer can help you in times of temptation. The Lord Jesus warned Peter, James, and John in Matthew 26:41, "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Now we're all weak at times, and we may not suspect that temptations coming our way. And it can catch us off guard and lead to sin. You see, the devil doesn't play around; he wants to deceive and control you. And he seeks for opportunities to make you sin.

James 4, verses 7 to 8 says, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Prayer is when we draw near to God, and know that we're not alone! The Lord will draw near you to help you resist the devil. You can avoid sin. Someone has rightly said, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."

The Lord makes Himself accessible to us, even though He is God and we're humans. Hebrews 4, verses 14 to 16 says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence (boldness) to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." The Lord understands our weaknesses and can help us when we most need Him.

Second, prayer can help you in times of trouble. In every difficult situation, prayer and faith in God helps us endure. We all face circumstances that test our character and our patience.

James 5, verses 16 to 18 reminds us, that "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

Now Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it didn't rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."

Circumstances can cause us to grow anxious and fearful; but prayer can make a difference. Philippians 4:6 to 7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." God can give us peace and

guard our hearts and minds. Oh, we can worry or we can pray. Let's pray, and let God deal with our concerns.

1 Peter 5 verses 6 to 10 says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood (your brethren) throughout the world. And after you've suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you."

Third, prayer can help you grow spiritually. Like Jesus we need to pray every day and night. We need to pray before making a hard decision. We need to pray when we know difficult times lie ahead. We need to thank God for our blessings. We need to praise God for His power, wisdom, glory, and grace. We need to draw close to Him and pour out our hearts to Him. Prayer can make a difference in our spiritual lives, and the absence of prayer can leave us weak.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Prayer is the greatest precautionary measure that you can take against falling away from the living God. Neglecting private prayers and reading Scripture is generally the first sign people have become indifferent to God; it's not long until they forsake their faith and worship.

We need to pray not only for ourselves but also for others who serve the Lord. Even though Paul was an apostle, an evangelist, he knew how much he needed the prayers of others. Paul said in Ephesians 6:19, "pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel." We could all ask for the prayers to help us serve the Lord. We all need the Lord. The Lord Jesus said in John 15:5, "but without Him (without Me) we can do nothing."

Fourth, prayer can help you in your ministry for Him. We are all dependent upon the strength of God to help us do what we cannot do for ourselves. We want to serve and bless others. We know that we need God's help to do that. 2 Corinthians 3 and verse 5 reminds us, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God." Later in 2 Corinthians 9 and verse 8 Paul declared, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." I tell you, every great work for God begins with prayer! And without God's help, we can do nothing (that's John 15, verse 5).

Now Nehemiah wept and mourned for days over the city of Jerusalem, which was in ruins and caused great trouble for the remnant of the Jews. And he fasted and prayed night and day before the God of heaven, confessing the sins of the people and asked for God to bring the people back to the place where His name dwelled (that's from Nehemiah 1:3 to 11). And God heard Nehemiah's prayer and gave him the opportunity to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and to restore their safety.

We're facing struggles and weaknesses in our own time. And there are good reasons for us too, to weep and mourn over the sins of our day. People are lost, people are hurting, people have forgotten God, and we need to see a revival in our time, our time, we need commitment, commitment to the Lord. Sidlow Baxter, who wrote a book called Exploring the Bible, said, "Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons -- but they are helpless against our prayers."

Fifth, prayer can reassure you of God's promises. Sometimes we just need to be close to the One that we love. We need to tell Him we love Him, to thank Him, to praise Him, to take our burdens to Him. We need reminding that He's there—available and willing to listen. Speaking of prayer, you remember Jesus said in Matthew 6 and verse 8, "for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him." When we pray, we're not praying to a stranger in Heaven who doesn't care, or doesn't know us, and He doesn't care what happens. God knows everything about you and me. He sees everything. God knows even before we ask! The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6:31 to 32 "Therefore do not be anxious (that is, don't worry), saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."

You see prayer is a great reminder that I have a "Father" in heaven. I lost my father in 1985, and I loved my father and mourned his absence. I needed and wanted my father! But at some point in my grief, I recalled that I had a Father in heaven, who would never leave me or forsake me. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:7 to 11, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" We have a good Father!

Prayer is man's response to God's willingness. I don't believe in the power of my praying; I believe in God's power to answer my prayers. I pray realizing my Father is wiser than I am. And sometimes He says yes; sometimes He says no; sometimes He says wait till later; and sometimes He answers in ways better than I asked. God sees what I can't see and knows what I don't know. He can see what lies ahead and knows what He has planned. And I am convinced that God answers every prayer, and it may be in ways beyond my comprehension. In spite of this, I trust God. He has blessed me for almost 70 years, and I know that He will be with me through every challenge and will supply my needs.

Now nothing is more reassuring than seeing prayer answered. God wants to hear from us; and we don't have to beg Him to listen. Prayer is how we connect with our Father in heaven. We can connect anytime anyplace. And He waits to hear from us. We need God every day and every hour. And I hope you haven't neglected praying to the Father in heaven. I hope that you make it a practice to pray often every day. God can work wonders, when we pray. Have you prayed today?

Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father we are so grateful that Your ears are open to us as we seek You and as we pray to You. And Father we ask for Your love, we ask for Your blessing, we ask for peace, especially for this nation. And Father we pray that we may serve You always from our hearts. In Jesus name, Amen."

As I mentioned, God wants to hear from you. He wants to be close to you, so draw close to Him. You may have a heartache; you may be facing a difficult problem; or you may not know what lies ahead. You probably have hurting people on your heart, people that you love, people who may not know God and need to know Him. Pray for them. Ask God's help in reaching them. God wants everyone to be saved and to know the truth (1 Timothy 2 and verse 4).

I like to begin every project with prayer from my heart and soul, reaching up to the One who cares and can help me. Without Christ in our lives, we can truly do nothing. Without the grace and help of God, we have no hope of salvation or of heaven. I want to thank my Father for every good thing. I want my Father to know that I love Him and thank Him for the forgiveness of my sins.

Without God's grace and forgiveness, we have no hope of eternal life. Prayer is a great gift, but it takes more than prayer for one to become a Christian. After being struck blind on the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus prayed and fasted for three days, according to Acts 9, verse 9 and 11; but he was not yet freed from sin. Ananias came to Saul, who became the apostle Paul, and told him, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (Acts 22, verse 16). You see, Saul needed his sins washed away in baptism, even though he fasted and prayed. We all need to be baptized to wash away our sins as well. Won't you be baptized today?

We hope that today's study about what prayer can do will lead you to draw close to God. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! We do ask that you go to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry", and subscribe. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Just write to us and let us know. Don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you focus your heart on God today by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ in your area. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. Now we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep searching God's Word with us, and to keep us in your prayers. Please tell a friend about this program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.