

Lesson #3

Prayer

There is one practice in the Christian life that many Christians struggle with: prayer. Think about it this way: many Christians want to pray to God but feel frustrated speaking to a person they cannot see with their eyes, hear with their ears, or touch with their hands. Why then should we pray?

Prayer is essential to the Christian life because it is our direct communication with God. As we practice prayer we will discover three unshakable truths:

- God sees us from our innermost hearts
- He hears and gives attention to our heartfelt requests, and
- He touches our lives through his Holy Spirit

When we engage in prayer we do more than speak to God. We are in the process of learning to see, hear, and touch him in unique and satisfying ways.

How does the Christian pray? Are there rules to prayer? How long must I pray? Are there certain things I must always pray for? How can I know when God is speaking to me instead of just me speaking to him? Prayer is the means whereby even the prophets of old spoke to God and learned how to hear his voice.

This study will serve as a beginner's guideline to prayer and how to experience God's love through the regular practice of prayer. We will also look at what prayer is not so that we don't confuse it with practices from false religions.

What Is Prayer? And What It's Not

Prayer is nothing more than having a conversation with God.

“Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” ([Matthew 6:9-13](#))

How do you communicate to your family or friends? You simply talk with them. You share your life with them. Prayer, in one sense, is no different. Prayer is simply having a conversation with God about the things that are on your heart. This passage shows how to pray about the things we care about and what God cares about.

What is on your heart? Talk to Jesus about that right now.

Prayer is a means whereby God transforms us so that our will and his will come together.

“When He arrived at the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, saying, ‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done’” ([Luke 22:40-42](#)).

Even Jesus prayed for his Father’s will instead of his own. Prayer is not a way to get things from God. Prayer is more than asking God for things. When we spend time in prayer and think about his Word our desires begin to transform over time to be more like his.

What do you want from your life? Make a short list of the five things in life you desire the most. Now make a list of the five things you think God wants from your life. Compare them. How can these things be brought together?

Prayer is not a talisman, charm, formula, chanting, or an exercise in magic or divination—prayer is spiritual conversation.

“When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words” ([Matthew 6:7](#)).

Because prayer is an expression within religion, many people see prayer in one of these ways. But as we’ve already seen, genuine prayer that God hears and responds to is a conversation with God. He is a person. We are persons. People communicate. Treating prayer like one of the above things takes away from the simplicity of just talking with God.

Do you treat prayer like one of these things? Begin turning from that by having a short conversation with God right now.

Prayer Practices

Have a conversation with God about your life and interests.

“Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” ([Matthew 6:9-13](#))

[Matthew 6:9-13](#) is the perfect guide to use for prayer. Notice that it combines God’s interests with our interests. As you consider this passage you will see how it reflects your needs. Practice this prayer right now.

As you read each phrase, take a moment to pray to God about it. Apply this to all of the things in life that you need and talk to God about them. Do this for each phrase you read.

Have a conversation with God about his life and interests.

Now look at the prayer again and notice where God’s interests are mentioned in verses 9 and 10. Pray specifically through these verses. For instance, read verse 9 then pray through different things you can thank God for. Our relationship with God deepens as we engage in this practice.

What kinds of things can you thank God for as represented in verse 9 and 10? Make a list and pray a prayer of thanks to God for them.

Engage in prayer regularly to get to know God better.

“Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints” ([Ephesians 6:18](#)).

“Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” ([I Thessalonians 5:17-18](#)).

The Bible encourages us to pray and think thoughts toward God continually. This does not mean at every waking moment we are praying. Rather, it means to turn to God throughout our day and bring our concerns, thanks, and praises to him. As we do this we will begin to sense and understand the things that please God.

Some people make an appointment with God for prayer. Some pray in the mornings, some in the evenings, and some a various times throughout the day. What kind of time can you give God in regular prayer?

Power Through Prayer

Our lives will powerfully change when we bring our concerns to God.

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God” ([Romans 8:14-16](#)).

As we become accustomed to talking with God and become sensitive to his leading, we will experience a change in our innermost desires. Instead of being concerned for only ourselves we will become more concerned with the things of God.

How has God begun to change your desires through prayer? As you spend more time in prayer, how have your prayers changed?

We will become more interested in God's will the more we seek God in prayer.

"For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" ([Ephesians 1:15-18](#)).

Prayer is one of the ways in which we get to know God's will. As we learn more about his character and his promises, and acknowledge them in prayer, our hearts will turn more and more toward God with a great desire to know him intimately.

What parts of God's will or his character interest you the most? Talk to God about those things. What do you seem to be learning?

Those who regularly and continually seek God in prayer will be more in touch with God and will experience a vibrant relationship with him.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" ([Philippians 4:6-7](#)).

Imagine you had a friend with whom you rarely talked. You would not know that person very well, would you? But if you met with that person regularly your relationship would deepen. So it is the same when we pray to Jesus and let his Word speak to us.

Do you want a close relationship with God? Spend time with him in prayer.

For more information or help please write to info@twrafrica.org or our WhatsApp number +27 72 641 4475.