

## Prayer 101<sup>1</sup>

1. Prayer defined and described: “Prayer is personal communication with God.”<sup>2</sup>
  - a. Prayer is \_\_\_\_\_. Prayer is not impersonal (e.g., a reciting of holy words; a meditative trance; or a technique). This does not mean that prayers cannot be recited. It means that prayer involves the heart through faith. Prayer, in other words, is a relationship.
  - b. Prayer is communication. Prayer is not an exalted state of consciousness, a dance of religious ecstasy, an offering of gifts, or the lighting of candles. This does not mean that words must be vocalized with your tongue and mouth. It means that prayer involves conscious communication—words.
  - c. Prayer is with God. Prayer is not to any other person (e.g., Mary, a deceased relative, a saint), idea (e.g., a higher-power), or thing.
  
2. Why we pray?
  - a. The God of prayer
    - i. The \_\_\_\_\_ God: God is able to do all things (Ps 33).
    - ii. The fatherly God: God is our Father and he is willing to care for us and give us good things (Acts 17:24-28; Psalms 104:13-15, 21-24, 27-28).
    - iii. The speaking and listening God: God speaks and listens, unlike idols who cannot do either (Ps 115:2-8).
    - iv. The holy God: God is holy and therefore unapproachable (Isa 59:1-2).
    - v. The merciful God: God is merciful and provides the means by which we can come before him in prayer (Heb 9:11-14; 10:19-22).
  - b. Why we should pray: our relationship with God through the gospel.
    - i. We pray because we must—because we are sinners and we are completely dependent on him (1 John 1:7-2:2). J. C. Ryle: “Prayer is absolutely needful to a man’s salvation. . . . No man or woman can expect

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent book on prayer, from which some of this material has been adapted, see: Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne, *Prayer and the Voice of God: Listening to God’s Living Word Will Transform the Way You Pray* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 376.

to be saved who does not pray. I hold to salvation by grace as strongly as any one. I would gladly offer a free and full pardon to the greatest sinner that ever lived. I would not hesitate to stand by his dying bed, and say, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ even now, and you shall be saved.' But that a man can have salvation without *asking* for it, I cannot see in the Bible. That a man will receive pardon of his sins, who will not so much as lift up his heart inwardly, and say, 'Lord Jesus, give it to me,' this I cannot find. I can find that nobody will be saved by his prayers, but I cannot find that without prayer anybody will be saved."<sup>3</sup>

- ii. We pray because, in his great mercy, God allows us to; because as a loving Father he has adopted us as children and given us free access to his throne (Gal 4:6).
- iii. We pray because we are \_\_\_\_\_ to and therefore not to pray is disobedience and sin (Eph 6:17-18; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Rom 12:12; Col 4:2).
- iv. We pray because of God's promise to hear and answer our prayers (Matt 7:7-11).

### 3. How to pray?

- a. Time: the best time for prayer is at any time and at all times.
- b. Length: the length doesn't matter; the length of our prayers does not affect God's answer (Matt 6:7). C. H. Spurgeon: "I never pray more than five minutes at a time, but I never go five minutes without praying."<sup>4</sup>
- c. Posture: physical posture does not matter; but our spiritual posture should be reverent, submissive, dependent, repentant, and humble (Matt 6:1-13).
- d. Place: private (i.e., individual and family) (Matt 6:5-8) and public (Acts 2:42; 4:24-31; 1 Cor 11:4-5; 14:13-17).
- e. The essence of how: we pray according to \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - i. We pray as dependent sons (Gal 4:4-7).
  - ii. We pray by the Spirit (Rom 8:12-17).

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<sup>3</sup> J. C. Ryle, *A Call to Prayer* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Helmut Thielicke, *Encounter with Spurgeon* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1963), 1; quoted in Bryan Chapell, *Praying Backwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 93.

iii. We pray through the Son (1 Tim 2:5-6).

iv. We pray to the Father (Matt 6:9).

#### 4. What to pray for (content)

a. We can pray according to what God \_\_\_\_\_ (Ps 37:4).

i. We can pray about his plans for us in Christ.

1. That all things be untied under Christ (Eph 1:3-10).
2. That we be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8:28-30).
3. That we become part of a new people who are purified from their sin and zealous for good works (Titus 2:11-14).
4. That we stand firm and live in holiness, and finally obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:13-15; 1 Thess 4:1-3).

ii. We can pray about his promises.

1. He will give wisdom to all who ask (Jas 1:5).
2. He will not let us be tempted beyond our ability but will provide a way out (1 Cor 10:13).
3. He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness if we confess our sins (1 John 1:9).
4. There will be no mourning, crying or pain in the new creation (Rev 21:4).
5. Nothing can separate us from his love (Rom 8:37-39).
6. The pure of heart shall see God (Matt 5:8). He will draw near if we draw near to him (Jas 4:8a).
7. He will sustain us if we cast our burden upon him (Ps 55:22).
8. He has removed our sins and cast them far away (Ps 103:12).

Andrew Murray: "When you get a promise from God it is worth just as much as a fulfillment."

Stephen Charnock: “Our Savior joins the promise and the petition together; the promise to encourage the petition, and the petition to enjoy the promise.”<sup>5</sup>

- iii. We can pray about his commands—for example, the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17), or Paul’s instructions (e.g., Col 3:1-17).
- iv. We can pray according to Scripture.
  - 1. Specific requests in Scripture.
    - a. Government (1 Tim 2:1-2).
    - b. Gospel workers (Matt 9:37-38).
    - c. Growth (Rom 8:28-29).
  - 2. Models of Scripture.
    - a. Prayers in the Old Testament.
      - i. David (2 Sam 7:18-29; Ps 17; 39; 51; 55; 61; 86; 102; 142).
      - ii. Solomon (1 Kgs 3:6-9; 8:22-53; 2 Chr 6:13-42).
      - iii. Hezekiah (2 Kgs 19:14-19; Isa 37:14-20).
      - iv. Ezra (Ezra 9:5-15).
      - v. Nehemiah (Neh 1:4-11).
      - vi. The Levites (Neh 9:5-38).
      - vii. Agur (Prov 30).
      - viii. Isaiah (Isa 63:15-64:12).
      - ix. Daniel (Dan 9:3-19).
    - b. Prayers of Jesus.

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<sup>5</sup> H.J. Horn, *The Puritans Day by Day* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2016), 274.

- i. Matt 6:9-13.
    - ii. Mark 14:35-36.
    - iii. John 17.
  - c. Prayers of Paul (sampling).
    - i. Rom 15:5-6.
    - ii. Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-21.
    - iii. Phil 1:9-11.
    - iv. Col 1:9-14.
    - v. 1 Thes 3:9-13; 5:23-24.
    - vi. 2 Thes 1:11-12; 2:16-17.
- 3. Other models: Prayer is more caught than taught. Therefore, choose model, but choose them well.
  - a. Dead models (e.g., *Valley of Vision*)
  - b. Living models (Pastor, parent, friend, etc.)
- b. We can pray about the concerns of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - i. There is nothing too small to bring before God (Phil 4:6; Matt 6:25-34).
  - ii. The more our hearts and minds are changed by the work of God's word and Spirit, the more our prayers will reflect God's own mind (Rom 12:2).
  - iii. We should pray with thanksgiving because it brings God glory, and therefore stops us from taking him for granted, and it lifts our spirits and changes our perspective (1 Thess 5:17-18).
  - iv. We should remember that God knows what we need, so we can trust him completely (Rom 8:26-27).