

HOW TO ENERGIZE YOUR PRAYER LIFE

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MAIN IDEA: In the Bible, God commands people, multiple times, to pray. But why do we need to pray?

This is a question many Christians, as well as people with other beliefs, have asked. If God is in control of human history and also directs individual lives, what's the point of praying?

The answer lies in understanding what prayer is. If you see prayer merely as a means of taking some level of control of your life and the world — as a means of leverage — then you will inevitably be troubled by what appears to be unanswered prayer. But if you see prayer primarily as an ongoing conversation with God, then you'll realize there is really no such thing as an unanswered prayer (Cru, "Reasons Why We Pray").

I. MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PRAYER

A. Prayer is a magic wand.

God is like a genie. You rub the vase and God comes out and says, "Your wish is my command."

B. Prayer is a fire alarm.

It is an act of desperation. "Use only in case of emergency." We've tried everything else; I guess all we can do now is pray.

C. Prayer is a tug-of-war.

A religious con game that you play with God where you try to convince God to do something nice for you. You keep pestering God until God gets so irritated that He finally says, "Ok, I'll give it to you," and He gives in.

D. Prayer is a religious duty.

The basic motivation behind it is guilt. I know I should pray more, I ought to pray, it's something I ought to do. It becomes a duty. You have a sense of obligation that if you don't pray, you'll be on God's bad list.

II. PRAYING WITH WRONG MOTIVES

- A. Santa Claus prayers: Asking God only for material things you want from him.
- B. Egocentric prayers: Asking God only for things that are self-promoting.
- C. Announcement prayers: Giving times, dates, and locations of upcoming meetings so others hear them.
- D. Negotiating prayers: Trying to sway God through hyper-emotion, or expecting something from God if you do something special (quid-pro-quo).

Oswald Chambers writes, "Beware of thinking that intercession means bringing our own personal sympathies and concerns into the presence of God, and then demanding that He do whatever we ask." (Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*)

III. WHY PRAY WHEN GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING?

"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD." Psa. 139:1-4

"...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Matt. 6:8b

- A. Prayer is not about informing God but about humbly expressing my dependence on him (John 15:5-7).

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (Jn. 15:5-7 NIV)

- B. Prayer builds my friendship with Jesus (John 15:15-16).

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. (Jn. 15:15 NIV)

- C. Prayer brings me God's joy and peace (John 16:24; Phil. 4:6-7; Rom. 5:1; Col. 3:15).

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. (Jn. 16:24 NIV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7 NIV)

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Rom. 5:1 NIV)

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (Col. 3:15 NIV)

- D. Prayer aligns my will to God's will (John 14:11-13).

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (Jn. 14:11-13 NIV)

IV. FOUR WAYS TO PRAY BIBLICALLY

A. I am to pray from a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

| *Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Tim. 2:22 NIV)*

B. I am to pray with a stable faith (Matt. 21:22).

| *If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." (Matt. 21:22 NIV)*

C. I am to pray from an obedient life (1 John 3:22).

| *"...and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. (1 Jn. 3:22 NIV)*

D. I am to pray for things that will glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31).

| *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31 NIV)*