

# PRAYING *Properly*



One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. As the disciples watched Jesus pray, the weakness of their own prayer lives drove them to beg Him to teach them to pray.

Therefore, when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.” Luke 11:1

In this short publication we will take a look at how to pray properly. We hear a lot of murmurings in today’s church, which are nothing but sinful petitions in the name of Jesus. People pray before sporting events, on their sick beds, and in shouts of praise, but what is true prayer?

## #1 In the Spirit

If we miss this point, anything else simply becomes the babbling of pagans—a noisy clamor of annoying words in the ears of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions...  
Ephesians 6:18

Praying in the Spirit does not mean speaking in the gift of tongues. Indeed, one can pray in tongues without being in the Spirit. You can use this gift without any surrender to the Gift Giver, just as those in the world use the good gift of life for their own selfish interests.

Praying in the Holy Spirit requires a quiet, waiting attitude toward the living God, which does not come easily to anyone. Before bending your knees or lifting your hands, first pause, listen, and wait for God’s attention. Prayer demonstrates a seeking of God and we should first look and see the expression on God’s face. Is He smiling at us? Is there a frown or anxiety? Is the Holy Spirit pleased or grieved? Does He desire us to pray about something? Does God wish to

inspire us unto praise or weeping? Praying in the Spirit means to first and foremost wait to discover God's heart for this moment of prayer. "On all occasions" we should pray only in the Holy Spirit, moved, directed, and shown what to pray by Him. Praying in the Spirit rejects the strength of our efforts in prayer and makes certain that anything poured out before God comes through the Holy Spirit rather than through our own strength and wisdom.

## #2 In Your Ignorance

When the disciples finally felt deeply their need to be taught by Jesus how to pray then He could teach them. In the same way, our prayers will never satisfy God until we start every prayer with the realization of our ignorance. Whenever I pray I begin with my ignorance. I don't know what to pray, and even if I do know God's will at the moment, I do not know how to pray about it. Therefore, I must humble myself and wait for the Holy Spirit's assistance. Only in our weakness does the Holy Spirit help us. God opposes the proud, and He will not hear their prayers nor inspire them to pray according to His will.

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express, Romans 8:26*

If we are filled with the Holy Spirit and can sense His working, we too will echo the groans of God and be blessed to have God work His perfect, pleasing will. Much arrogance fills the house of God as individual after individual floods the Lord's altar with words about their needs or how they want God to glorify His

name. We, in our self-righteousness, think we know what glorifies God and how things should move forward. Praying in the Spirit leaves all of this confidence behind and picks up a cross that keenly feels the weakness of the flesh that thinks it knows what to pray. So many of our prayers go unanswered, or we feel confused about God's actions simply because we fail to grasp, by the Spirit, what the groans really mean.

To pray in the Spirit means to cease our efforts of prayer and allow the new life of Christ to move and inspire us in the proper posture for praying at any given moment. There is a time and season for everything under heaven and we are fools if we praise when we should weep, and weep when we should praise. We are foolish when we come before God with all our needs, concerns, and wants but have not asked Him to show the desires of the Holy Spirit. Hearing and doing the will of God takes a degree of humility most people completely reject. Human words cannot fully express God's will, and so the Holy Spirit must intercede with groans.

So why then do we think we can second guess God concerning His will? If you cannot understand the groans of the Holy Spirit, then wait in humility for God to reveal step by step His will. Wait upon God to impress on you the needs of Christ rather than your own. Wait upon God to show what direction to go rather than running ahead to do what you think will glorify Him. Continually admit your ignorance and you will receive the mind of Christ and Jesus will teach you how to pray.

## #3 In Your Room

Praying while jogging or walking is not "closed door" praying. Praying while driving and doing

any other activity is not “closed door” praying. Lying upon your bed praying early in the morning is not “closed door” praying. Only after we arise, go into our rooms, shut the door, and pray are we prepared to pray as we jog, drive, and fulfill the demands of the day.

*But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen... Matthew 6:6 (emphasis added)*

Jesus, the example of prayer, often arose before daybreak to find a lonely spot to pray. From this closed door praying time, in other words shutting out the world, He could move throughout the day teaching, healing, and rebuking.

When Jesus prayed to feed 5,000 His prayer was short, to the point, and powerful. Jesus simply blessed the food. Because He had spent time alone with God behind closed doors, the shortest of prayers could feed multitudes.

*Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Mark 6:41a*

One of the first things the Holy Spirit will work is to shut us up (Ecclesiastes 5:2, Matthew 6:7). Our prayers are way too wordy, and when words are many, sin is not far off, (Proverbs 10:19). Unlike Jesus, our prayers of blessing food could not feed a family of five, let alone 5,000. People often remark how short my prayers are, for they are to the point and with a full heart. This comes from the work of the cross that produces life compared to the long winded prayers that we must endure for the sake of showiness, (Mark 12:40).

Is it any wonder we walk in such spiritual poverty? We can hardly feed ourselves, let alone consider feeding multitudes the bread of life. Why? Because we do not go into our rooms

and close the door to the world. If we expect to hear God’s voice then we must close the door to our thoughts, emotions, and wills. How does this square with pouring our hearts out to God? That, as we will see, shows how the cross works in our prayer lives.

## #4 In Surrendered Obedience

The Bible declares we must walk as Jesus walked and if we expect God to hear our prayers and praises then we too must pray as Jesus prayed, in reverent submission.

*During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. Hebrews 5:7-8*

Would you expect God to answer the prayers of Hitler? Of course not, for we know that Hitler’s heart would have had to change before God would remotely consider listening to his prayers. In the same way God will not listen to our prayers unless we surrender to the suffering that the cross brings in our lives. Jesus learned obedience from what He suffered and we too will only learn to pray correctly to the degree we have allowed the sufferings of Christ to teach us to obey. The quiet times of Jesus consisted of loud cries and tears, a far cry from our coffee cup devotionals found at the

local bookstore. Jesus could petition and pray to God and was heard because He willingly obeyed God, not out of selfish ambition, but reverent submission. We must remember throughout the day that God gives the Holy Spirit only to those who joyfully obey that voice, (Acts 5:32). As you let God lead you into the sufferings of Christ, He will also grant you the prayers of Christ by the Holy Spirit, and those prayers God answers, (Romans 8:17, 1 Peter 4:1-2).

## #5 Unto Dying

We must pray until we joyfully surrender to God's will. We must pray so that only God's strength performs His will. Jesus, our example, surrendered in the Garden of Gethsemane. There he wrestled until He had given up His entire will and replaced it with a joyful obedience to the Father. Jesus died to His will and, by the Holy Spirit, moved with great speed and conviction to meet the cross head on.

Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"  
Mark 14:42

This is what Jesus meant when He spoke in John 12:24 of falling to the ground and dying. We must die to our wants, wills, and wishes to the point that we would never go back to them if given the chance. Prayerful worship offers our bodies to God to will and work as He desires. True worship and prayer ends with knowing in the heart and performing with our bodies the "good, pleasing and perfect" will of God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing

of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2

## Summary

This publication by no means provides the definitive guideline to praying but a small part of what it means to pray in the Spirit. Indeed, there are no guidelines to praying, there is only the Holy Spirit who will teach and fill us unto acceptable prayers.

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