

# DAY ONE

## WHY DO WE PRIORITIZE PRAYER?

J.C. Lambert of The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia puts it this way: “Christian prayer in its full New Testament meaning is prayer addressed to God as Father, in the name of Christ as Mediator, and through the enabling grace of the indwelling Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> That is a mouth full! To put it simply, prayer is intimate communication with God. The level of intimacy we may enjoy in prayer is made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The experience of that intimate connection comes to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit which God gives to those who believe in His Son, Jesus.

Prayer has many forms and expressions (formal, informal, poetry, song, audible, silent, private, public, etc.) but what all forms hold in common is an authentic engagement with God Himself. Prayer is expressive and like all communication, it is meant to bring about connection. It is important to understand that God greatly desires to connect with you. He has from the beginning, just read back over the creation story in Genesis and pay attention to the intimacy of God’s interactions with Adam and Eve. That heart of God that longs to connect with us, is reflected in the prayer of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John chapter 17, which we will be reading through this week.

While there is no one way to pray to God, there are guided ways designed to help us order our thoughts and facilitate that conversation. During this week we will be using the P.R.A.Y. acronym: praise, repent, ask and yield.

We recommend maintaining good communication with God and that means keeping it a two-way street. God wants to hear your petitions, frustrations, joys and sorrows (Ph. 4:6-7) but He also desires to speak to you as well (Eph. 6:18). As such, it is good to write down impressions, thoughts and reflections received during prayer, or as Paul states, to “keep alert”. Sometimes in prayer, we don’t even know what to pray. Don’t fret, remember the Holy Spirit is

there to help you connect with God. The Holy Spirit even goes so far as to intercede on your behalf during prayer (Rm. 8:26). Suffice it to say God has gone all out to make prayer always available to you in the richest forms possible, so let's take full advantage of that connection (Hb. 4:16).

## **WHY PRAY?**

It has been said that prayer is not an attempt to get God to do our will on earth but rather is a means to help us get His will done on earth (based on Matthew 6:10). When our will aligns with His, life happens (1 Jn. 5:14-15). It's not so much that we change God through our conversing with Him but rather that He changes us. That is not to say God is not moved by our petitions, rather it is to say that communicating with God shifts our perspectives, soothes our soul, informs our decisions, corrects our thinking, excites our spirit and empowers us to action. All these lead to a fuller experience of life.

Scripture outlines some conditions that serve us in having our prayers answered:

- our prayers should be grounded in faith in God (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24)
- we ask in Jesus' name (John 16:24)
- we ask with the right motives (James 4:3)
- we are persistent in our dependence on God (Matthew 7:8; Luke 18:1-8)
- we keep His commandments and obey Him (1 John 3:22)
- our prayers are in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14)

In addition to these, there is power gained in prayer. Prayer is a weapon that invokes change. It overcomes demonic strongholds (Mt. 17:14-21, NASB 1995), aids us in overcoming temptation (Mt. 26:41), helps us in making decisions (Lk. 6:12-13) and brings about healing (Jm. 5:16). There are things God will do whether we ask or not, but there are also things He will not do unless we ask (Jm. 4:2). So let us be bold in our petitions and let us seek Him often in these pursuits, for we will never see answers to certain prayers we do not pray.

## **REFLECTION**

What has been your experience with prayer in the past (dry, invigorating, ritualistic, awkward)?  
Did anything strike you as new in the explanation of prayer and why we pray?

Write out a prayer to God now expressing your experience with prayer and what you hope it to be as you commit to the relationship He holds out to you.

## **ROMANS 8:26-28**

Grab your Bible and open to today's reading. Use the PRAY and HEAR tools as you spend time in the Word.

**H**

**E**

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