

INTRODUCTION

1. Tonight I want to begin a series on Christian Basics.
2. In this series, we will look at the subjects of prayer, bible study, and spiritual gifts.
3. Tonight I want to begin with the subject of prayer and how important it is in our lives.
4. It is true that the subject of prayer may seem to be overworked, but it is nonetheless vital because it is necessary to live and needful to survive.
5. Now just a few moments ago we prayed together.
6. And if I could borrow the imagery of what we just did we can see a working definition of prayer: prayer is “the act by which we talk to our heavenly Father.”
7. When we pray we are talking with God.
8. When we read the Bible God is talking to us.
9. Both work together. You cannot have one without the other.

10. Prayer to the believer is like *breathing*.
11. William Gurnall said that “Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself.”
12. You pray because you are a child of God.
13. Before we look at this subject tonight, let me give you some good advice that I read from Chuck Swindoll in his book, *Strengthening Your Grip*.

He writes: “Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one’s heart, it’s pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober them; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes, that He may help you to conquer them; talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them; Show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved tastes

for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself and to others. If you thus pour out all your weaknesses, needs, troubles, there will be no lack of what to say. You will never exhaust the subject. It is continually being renewed. People who have no secrets from each other never want for subjects of conversation. They do not weigh their words, for there is nothing to be held back, neither do they seek for something to say. They talk out of the abundance of the heart, without consideration they say just what they think. Blessed are they who attain such familiar, unreserved intercourse with God.”

14. Do you talk to God like that?
15. Do you tell Him “all that is in your heart as one unloads one’s heart, it’s pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend?”
16. Do you pray for others in this way?
17. D. Martyn Lloyd Jones said “Man is at his greatest and highest when upon his knees he comes face to face with God.”

18. In James 5:16 it says we are to “pray for one another.”
19. The word for prayer is Gr.euchomai, which means “to pray” (Rieneker) but more specifically “to pray to God” (Thayer).
20. It “has to do with the entire man” (E.M. Bounds).
21. “Prayer takes in man his whole being, mind, soul, and body. It takes the whole man to pray” (E.M. Bounds, *The Essentials to Prayer*, p.9).
22. In fact we could say ***it takes work to pray for one another.***

I. It Takes Work to Pray for One Another

A. It Takes Work to Get Our Eyes Off Ourselves and Put Them on Someone Else

1. Because “prayer has to do with the entire man,” man has to give himself entirely to prayer.

This, of course, takes work. “It takes work because prayer is hard and selfless.”

But as Charles Spurgeon said, “All the Christian virtues are locked up in the word *prayer*.”

2. To get your eyes off yourself you first have to recognize the One in whom your petitioning
 - a) Jesus said in **Matthew 6:9 (NASB)** Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.’
 - (1) First you are recognize your “Father who is in heaven” – the One you are

praying to.

J.C. Ryal said, “We are not to pray to saints and angels, but to the everlasting Father, the Father of spirits, the Lord of heaven and earth” (*Matthew*).

Romans 8:15 (NASB) says “we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

Galatians 4:6 (NASB) says “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”

- (2) Second you acknowledge the holiness of His character

“Hallowed” (*hagiozo*), “to treat as holy, to reverence” (*Rienecker*)

He says you are to “treat” His “name” “as holy.”

“God’s name signifies infinitely

more than His titles or appellations [names]. It represents all that He is—His character, plan, and will” (John MacArthur, *Matthew*).

J.C. Ryal again says, “By the 'name' of God we mean all those attributes through which he is revealed to us his power, wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy and truth. By asking that they may be 'hallowed,' we mean that they may be made known and glorified. The glory of God is the first thing that God's children should desire. It is the object of one of our Lord's own prayers: 'Father, glorify your name!' (John 12:28). It is the purpose for which the world was created; it is the end for which the saints are called and convened: it is the chief thing we should seek 'that in all things God may be praised' (1 Peter 4:11).

Do you recognize “the Father?”
Do you treat His name as “holy?”

Are you seeking to “make known”
His glory?

- b) In order to recognize the One in whom you are petitioning you have to “Draw near to God” (**Jas.4:8 NASB**)
- c) That means you are willing to cast all your anxiety on Him” (**1 Pet.5:7 NASB**)
- d) It’s only when you have done this are you truly prepared to *pray for one another*

B. We are to labor in prayer

1. That means we are to pray *always*

- a) **Eph.6:18 (NASB)** says, “Pray at all times.”
- b) **1 Thess.5:17 (NASB)** says, “Pray without ceasing.”

John Bunyan said, “Pray often; for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice

to God, and a scourge to Satan” (*The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations*).

2. That means we are to do *everything* by prayer

Philippians 4:6 (NASB) Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

John Bunyan again says, “You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.”

II. Regardless of the Labor We Are to Make the Sacrifice to Pray

I have a bookmark that says, “No Christian is greater than his prayer life.” – This is the spiritual barometer of every Christian.

- A. In Order to Make the Sacrifice to Pray We Need to Change Our Perspective About Prayer

1. Prayer is *needed by everyone*

Have you ever heard someone say: “Why should I pray about this? God is sovereign!”

Yes, God is sovereign but He wants us to talk to Him for several reasons. First...

a) Because it is commanded

(1) The prophet Samuel said in **1 Sam.12:23 (NASB)**, “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way.”

(2) Paul gave instructions to the Romans, Colossians, and Thessalonians concerning prayer. He said:

(a) **Rom.12:12 (NASB)** Be “devoted to prayer.”

(b) **Colossians 4:2 (NASB)** Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving

(c) **1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NASB)**
“Pray without ceasing.”

(2) He told Timothy that his desire was that “the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension” (**1 Timothy 2:8 NASB**).

Not only did he challenge others to prayer but he requested prayer from others:

b) Paul asked the church to pray for him and his co-workers in Christ because it was a *need*

(1) **1 Thessalonians 5:25 (NASB)**
“Brethren, pray for us.”

(2) **2 Thessalonians 3:1 (NASB)**
Finally, brethren, pray for us that

the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.

Paul was not alone is pointing out our *need* for prayer:

c) The writer of Hebrews asked for prayer

Hebrews 13:18 (NASB) Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

d) Even the disciples recognized the need for prayer because they went to Jesus and ask Him to teach them to pray in **Luke 11:1 (NASB)**

“It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.’”

2. When we pray we reflect the need that we

have to pray and the need we have for prayer

As we have already seen, there are many examples of others asking for prayer.

B. In Order to Make the Sacrifice to Pray We Need to Follow the Example of Those Who Prayed

1. This is true today as it was then
 - a) We learn from each other
 - b) If you are around someone who always prays it will challenge you to pray
2. If Jesus spent time alone with the Father you and I need to do the same
 - a) He would rise before “daylight” to pray

Mark 1:35 (NASB) In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

W.A. Criswell said, “Jesus found time to

pray. Jesus saw the need to gain inner refreshment, renewed intimacy with God, and strength for facing the challenges before Him. His example is a challenge to all believers” (*The Believers Study Bible*).

- b) He would also depart from the crowds to pray

Mark 6:45-46 (NASB) Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. 46 After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.

- c) Sometimes He would pray “all night”

Luke 6:12 (NASB) It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

Why do you think He rose “a long while

before daylight” and “departed to a solitary place?”

Why do you think He sent the disciples and the multitudes away and then “departed to the mountain?”

Why do you think He “continued all night in prayer to God?”

He did that because He needed personal fellowship with the Father. John 1:1 tells us that He had a “face-to-face relationship with the Father prior to the incarnation.” It says, “And the Word was with God.” This is a reference to an intimate relationship with the Father.

I do not endorse much of Rick Warren’s writings but I will endorse the following statements:

“Personal fellowship with His Father in heaven was the top priority of Jesus’ life. He was never too busy for it; in fact, when His ministry was the busiest, that’s

when He made certain that He kept in daily touch with the Father. If Jesus needed time with God, how much more we need it” (*Personal Bible Study Methods*, p.212).

3. Just like Jesus Paul needed personal time alone with God and so do you

“Anyone who has ever been used mightily by the Lord was a man or woman of the Word and prayer” (Warren).

Galatians 1:15-17 (NASB) But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

III. Praying for One Another is Another Responsibility We Have to Each Other

The examples are enormous. Notice a few:

A. Jesus Prayed for Peter (**Luke 22:31-32 NASB**)

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; 32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

B. Jesus Prayed for His Disciples (**John 17:9 NASB**)

“I ask on their behalf.”

C. Jesus Prays for You

1. He said in **John 17:20 (NASB)** “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.”

2. The writer of Hebrews captured that thought when He said “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (**Hebrews 7:25**)

NASB).

D. Paul Prayed for the Churches

1. The believers at Rome (**Rom.1:8 NASB**)
2. The believers at Corinth (**1 Cor.1:4 NASB**)
3. The believers at Ephesus (**Eph.1:15 NASB**)
4. The believers at Philippi (**Phil.1:3 NASB**)
5. The believers at Colosse (**Col.1:3 NASB**)
6. The believers at Thessalonica (**1 Thess.1:3; 2 Thess.1:3 NASB**)

E. Paul Prayed for Timothy (2 Timothy 1:3 NASB)

“I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day.”

F. Paul Prayed for Philemon (Philemon 1:4 NASB)

“I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers.”

G. The Church Prayed for One Another (Acts 2:42 NASB)

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

CONCLUSION

1. How about you?
2. Are you praying for one another regularly?
3. As I close, I want to read a story that illustrates the sacrifice that is involved in praying for one another. The author is unknown and the story is found in *Stories for the Heart* compiled by Alice Gray.

“About 1490 two young friends, Albrecht Durer and Franz Knigstein, were struggling young artists. Since both were poor, they worked to support themselves while they studied art.

Work took so much of their time and advancement was slow. Finally, they reached an agreement: they would draw lots, and one of them would work to support both of them while the other would study art. Albrecht won and began to study, while Franz worked hard labor to support them. They agreed that when Albrecht was successful he would support Franz who would then study art.

Albrecht went off to the cities of Europe to study. As the world now knows, he had not only talent but genius. When he had attained success, he went back to keep his bargain with Franz. But Albrecht soon discovered the enormous price his friend had paid. For as Franz worked at hard manual labor to support his friend, his fingers had become stiff and twisted. His slender, sensitive hands had been ruined for life. He could not longer execute the delicate brush strokes necessary to fine painting. Though his artistic dreams could never be realized, he was not embittered but rather rejoiced in his friend's success.

One day Durer came upon his friend unexpectedly and found him kneeling with his gnarled hands intertwined in prayer, quietly praying for the success of his friend although he himself could no longer be

an artist. Albrecht Durer, the great genius, hurried sketched the folded hands of his faithful friend and later completed a truly great masterpiece known as ‘The Praying Hands.’

Today art galleries everywhere feature Albrecht Durer’s works, and this particular masterpiece tells an eloquent story of love, sacrifice, labor, and gratitude. It has reminded multitudes world around of how they may also find comfort, courage, and strength” (p.261).

4. **James 5:16 (NASB)** says to “pray for one another.”
5. Let’s obey God’s Word tonight.