

"Time to Pray"

This week and every week, let's take time to pray and to give thanks. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to look at the value of expressing our hearts to God.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We search the Scriptures for God's will. We want to please God in every way, and so we take the time to listen to what God has to say. Our Father in heaven speaks today through His written word. He gives us a message that is true for all time and all people. We study God's word, because it has God's wisdom. And we need that wisdom! Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Daniel chose to spend the night in the lion's den rather than go one day without prayer. He believed praying to God was more important than his own life. Prayer is how we personally tell God all the things that in our hearts. It's one means of adoring Him, thanking Him, and praising Him. Prayer time allows us to confess our sins and to ask God's forgiveness. Prayer gives us an opportunity to ask God to meet our needs or the needs of people that we love. God invites us to pray to Him as our Father. He loves us that much.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 urges us to "Pray without ceasing." Oh we should never give up on praying or lose heart. Acts 2:42 reminds us of the early church was "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

Colossians 4 and verse 2 says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving." Well why does God want us to concentrate on praying day after day? Because God knows how much good a strong prayer life will be to your soul. If you wish to renew your zeal for God or merely draw closer to God, then take time each day to get alone with God and pray fervently from your heart.

Now we offer this study about prayer free. And if you'd like a printed copy or a CD of this lesson and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Matthew 7:7 to 11, and we'll explore our need to pray.

Our reading today comes from the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 7, verses 7 through 11. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" That's a reading from God's holy word. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful that You are so generous and good to us. That You give for what we ask for, that You open doors, and that You give us a way to live. Father we pray that we will always for all that You've done for us. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Even though He was the Son of God, Jesus saw value in prayer. Mark 1:35 says, "And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose He and went out and He departed to a lonely place, and was praying there." Jesus needed time alone with the Father and He needed time to prepare His heart for

the day's tasks. Luke 5 and verse 16 says that, "He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray." Before Jesus appointed the twelve disciples to be apostles, He felt the need to pray.

Luke 6 and verse 12 says, "And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God." Have you ever spent even a single hour in prayer?

I can't imagine all that Jesus felt on the night that He was betrayed. Jesus knew what struggles lay ahead of Him during the trials and on the cross. He knew that He would die a most painful death and He would bear the sins of the whole world. And He prayed at the garden of Gethsemane for three hours. Luke 22 and verse 42 says that He prayed, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done." Jesus prayed for the Father's will to be done. And again He said to His Father in Matthew 26:42, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." Now Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price with His own blood.

The Lord Jesus began and He ended His crucifixion and His death with prayer. While they were nailing Him to the cross, Jesus was praying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they're doing" (Luke 23 verse 32). Even while these hardened soldiers were putting nails through His hands and feet, He was thinking of their forgiveness. Such was His devotion to granting forgiveness to the lost. He wanted everyone to be saved. And His last words after suffering for six hours and as He was breathing his last were "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23 and verse 46). His heart and mind throughout this horrifying time was upon His relationship to the Father and doing the Father's will. Now if Jesus needed to pray, how much more so do we?

God not only wanted us to pray, and He also wanted to hear our hearts, He also knew the value of prayer to our daily lives. Praying can bless your life in a multitude of ways. And I just want to mention a few:

First, prayer can help you in times of temptation. Now the Lord Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the Garden of Gethsemane. And He wanted them to pray and to watch with Him. Well while He was pouring out His heart in prayer, well they were falling asleep. And the Lord Jesus told them in Matthew 26 and verse 41, "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing He said, but the flesh is weak." Prayer can help us to remain close to God in trying times. Now when Satan tempts us, prayer can strengthen our hearts and help us to overcome the temptation. We don't have to fight temptation alone. Hebrews 4 verses 15 to 16 says, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." I tell you, God will help us.

We also need to understand that the devil means business when he tempts us. He wants us to sin and break our relationship with the Lord. James 4 verses 7 and 8 says, "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." Now God will protect and help us when we pray. Someone has said that, "Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees."

Second, prayer can help you in times of worry and struggle. 1 Peter 5 and verse 7 reminds us to cast "all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you." We all face worries and fears, but we can cast those anxieties on the Lord. The Lord cares about you and your daily life. No problem is too big or too small for the Lord. I love the promise in Philippians 4 verses 6 to 7: "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, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

God wants you to be at peace, to find security in Him. And instead of worrying about every problem that comes along, tell God about it! By prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God. And while you're asking, thank Him for listening, for caring, and for helping you. Well what will happen if you pray? God will give you a true peace of heart and mind that surpasses all understanding. He will place a guard all around your heart and mind; He won't let your worries overcome you. He won't abandon you. And He won't forget you. In every difficult situation, prayer to God with faith will help you ride out the storm.

Third, prayer can help you grow closer to God. When we pray regularly and truly desire that the will of God be done on earth as it is in heaven, we build our devotion to Him. When we see our prayers answered, it makes us love Him all the more. Prayer helps us see things differently and to want what God wants. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." How I wish every person in America, every person in the world hungered and thirsted for righteousness. You know this would change our country, it would change our world, and make it a better, more loving, more joyful, more hopeful, more honest, and more honorable society. Wouldn't you like to live in a world that had no crime, no drunkenness, no immorality, no hatred, and no prejudice? Wouldn't you like to live in a country where people helped each other, respected each other and told the truth?

Prayer is the greatest precautionary measure that you can take against falling away from the living God. The first step in falling away from God is when people stop praying and become indifferent; and in time they forsake God altogether. Praying and being close to God will keep you from growing complacent and apathetic. Praying reminds you of the most important matters of life. Now when you pray, you think of your soul and you think of the souls of those around you. And in prayer you thank God for His blessings, and this makes you appreciate and love Him all the more. Praying every day will change your life; taking time to talk with God will renew your spirit and keep your values and priorities straight. It will give you a safe place to go from the world and all its temptations. Jesus needed time with His Father, and so do we.

Fourth, prayer can help you in your work for God. Now prayer gives us the strength to carry on in our labor for the Lord. In Ephesians 6 and verse 19 Paul asked the church at Ephesus to "pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel." You know, when we knock, God opens the door. When we are weak, God gives us the strength to bear our burdens. Sidlow Baxter said, "Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons -- but they are helpless against our prayers."

I think of Nehemiah, and how he heard "The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire." Nehemiah 1 and verse 4 says, "When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven." I tell you, we too hear bad news now and then. What do you do? Nehemiah wept and mourned for days; he fasted and prayed. My friend if you are hurting and in fear, pray for God to help you make a difference. You see God heard Nehemiah's prayer and helped him rebuild Jerusalem.

We all find ourselves inadequate at times, unskilled, lacking wisdom, or unprepared for the challenge. And at those times we pray for God's help! Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3 and verse 5, "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God." Well this is certainly true! God can work in and through us to do things that we couldn't do by ourselves. Never give up on the power of prayer! Never give up on God!

If we're ever to recapture the zeal of the first century church, it'll begin with prayer.

Paul praised God in Ephesians 3 verses 20 to 21. He said, "Now to Him who is able to do far abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." Oh, we need to ask for God's help!

Fifth, praying can reassure you. Sometimes we just need to be close to the One we love. We need to tell Him we love Him, to thank Him, to praise Him, and to take our burdens to Him.

Prayer is a great reminder that we have a "Father" in heaven. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 6 and verse 8 that "your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him." He knows all about everything, and He wants to bless us. Jesus asked in Matthew 7 verses 9 to 11, "'Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, he won't give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?' He said, 'If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!'"

I tell you God is willing and He's waiting for us to ask! Nothing is more reassuring than seeing prayer answered.

Now God will answer our prayers. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 11:22 to 24, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, that whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have (that is, have already) received them, and they will be granted you." Faith and willingness to do God's will are vital to our prayers.

James 1 verses 5 to 8 says, "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." When I need God's wisdom to help me work through a problem, I pray and God answers. I know He has helped me in the past and will continue to help me. God isn't offended by my asking. He's generous and happy to help.

So prayer is how we connect with our Father in heaven. We can connect anytime anyplace. We need God every day and every hour. My friend how is your prayer life? Are you a man or woman of prayer? Let's pray together. Oh Father help us each day to remember that You are ever present and willing to help us in our times of need. Father help us to love You and to do Your will. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

Real prayer, heartfelt and fervent, blesses both God and man. Proverbs 15:8 says, "the prayer of the upright is His delight." God wants to hear from you regularly. You don't have to beg God to be heard. He wants to hear your heartfelt prayers. It's a joy to count my blessings and recall all the good that my God has done. It's a great blessing to share my heart, my burdens, my fears, and my concerns with my Father in heaven, knowing He cares to listen and that He can do something about them.

Now when people tell me about some trouble they face, maybe it's trouble at home, or trouble financially, trouble with their health, or trouble on the job, I ask them, "Have you prayed about it?" Don't give up on God too quickly. Don't imagine that God is unaware of our troubles and cares. God may very well be working behind the scenes in ways that we cannot see and we don't understand to answer those prayers. God doesn't always give us what we ask for, but He always gives us what is best for our souls. Let's trust in God when we pray.

Some folks think that salvation comes from simply saying a “sinner’s prayer.” The New Testament, however, never speaks of a “sinner’s prayer.” Does that surprise you? Saying a “sinner’s prayer” is a modern invention. To be saved, the Lord expects people to believe in Him, to love Him, to repent of their sins, to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and to be baptized in His name for the forgiveness of their sins. In Acts 22 and verse 16 Saul of Tarsus was baptized to wash away His sins, calling on His name. Now according to 1 Peter 3 and verse 21 baptism is how we appeal to God for a good conscience. Well we hope that you’ll follow the Lord’s teaching and be baptized today for the forgiveness of your sins. And when you do, the Lord will add you to His church and make you His child.

We’re so thankful you tuned in today. We hope that you’ll deepen your prayer life. Now if you live in the United States and you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can also view this program on YouTube. Just go to our channel, “SearchTVMInistry.” And there are several program there. There are also many wonderful resources on our website at searchtv.org. There are studies, and maps, and songs, and a newsletter. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses and study sheets. Now don’t worry, we’re not here to get your money. We’re here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you get involved with a church of Christ, and we’d be glad to help you find a church home. Well we’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So we ask that you keep on searching God’s Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.