**PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER**

Sunday School Lesson 7

*Bible Principles for Daily Living*

Matthew 6:5-18

7/24/2022

**Introduction:** Imagine hearing Jesus Christ pray to His Father. What an experience that would have been! Is it any wonder that when He finished praying, one of His disciples asked to be taught to pray? They wanted to model their prayers after His prayers because nobody prayed like Jesus did. That should be the desire of every Christian and of every pastor. No pastor will minister as he ought if he does not pray as he ought. Prayer is not just for the pastor though. Every Christian needs to understand some principles of prayer. The Lord has given us direct access to the Father, so we ought not to waste that access. Prayer is something that we should want to do. It is the opportunity to speak to the Lord. By way of introduction, we must understand that Jesus did not just talk to His Father only when He had a need. Prayer is more than just bringing our petitions before the Lord. It is a way to address God with solemness, reverence, and adoration. It is confession of sins, supplication for mercy, and thanksgiving for blessings. Prayer is not just calling on the Lord when we are desperate. Prayer does many things for the child of God and the church. I believe that prayer is the secret to having a deeper Christian life. It is the secret to having victory. It is the secret to staying in the joy of the Lord. It is the secret to being content. The Bible has principles that will help Christians to have a better prayer life. They are simple principles because doing right is not complicated. Let’s observe the following:

1. **WE SHOULD HAVE A SPECIFIC TIME AND PLACE DESIGNATED FOR PRAYER.**
2. **Notice that while we are to pray without ceasing, it is essential that we have set times of prayer to help build a consistent prayer life (Prov. 8:17; Dan. 6:10; Mk. 1:35; Luke 6:12; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).** The Bible teaches us to have a time of prayer. I believe it is good to talk to God any time that we can talk to Him, but It also puts an emphasis on starting our day in prayer. For this reason, I believe it is a good principle to pray in the morning. Make a set time. Maybe it is as soon as you get up. Maybe it is on the way to work. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to have a time every day that we set aside to talk to God. It is our standing appointment. I believe that when we set that appointment, the Lord waits for us to keep it. We know that He loves to talk to His children. He came down daily to talk to Adam and Eve. Even when they did not show up for their appointment after their sin, the Lord was still there looking for them. If prayer is important to us, isn’t it wise to schedule some set time for it? Things that get scheduled are more likely to get done than things that aren’t on the schedule. Jesus Christ had set times that He designated just to talk to the Father. He talked to Him often, but He still had a set time.
3. **Notice that while we are to pray everywhere, it is essential that we have a set place of prayer to help build a focused prayer life (Matthew 6:5-6; 14:23; 21:13; 26:36; Mark 6:46; 1 Timothy 2:8).** In Matthew 6:1-13, Jesus speaks to His disciples on the subject of prayer. Specifically, in verse 6, the Lord rebukes the Pharisees because they prayed so that everyone could see them. Their prayers had nothing to do with truly speaking to the Lord. It was about everybody taking notice of them. In His teaching, He instructs the disciples about the need for a private place of prayer. Jesus didn’t just teach this, but He also gives us several examples of secluded prayer in the New Testament. He went away into the desert to pray. He went up into a mountain to pray. Even in the Garden, the Bible tells us that Jesus went away from His disciples to pray. Having a particular place for personal prayer is important. It helps to ensure focused prayer. When you go to that place, you go there to talk to the Lord. It is personal. It is private. The church house shouldn’t be the only place of prayer. That’s a place for collective prayer with other believers. Where is your place of private prayer? If you don’t have one, designate a place for it.
4. **WE SHOULD HAVE SPECIFIC THINGS WE PRAY FOR DAILY BUT NOT REPETITIVELY.**

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1. **Notice that we are to pray for our daily bread. This represents the things that we need for the Lord to give to us (Matthew 6:8, 11, 25-34; 7:7-11; Philippians 4:19).** As Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He asked the Father for the things we all need every day. Our daily need and the daily needs of others are many. Since we cannot always remember everything that is needed, it is good and practical to have a prayer list of those needs. While we must be careful not to use a prayer list as just something we list out before the Lord without any thought or personal communication with it, a list is important to have. The Lord wants us to pray for the things that we need. Thankfully, if we do forget something, we have confidence that the Lord knows what we need before we even ask. I personally like to ask the Lord to meet those needs that I have generally before I list them out individually. I don’t have to worry about it after that because I know that the Father knows how to give good gifts unto His children. If I ask for bread, He is not going to give me a stone! He is going to give me the things that I need.
2. **Notice that we are to pray continuously for our needs, but we are not to pray in vain repetition (Luke 11:1-13; Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 6:7; 15:21-28; Romans 12:12).** There must be a proper balance in our prayers. On one hand, we are encouraged to pray for our daily bread. We are also encouraged to have perseverance in our prayer. We are given examples in the Bible that demonstrate the need for constant prayer. The Canaanite woman who needed help for her daughter is an example to us of persistence in prayer. Hannah is another great example. She finally had her prayers answered for a son. She did not give up after the first request. Yet, on the other hand, we are also instructed not to pray in vain repetition. We are told that the Father knows what we need. We are told to ask, and we shall receive. We see an example of this with Elijah and the prophets of Baal. They prayed and prayed and prayed without any result. Elijah prayed once, and fire came down from Heaven. How do we balance this principle appropriately? The key to this is that when we pray for the same needs, we are not praying with the mindset that the Lord did not hear us the first time. We are praying again to express our faith.
3. **WE SHOULD TALK TO THE LORD IN A PLAIN AND PERSONAL MANNER.**
4. **Notice that the Lord’s example of prayer was not meant to be a formal, official prayer to be recited to the Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:9; 11:25-26; 26:39-42; Luke 10:21; 23:34; John 11:41).** In Matthew 6:9, there is a critical word of importance for us to keep in mind when it comes to the Lord’s prayer. Jesus said to pray after this “manner.” While there is nothing wrong with praying the Lord’s prayer, we should understand that the Lord is not instructing us to pray those exact words every time that we pray. How do we know this? We know this because Jesus did not pray this exact way every time that He spoke to the Father. In fact, if we look at each example of Jesus speaking to the Father, we see a plain conversation taking place. While the Father definitely deserves our respect and all formality, we find that He simply wants us to come and speak to Him as Jesus spoke with His Father. Formal prayers tend to more closely resemble the behavior of the Pharisees and the worshippers of false gods. We want to pattern our prayer after the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason, we ought to pray with plain speech.
5. **Notice that other examples of the prayer of saints in Scripture are shown as personal and plain (1 Samuel 1:11; Daniel 9; Psalm 51; Exodus 3:13).** When Hannah prayed to the Lord, she asked the Lord to look on her affliction and remember her. She promised to give the child unto the Lord if the Lord gave her a child. That’s it. That was her prayer. It was very plain and simple. In Daniel 9, we find the prayer of Daniel to the Lord regarding Israel. In it, we see that Daniel lists out all the ways that Israel had wronged God. He also proclaimed God’s goodness in his prayer. It was not a recited prayer. It was a personal prayer. It was a confession. We find the same thing from King David in Psalm 51. He asks the Lord to have mercy upon Him. He asks for his sins to be forgiven. He begs the Lord not to depart from him. He asks the Lord to restore the joy of salvation. Again, this was not some formal request. This was a broken man begging God to show him mercy. Consider Moses’ prayer to the Lord in Exodus 3. It resembles more of a conversation than it resembles some type of formal prayer. Be personal in prayer!
6. **WE SHOULD MAKE SURE THERE ARE NO HINDRANCES TO OUR PRAYERS.**
7. **Notice that sin prevents us from proper communication with the Lord. When we sin, the prayer He wants to hear is a prayer of confession (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9; Is. 59:2; Matt. 6:12; John 9:31).** If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. That’s about as clear and simple as it gets. Sin separates us from the Lord. We know that He hates it. We know that His holiness cannot tolerate it. The book of Proverbs tells us that he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination. James 4:3 tells us that our prayers do not get answered because we ask amiss. What does that mean? It means to ask in the lust of the flesh. We know that sin is conceived out of lust. Thus, we grasp that James 4:3 is reinforcing what we already know to be true. As long as we keep sin in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. The only thing He desires to hear is a prayer of confession. He wants us to call upon Him and admit our sin and seek His mercy. That’s the prayer that He will hear.
8. **Notice that broken relationships with others will also hinder us in our prayers to the Lord (Matthew 6:14-15; 1 Peter 3:7).** The Bible shows us that bitterness (which comes as a result of refusing to forgive others) will hinder our prayers. We have no reasonable expectation of the Lord answering us if we will not forgive others. The Lord Jesus made this very clear to His disciples. Unfortunately, this often takes place with Christians, and we for some reason think that it is not a big deal. We cannot have a healthy prayer life while having an unhealthy relationship with others. First of all, we know that not forgiving is sin because the Lord commands us to, so this means that we fall back under the first observation. Not forgiving is also a result of a lack of faith. We ought to be trusting the Lord in our relationships. We should be trusting that He will right the wrongs that have been committed. We are trusting that He is a righteous judge. We know that we must have faith in prayer. Have faith to forgive.