

The Pursuit of Prayer

February 7, 2003

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving."

Colossians 4:2

This week we will begin a brief study on Prayer looking at aspects such as its purpose and pattern and answer the questions "What is prayer?" and "Why pray?" Hopefully we will all strengthen our prayer life as believers in Christ and find ourselves devoted to prayer.

I. Preliminary Questions:

- *How is your prayer life?*
- *Do you spend time in prayer?*
- *Is prayer an essential part of your life?*
- *Where are you on the prayer growth chart?*

THE PRAYER GROWTH CHART

Care Less Praying	Casual Praying	Concerned Praying	Committed Praying	Combat Praying
Care less praying is complete and total disregard for prayer. It is entirely absent from your life.	Casual praying occurs primarily at meal times and possibly at bed-time. It is praying only when you have to or are expected to and tends to be routine and quick.	Concerned prayer usually occurs when faced with a trial or difficulty. It is fervent for a time until the particular trial passes and then it becomes more casual again.	This kind of prayer is focused and purposeful. It is a commitment to come before the Lord in prayer on a regular basis.	This is a consistent, fervent, focused, purposeful and committed prayer. It is like the prayer of Epaphras in Colossians 4:12 who labored earnestly or wrestled in prayer.

At what level is your prayer life?

II. What is Prayer?

The first question we must answer when dealing with the topic of prayer is, "What is prayer?"

- *How would you answer the question, "What is prayer?" How would you describe prayer if someone asked you that question?*

"For Christians prayer is like breathing. You don't have to think to breathe because the atmosphere exerts pressure on your lungs and forces you to breathe. That's why it is more difficult to hold your breath than it is to breathe. Similarly, when you're born into the family of God, you enter into spiritual atmosphere wherein God's presence and grace exert pressure, or influence, on your life. Prayer is the normal response to that pressure. As believers we have all entered the divine atmosphere to breathe the air of prayer... Unfortunately many believers hold their spiritual breath for long periods, thinking brief moments with God are sufficient to allow them to survive... The fact is every believer must be continually in the presence of God, constantly breathing in His truths to be fully functional... Continual, persistent, incessant prayer is an essential part of Christian living."

John MacArthur, *Alone With God*, pp. 13-14

God is a **personal God** who desires a **personal relationship** with His creation so much that He gave His only begotten Son as a substitute sacrifice for our sin. God has opened the door for a personal relationship with His creation (at least those who have trusted in Him). Therefore, communication is called for in order to maintain this personal relationship. Prayer can best be defined as: COMMUNICATING WITH THE ONE WITH WHOM WE HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP (God). Thus, prayer has often been defined as "a two way conversation with God."

There are four personalities involved in this vital personal relational communication called prayer.

1. The Child-Children need to communicate with their fathers, likewise as children of God, we must communicate with God the Father. The children are doing the praying. They are the ones, who are bringing petitions before God their Father.

- *What do the following verses teach regarding the relationship of the child of God with their Heavenly Father?*

Matthew 6:9

Matthew 6:26

Matthew 7:11

2. The Father-He is the One who we pray to. He is the One who we carry our burdens to. He is the One who we bring our petitions to.

- ***What do the following verses teach regarding the Father's character in relating to His children?***

Job 11:7

Revelation 19:6

1 John 3:20

John 21:17

Psalm 139:7-10

These characteristics/attributes should comfort us as we come before the Father and communicate to Him.

3. Jesus-He is our Mediator. He is our official stand-in, our representative before God's throne. When God looks at us He sees the righteousness of Jesus placed to our account. Justified, just as if we are sinless.

- ***What do the following verses teach about Jesus as our Mediator?***

1 Tim. 2:5-6

1 John 2:1-2

Hebrews 10:11-12

Romans 8:34

4. Holy Spirit-He is the Indweller.

- ***What do the following verses teach regarding the Spirit's indwelling role in this relationship?***

1 John 3:24

Romans 8:26-27

Prayer then is vital communication with the one whom we have a personal relationship with (God our Father). We as God's children must be in constant communication with Him. This personal relationship should actively involve Christ our mediator and the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

To whom do we pray----God the Father

Through whom do we pray----Christ the Mediator

In whom do we pray----The Indwelling Holy Spirit

APPLICATION:

- **At what level is your prayer life on the prayer growth chart?**
- **What can you do to improve your prayer life?**
- **Take time to pray!**