



The Doctrine of Prayer

When Should We Pray?

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. There are no specific times of the day when prayer is allowed or disallowed.
- B. We have access to God by prayer at any and all times.
- C. However, we do find examples in the scripture of when people said that they would speak with the Lord specific references to when people did talk to God.
- D. From these examples we can glean truth that should challenge and help us in our relationship with God.

II. WHEN TO PRAY AS IT RELATES TO THE TIME OF DAY

A. Pray in the morning

- 1. The morning is the beginning of a new day and for most people is when we rise up from sleep to begin our day of labors.
- 2. For many people, the morning is a busy and rushed time as they prepare for the day ahead.
- 3. A set aside time for prayer may not be ideal for many Christians but consider this statement made by David when he prayed:
 - a. “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.” (Psalm 5:3).
 - b. According to the context, David needed God’s help and for God to turn his attention upon him as well as David needing to turn his attention upon God (consider verse 1 and 2).
 - c. David’s day was yet before him and he sought God early so that God would “Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.” (Psalm 5:8).
 - d. David needed God to lead and direct him through his day and therefore, he needed to seek God first thing in the morning.



4. Isaiah made a convicting statement when he spoke to God, that we need to consider.
 - a. “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isaiah 26:9).
 - b. Because Isaiah desired the Lord, he said that he would seek the Lord early, which would certainly include prayer.
 - c. He had such a great desire for the Lord and to be close to the Lord that he couldn’t wait to commune with him.
 - d. In fact, he says that he desired God in the night and that he would seek him early in the morning.
 - e. It would seem that during the night he meditated upon God and his word and as soon as morning came and he awoke, he spoke to the Lord.
 5. That which we seek out first in our day is what we desire and care about making time for. It may also be that that which we do in the mornings are what we consider the most essential things that must be taken care of. Shouldn’t time with God be the most important?
 - a. Does your alarm go off and you hit snooze multiple times, then your desire is sleep.
 - b. Do you get up and make time for exercise, then your desire is exercise.
 - c. Do you get up and check your emails and social media, then that is your desire.
 - d. Our heart’s desire may be wrong if it is not for the Lord and time spent with him in the mornings. This should be our desire and necessity.
 6. Like David, we too need God to lead and direct our day and for this we must seek him early in the morning!
 7. Like Isaiah, we should so love the Lord that we desire to seek him early!
 8. We may need to adjust our morning routines so that we can allow ourselves time to commune with our Creator and thus indicate to him our desire for him.
- B. Pray during the day
1. The example of Daniel
 - a. Daniel was a man who loved the Lord and was faithful to him while in captivity.



- b. Due to Daniel's love and faith in God, he was able to minister to the king, save people's lives, remain steadfast in opposition, and be given prophecy from God.
 - c. This great man of God had an appointment with God which he kept three times a day.
 - d. Daniel 6:10 says, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."
 - e. This time with God kept his heart tender and mind focused on the Lord.
 - f. It was something that Daniel was well known for and he was faithful to keep this time with God.
 - g. Whether these three times a day were the evening, morning, and noon as we see elsewhere in scripture is not so important but what is important is that he set aside three specific times each day to commune with his God.
 - h. Three times each day, Daniel stopped what he was doing, put aside all distractions, focused his heart and mind on the Lord and spoke to him.
 - i. The passage says that he "prayed, and gave thanks before his God" so we know for certain that part of this communion with the Lord included thanksgiving.
 - j. Verse 11 tells us further, "Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God."
 - k. So, Daniel prayed, gave thanks, and made supplication to God three times during his normal day.
2. The example of David
- a. When David was in great distress "Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me." (Psalm 55:3), he prayed unto God.
 - b. In fact, his distress and turmoil were so great that bringing the matter to God in prayer one time was not enough.
 - c. He says, "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." (Psalm 55:17)
 - d. Maybe praying at these specified times were already David's habit but certainly this was his practice during this trying time in his life.



- e. David's trouble was so compelling that he needed to set aside time in each of the three parts of the day to pray unto God.
 3. The men above had responsibilities, duties, and families (David) that occupied their days and demanded their time and energies.
 4. Yet, despite the busyness of their lives, they still managed to set aside three times a day just to talk with the Lord.
 5. What prevents us from having one, two, three or more set aside times each day for communing with God?
 6. Likely, we need to reevaluate our priorities in life and make some adjustments so that time with the Lord is more prominent.
 7. These men clearly had a great desire for talking to the Lord and there was necessity for them to commune with him multiple times in the day.
 8. Is this our desire? God said that David was a man after his own heart (Acts 13:22) and it was a necessity for David to have multiple times in prayer with God, how much greater is our necessity?
- C. Pray in the night
1. We may agree that we should spend time in prayer during the morning and during the day but what about during the night time.
 2. Most of us are weary from our day of labors and activities and very much look forward to the night when we are able to lie down for sleep.
 3. Yet, how seriously do we take the importance of prayer in our lives?
 4. Because there are many convicting examples of folks either waking up in the middle of the night or staying up all night in order to speak to God.
 5. Apparently, the need to speak with the Lord would be greater than our desire for rest and sleep if our hearts were truly fixed upon the Lord.
 6. One such convicting example is found in the Psalms.
 - a. Psalm 119:62 says, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments."
 - b. The wording seems to indicate that the psalmist was sleeping and purposefully roused himself at midnight for the sole purpose of giving God thanks.
 - c. We can understand the desire to give God thanks but why specifically did the psalmist feel that it was important to interrupt his sleep to do so?



- d. Is it possible that this simple act of self-denial added to the sincerity and significance of giving God thanks.
 - e. In some way, waking himself at midnight and giving thanks was a gesture to God of just how thankful he truly was and no doubt God received it as such.
7. A second convicting example is from the Lord Jesus.
- a. Referring to Jesus, Luke 6:12 says, “And it came to pass in those days, that he went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”
 - b. Unlike, the previous example, it does not appear that Jesus was sleeping at any point but that he stayed up the entire night praying.
 - c. We may struggle to spend an hour praying during the day but Jesus spent the entire night praying.
 - d. Jesus is our model and perfect example to follow and for whatever reason he needed to spend the entire night in prayer to God.
 - e. How much weaker and needy are we than Jesus but yet are we willing to spend an entire night praying to God?
8. A third example is from the book of Acts.
- a. Herod the king had apprehended Peter and kept him in prison between two soldiers (Acts 12:1-6).
 - b. It was night time and for that reason Peter was sleeping (Acts 12:6).
 - c. Even though it was the night, the church was awake and praying to God for Peter (Acts 12:5, Acts 12:12).
 - d. Due to the prayers of the saints, God sent an angel to free Peter from the prison and he came to the very house where these saints were praying (Acts 12:7-12).
 - e. Again, we know that these saints were up either all night or much of the night in prayer because after these things take place verse 18a says, “Now as soon as it was day”.
 - f. These believers forfeited their sleep in order to be up during the night in prayer not for themselves but someone else!
 - g. How many of us would groan if asked to stay up all night in order to pray? How easily would we make excuse that it would hinder our work or activities of the next day?



- h. What if we were asked to stay up all night to pray for the needs of someone else?
- i. Surely, our flesh has too much sway in our lives averting us from the blessedness of a close walk with the Lord through prayer.
- j. The Lord forgive us and correct us for undervaluing the importance and need for prayer in our lives!

D. Pray continually

1. So far, we have looked at examples of when to pray in the scripture that are to be a pattern for us to follow.
2. Yet the scripture actually gives us clear command to pray continually.
3. A command is given in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 for us to “Pray without ceasing”.
 - a. Does this mean that we are to literally be in non-stop prayer unto God throughout our day?
 - b. Maybe Romans 12:12 adds a little clarity to help us understand. This verse says, “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;”.
 - c. The idea of continuing instant in prayer seems to be that we are ready and mindful to communicate with God at any moment’s notice.
 - d. Nehemiah demonstrates praying without ceasing and continuing instant in prayer.
 - (1) In Nehemiah chapter 2, Nehemiah is serving king Artaxerxes and was sad before the king which was out of character for Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1).
 - (2) Artaxerxes perceived Nehemiah’s sadness and therefore asked what the source of his sorrow was (Nehemiah 2:2).
 - (3) Nehemiah responded and the king could tell that there was something that Nehemiah wanted to request so the king asked what his request was (Nehemiah 2:3-4).
 - (4) Here in the middle of this face-to-face conversation with the king the Bible says “So I prayed to the God of heaven.” (Nehemiah 2:4b).
 - (5) Nehemiah went from talking to the king to talking to God in an instant.
 - (6) He had a strong relationship with the Lord through prayer as is seen in chapter 1 alone but also throughout the book of Nehemiah.



- (7) It is as though Nehemiah was so close to God and communicated with him so frequently that Nehemiah acted as though God was there with him wherever he was.
 - (8) Like two people taking a walk; sometimes there is silence and at another moment there is conversation.
 - (9) Nehemiah did not restrict his communication with God to only set times of prayer but was in communication with God at any moment in his day.
4. Another command for the Christian to pray continually is found in Ephesians 6:18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”
 - a. This instruction for us to be praying always completes the whole armour of God that was started in Ephesians 6:10.
 - b. Prayer is an essential part of our spiritual armour.
 - c. This verse tells us to always pray and it has been said that there is a difference between “always” and “alway” in the scripture.
 - (1) Always refers to every individual instance. Like saying “every time I smell pepper, I always sneeze.”
 - (2) Alway refers to a constant permanency. Like when Jesus in Matthew 28:20 said “lo, I am with you alway”.
 - d. So, if this difference is true, then Ephesians 6:18 is telling us to pray for the saints every time we pray.
 - e. Possibly, this is what we see in Philippians 1:3 when Paul says, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.”
 - f. Then in verse 4 he says, “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,”
 - g. You can see here how that the word “always” is pointing to every individual instance of prayer, that Paul remembers the Philippian believers.
 - h. This would mean that we are to have many instances of prayer and that it should be ongoing.
 5. We have looked at just a few Bible verses indicating that we are to pray continually and without ceasing.
 6. The point is that we are instructed to be so thoughtful of the Lord and close to him that all through our waking moments we are in and out of prayer with him.