

HC 117-118 – The Method to Proper Praying

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Since prayer is the breath of the Christian, and since you need breathing to live, the Christian who doesn't pray is a dying Christian. I can't say that more bluntly!

Now you have already heard **why you should pray**: You must pray to show **thankfulness to God** and you must pray **to get the things you and your neighbors need to do the work God wants you to do**.

Today you will hear from God's Word **how to pray**.

Our headings are:

Pray with Sincerity

Pray with Humility

Our goals are: **That you will learn to pray properly, so you will get what God has promised you, so you can fulfill your duties**.

117 Q. **HOW DOES GOD WANT US TO PRAY SO THAT HE WILL LISTEN TO US?**

A. First, we **must pray from the heart** to no other than the one true God, who has revealed himself in his Word, asking for everything he has commanded us to ask for. Second, we must **acknowledge our need and misery, hiding nothing**, and **humble ourselves** in his majestic presence. Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer **because of Christ our Lord**. That is what he promised us in his Word.

Pray with Sincerity

1. Pray from the heart; God despises insincere prayers.

This means your prayer cannot be rote...simply repeating a prayer without thinking about it.

That's Roman Catholic. That's Pentecostal. That's Hare Krishna's. That's not Christian. You must carefully contemplate what your lips say.

Does this mean written prayers are wrong? No. You can find written prayers in the Bible. **Written prayer can be helpful. They help you to focus and cover all your bases.**

But when you use written prayers **make an effort to think** about what you say.

2. Consider a passage that reminds you to be heartfelt in prayer.

Psalm 43:1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation; Oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man! 2 For **You are the God of my strength**; Why do You cast me off? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; Let them **bring me to Your holy hill And to Your tabernacle**. 4 Then I will go to the altar of God...

You can't help but see the Psalmist **sincerity as he cries out to God**.

He expresses **his need for strength**. He **accepts his strength comes from God** – not himself.

He asks to be led.

He **expresses dependence**.

3. When you pray in sincerity, God, your loving Father, will hear your cry for help!

Psalm 145: 18 The **LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth**. 19 He **will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him**; He also will hear their cry and save them.

4. Your prayer must be sincere, but how do you become sincere?

When the Holy Spirit works in your heart you will begin to fear God...then you will cry out for help from your heavenly Father for everything you and your neighbors need.

Romans 8: 26 Likewise the Spirit also **helps in our weaknesses**. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, **but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings** which cannot be uttered.

And even if you have sin in your heart when you pray, Scriptures confirm God's Spirit searches it and cleans it out.

Pray with Humility

1. When you pray, be humble, not arrogant.

Only by being humble will God hear your prayers and give you what is good for you and your neighbor.

God said so – through King Solomon – the wisest man to have ever graced the earth.

2Chronicles 7: 14 "if My people who are called by My name **will humble themselves, and pray** and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, **then I will hear from heaven**, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

You must be conscious of your sin and weakness when you come to God in prayer.

Revelation 4: 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and **cast their crowns before the throne**, saying: 11 "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created."

Psalm 34: 18 The LORD is near to **those who have a broken heart**, And saves such as have a **contrite spirit**.

President Trump said he never asks for forgiveness because he never does wrong things. It is obvious he doesn't understand the ubiquity and seriousness of sin and he lacks proper humility.

2. When you pray put the honor of God first in your thoughts.

God in not your personal genie– your magic potion - to do what you want. God is not desperate for your affections. The humble Christian shows how completely dependent he is on God and God's will. After all, who are you to tell God what he **must** do for you. God is the Supreme Majesty. So honor him!

Isaiah 66: 1 Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? 2 For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. **"But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.**

The one who is humble keeps God in his place – as ruler over all. The humble man gives God the glory when God answers his prayers.

He especially doesn't try to take credit for what God does.

3. When you pray, you can only do so through the merits and works of Jesus Christ.

a. There is no unfettered access to God. That's what the Emergent church teaches.

(They believe doctrines mean little but relationships mean everything!) **Sin blocks access to God.** And the cost of access to God is a perfect human blood sacrifice.

The only perfect human blood sacrifice is the Lord Jesus. So you gain access to God through faith in his Son. There is no other way.

Those who don't pray through faith in Christ are just praying by imitation or tradition.

b. As a Christian, Jesus continues to be your advocate in heaven.

So for whatever you pray that is good for you and brings glory to God, Christ advocates for that before his Father and says: "***Do this for her. Don't do this to him. He is my child.***" **That is the only basis of approach!**

Hear Daniel:

Daniel 9: 17 "Now therefore, our God, **hear the prayer of Your servant**, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. 18 "O my God, **incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes** and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You **because of our righteous deeds**, but because of Your great mercies.

Daniel shows you have no merit of your own to approach God in heaven.

John 16: 23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, **whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.**

In John 16 Jesus **shows through whom you may pray: Him!**

You are able to pray through him if you have faith in him! **Faith is a gift from someone else!**

Now look at Apostle James:

James 1: 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But **let him ask in faith, with no doubting**, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

Prayer without trusting Jesus is a child blowing bubbles, empty shells which are broken and disappears.

4. When you pray, direct your prayers to the Father – to one greater than you.

It is perverted to pray to Mary or dead saints. It is madness to pray to someone who has no ability to answer a single prayer you make. Those prayers have no direction!

Pray through the Son to the Father! Praying through dead people is to think too much of mankind!

Matthew 6:9 "In this manner, therefore, pray: **Our Father in heaven,** Hallowed be Your name.

And know that your heavenly Father, will give you what you need.

James 1:17 **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,** and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

118 Q. WHAT DID **GOD COMMAND US** TO PRAY FOR?

A. **Everything we need, spiritually and physically,** as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

5. Consider how many things you need and let this humble you!

Look at the exact words of Jesus. You are needy and God will give you what is good.

Matthew 7:8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 "Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10 "Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11 "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 good things to those who ask Him!**

Question: So what do you need? You need to be **saved**, you need to be **sanctified**, and you need to **serve** God and man. **“Need” is determined as what is necessary to do what God wants you to do.**

You don’t need 3 meals and 2 desserts per day. You may not need a husband or a wife. You may not need money in the bank or RRSP’s. You don’t need a 6-figure salary. Those are all graces.

So why is it important to identify what “need” is?

When you see how needy you are, you will be humble and pray to fit into God’s plans rather than try to fit God into “your own plans.”

Illustration borrowed: You are not to be the architect of your life – draw up the plans in details and expect God to build it according to your desires. No, you are to let God design and build your life to please him.

You must say: **“God, give me what I need so I can praise your name and serve you as you desire. God, give me what I need to do good for my neighbor.”**

When you don’t get something you pray for, you will know that that is not a need – but maybe a desire!

Of course God may be pleased to give you some of your desires. **(So you can pray for your desires as well!)** He is a gracious God who delights to give gifts to his children. But he is so good that he doesn’t give you everything you want.

Conclusion:

Prayer is the breath of a Christian. If you don’t pray you are dying. Don’t ignore prayer. **But your prayer must be heartfelt, your prayer must come from a humble heart, and it must be offered through Jesus Christ.**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Do you see how necessary it is to have a good prayer life and to be heartfelt and humble when you pray?

Did these 2 things sink into your heart?

Do you pray for the things which are proper so you and your neighbor can fulfill your Christian duties?

Join your brothers and sisters in prayer at home, church, and online.

**2. Now what happens when you don't get what YOU want through your prayer?
Do you get angry with God?**

Remember, prayer is about the glory of God. So ask God to help you more and more to die to your own desires and live your life for the glory of his Son, your eternal Redeemer.

Pray for sincerity and humility. And wait for what is good.

Finally, **ritualistic prayers as a form of therapy are superstitious.**

Religious prayers made by people of other religions go in the air and disappear.

Prayers mean nothing if they were not offered through Christ.

Prayers not offered through Christ insults God.

Only if you become a child of God and are adopted because Christ took the punishment for your sin, can you pray.

Ask God to adopt you today and make you his child.