

Prayer – Lesson 5
Practicing the Five Basic Types of Prayer

Approaching God Through Daily Praise and Worship

We should get in the habit of spending the first several minutes of our prayer time in genuine praise, worship and thanksgiving. We use praise, worship and thanksgiving to prepare our hearts for dynamic prayer.

Psalm 100:4 tells us to, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.” Questions you need to answer...

What are some things for which you are thankful?

What words of praise come to your mind?

Scripture reminds us to come before Him with a sense of awe and reverence. When we pray do we have the right attitude in our approaching Him?

Steps to a Meaningful Time of Praise

1. Dedicate adequate time to sincere praise and worship.

Don't rush through your time of praise and worship so you can get to your want list.

Is your prayer time mostly devoted to your want list?

Estimate how much time you spend in praise and worship.

2. Spend time thanking God for the things He has done in your life.

Thank Him for past, present and promised blessings.

Nothing builds faith and prepares you to pray like thanking God for your list of answered prayers.

Build a habit of listing your blessings as well as your requests. You will then be able to look back on past blessings God has given you, keep track of His present blessings and most importantly look forward to the future blessings He's promised you in His Word.

Who is God to you? When we take the time to think about who God is and all He's done for us, praise becomes natural and spontaneous.

Your daily time with God is a relationship and should always contain an element of spontaneity and variation. The goal is to allow the Holy Spirit to direct each time you meet with God. He

wants your heartfelt praise and worship above everything else. If you will give regular time to genuine praise and worship, it will revolutionize your relationship with Him.

Getting Clean Before God Through Confession

Now that we've spent quality time in praise, we are now ready for a time of confession and cleansing. Unconfessed sin will hinder your power to pray. Confession is how we allow God to conform us to His image.

How much time do we actually spend in confession?

It is extremely important that we are fully right with God before we start our prayers of petition and intercession. Remember what James 5:16 tells us, "The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

It is impossible to pray powerful, Spirit led prayers with unconfessed sin standing between you and God. He calls for a thorough process of confession and cleansing...not a brief, casual formality.

Most Christians have little or no prayer power because they fail to practice genuine confession on a daily basis. Most people tend to rush through confession time so they can focus on what it is they want God to do for them.

Categories of Potential Sin

1. Sins of Thoughts and Attitudes

Sin always begins in the realm of our thoughts and attitudes. Jesus said in Matthew 15:19, "Out of the heart come evil thoughts." James 1:14-15 tells us that, "Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin."

We must ask ourselves...

Are there any unclean or lustful thoughts?

Are there any thoughts of anger or bitterness?

Are there any attitudes of pride or prejudice?

Are there any attitudes of lukewarmness toward God?

2. Sins of Speech

God's Word is clear about the enormous importance of our speech. Jesus told us in Matthew 12:36 that, "Everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken." James 3:10 tells us, "Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be."

We need to be specific in confessing our sins of speech and sensitive to the fact that God will lead us to apologize to those we've hurt with our words.

Examples: Cursing, gossip, slander, lying, complaining

3. Sins of Relationship

Perhaps the most common place we lose God's closeness is in our relationships with others. Relationship sins generally fall into the following major areas...

- People we've hurt or offended

Jesus shared the importance of getting right with those we have offended. In Matthew 5:23-24 He said, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."

Many Christians lack power because they have ignored this fundamental command. When God reveals people to us, we must commit to going to them and asking their forgiveness. Keep in mind that forgiveness is tough. Don't think you've failed if someone refuses to forgive you. Your responsibility is to do your part in a humble, loving manner. How others respond is their responsibility.

- Bitterness or Holding Grudges

In Matthew 6: 14-15, Jesus made a statement of extreme importance. "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Jesus says we must forgive people "from the heart." Remember that forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling.

We need to ask God to search our hearts and reveal any patterns of bitterness or unforgiveness against friends, family members or even against God.

- Improper Relationships

An improper relationship could be anything from adultery and fornication to simply being inappropriately close to someone. Don't try to rationalize or defend a relationship you know to be improper. Improper relationships involve many things besides physical immorality.

If you are involved in any improper relationship, it is vitally important that you ask God what steps you need to take to resolve the relationship.

- Family Relationships not consistent with God's Word

Family relationships inconsistent with His Word is a common place we lose the filling and power of God's Spirit.

We need to commit ourselves to the study of the Word and pray that He will reveal to us the steps needed for us to become the husbands, wives, parents, grandparents and children He expects us to be.

4. Sins of Commission and Transgression

In a broad sense, these are the sins of doing something wrong or breaking God's laws. Examples would be: adultery, fornication, stealing, murder, pornography, idolatry...on and on and on.

Fortunately for us, God's grace will cover them all! Never forget what 1 John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

We must ask God to reveal anything that may be offensive to Him and not be afraid to own up to our sins.

5. Sins of Omission

Sins of omission are our failures to obey His commands. James 4:17 describes it this way, "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them."

Some examples of sins of omission are: neglecting Bible reading and prayer, failing to witness, failure to tithe, neglecting regular worship, refusing to use your spiritual gifts, etc.

One final thought on confession. One potential danger is confession that doesn't lead to immediate repentance. When you become aware of a sin, be sure to take the action necessary to remove it. Keep in mind that true confession must involve repentance, or it is not genuine. Sin must be confessed and forsaken.

Praying Dynamic Prayers of Petition

The primary objective of this section is to help you learn to pray petitions that are both Biblically based and centered on God's will for your life.

This type of prayer is the one where we bring our list of needs and wants to God. It is important that we not only understand there is nothing wrong or selfish about bringing your desires and needs to God but also that He wants and expects us to do so.

Psalm 37:4 tells us, "Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

With most Christians, our petitions focus mainly on personal needs such as physical problems, emotional needs, personal desires, financial and job concerns, relationship issues and so on. Each of us needs to mature to the point where our personal petitions also reflect the priorities of God.

We need to understand the difference between prayer requests that are only physical or temporal and those that are spiritual or eternal. Some examples of spiritual or eternal requests that should make our lists are overcoming temptation, to grow and mature spiritually, to see the opportunities we have to share Christ with those around us.

When we develop the practice of asking God for spiritual as well as physical things, our prayers of petition will be dynamic and powerful.

Powerful Intercession

Intercession is one of the most powerful but also one of the least practiced types of prayer. Intercessory prayer focuses on the needs of others...both physical and spiritual.

As with our petitions, we should put a greater priority on interceding for eternal issues as opposed to temporal. Intercessory prayer is God's foundational strategy for evangelism, missions, discipleship, revival and spiritual awakening.

A very shallow level of intercession explains the lack of power in many churches and ministries. As with petitions, many Christians practice intercessions that are far too general and unfocused.

Again, there is nothing wrong with intercessory prayer for physical needs but these should not be the majority of our requests. Far more important that someone's physical well being is their spiritual well being. Our focus, like His, should always be on the spiritual first.

The more specific and Biblical our prayer, the more power we have before God. Learn to pray for the lost and backslidden, for pastors and teachers, for churches, for revival and spiritual awakening. God has incredible blessings for all who embrace Biblical intercession.

Hear God's Voice Through Meditation

Meditation is a type of prayer because it is communication with God through prayerful listening. You are quietly listening for God's voice through His Word and the impressions the Spirit speaks to your heart. The more we know and meditate on God's Word, the easier we will recognize His voice when He speaks. Never forget that genuine prayer is a relationship and there can be no real relationship unless it is two way.

Develop the practice of asking God to speak to you during your daily Bible reading. Approach the Bible as God's personal word to you each and every day. By asking, "God what are you saying to me?" our prayer and Bible reading become powerfully inter-connected.

Journaling is a great tool and will help your daily time with God. A thorough, personal journal will literally be a written record of your relationship with God. Another great advantage of journaling is you will form the habit of writing down the specific promises God reveals to you. Writing down key thoughts and impressions helps you get into a serious habit of listening for God's voice.

The more we are exposed to His Word the more He speaks to us and transforms our lives. Never forget that meditation is the intentional act of listening to God. Unfortunately, far too many approach Bible reading and prayer without expecting to hear a personal word from God.