

The Power of Prayer!!!!

One of the greatest blessings enjoyed by Christians is the privilege of prayer. By praying, the Christian can find forgiveness for sins (Acts 8:22). Through prayer, he can find peace to replace anxiety (Phil. 4:6-7). In praying, we can receive spiritual strength (Eph. 3:14-16). For such reasons we are frequently exhorted to be diligent in our prayers (Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17). Yet Jesus knew that we would tend to become slack in our prayers (Luke 18:1f). In this lesson, we study some of the characteristics of acceptable prayer.

The “musts” of acceptable prayer include the following:

1. Prayer must be offered "in faith" (Matt. 21:22). In order to please God in anything, we must have faith in God (Heb. 11:6). Without faith, God does not answer prayers (James 1:5-8). When our faith is weak, let us increase it through the study of God's word (Rom. 10:17).
2. Prayer must be offered in the spirit of humility. In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus contrasted the proud prayer of the Pharisee versus the humble prayer of the tax-gatherer. This teaching of our Lord emphasizes the need to work on humility as a virtue, especially as an attitude in praying. When we pray, God is not looking for an orator. God is not looking to the outside; but rather upon the heart of man (Psa. 34:18; James 4:6).
3. Prayer must be offered in harmony with God's will. God answers prayers that is offered "according to His will" (1 John 5:14). That was the main point of Jesus' prayer in the garden (Luke 22:42). Far too often, our individual prayers are unanswered because we are more concerned with our will rather than God's will! (See James 4:3).
4. In order to be effective, prayer must be offered by those who are righteous before God (1 Peter 3:12; James 5:16-18). The Scriptures also emphasize the opposite: that God will not hear those who continue in sin (Prov. 28:9). Even his prayer is an abomination. God does not turn a holy ear toward the words of the one who defies Him (Isa. 59:1-2). It is not that God cannot hear; "He does not hear." So, to be righteous before God, we are required to submit to the "righteousness of God" offered in Christ (Rom. 10:1-4). Subjection to the righteousness of God is to be in subjection to the will of God for making men righteous; i.e., the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17).
5. Prayer must be offered in the spirit of thanksgiving (Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17-18). We read those passages and yet often we are complaining to God about the things which have happened. Do we really think God will help us with our present burdens if we do not take the time to thank him for our past and present blessings?

6. In order for our prayer life to be really effective, prayer must be offered with persistence. Jesus taught this in two parables. The first was that a persistent friend (Luke 11:5-10). The second similar parable was about the widow who persisted in seeking justice (Luke 18:1-8). Probably the best illustration of persistence in prayer are the three prayers of Jesus in the garden (Matt. 26:40, 42-44). Another good example is Paul's three prayers regarding his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-8). Persistency in prayer was also a characteristic of the New Testament church collectively (Acts 2:42).

7. Prayer must be offered "in the name of Jesus" (Eph. 5:20). Prayers are properly addressed to God, "our Father in Heaven." To pray in Jesus name is not just some magical phrase which must be used. It is how we give thanks! As we pray, we should be aware that Jesus is the way by which we can approach God (John 14:6). We should view Jesus Christ our Lord as our "High Priest" who intercedes for us (John 14:13; Heb. 7:24-25). Appealing to God in the name of his Son gives us great confidence that God will give us what we need (Heb. 4:14-16).

Now let us also notice a few obstacles to prayer:

1. Unrepented of and unconfessed sin (Psa. 66:18). As long as one continues in unrepented sin, fellowship with God (the basis for prayer) is broken.
2. My improper treatment of others hinders my prayers. This includes how we treat the poor and helpless (Psa. 41:1-3); our brethren (Matt. 5:23-24); and in family relationships (1 Peter 3:7). There are many other specifics. We must correct our relationships with others (if possible) before we can expect God to hear our prayers! This is especially true if we desire to receive the forgiveness for our sins (Matt. 6:14-15; 18:22; 18:34-35). We just must recognize the evil of an unforgiving heart; and the fact that it hinders the effectiveness of our prayers.

In conclusion: - 2nd Corinthians 13: 5

1. The ability to pray to God and receive answers in our lives is truly one of the greatest blessings we can have as children of God!
2. Hopefully, understanding and applying these very passages will assure greater success in having our prayers answered.

Questions:

1. Do you find it easy or difficult to pray? - 1st John 5: 15
2. Do you believe in the power of God to answer prayer base on "His Will" – 1st John 5: 14
3. Are you spending time every day devoted to prayer without ceasing – 1st Thessalonians 5: 17