

Prayer

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WHAT IS PRAYER?

Our Means of Communication

God communicates with us through His inspired word; we communicate with Him through prayer.

Warning against hypocrisy, empty ritual, and meaningless repetition, Jesus taught His disciples to pray (Matt. 6:5-15; Luke 11:1-4).

Matthew 6:5-15 (NASB95) — 5 “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 6 “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. 7 “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. 8 “So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. 9 “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 ‘Give us this day our daily bread. 12 ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’ 14 “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 “But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Luke 11:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” 2 And He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. 3 ‘Give us each day our daily bread. 4 ‘And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’ ”

Prayer is the sincere outpouring of our hearts to God. The faithful come before God’s throne with confidence (Heb. 4:14-16), knowing that He hears and answers the prayers of His own (Heb. 4:14-16).

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NASB95) — 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Psalms 27:7-10 (NASB95) — 7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice, And be gracious to me and answer me. 8 When You said, "Seek My face," my heart said to You, "Your face, O Lord, I shall seek." 9 Do not hide Your face from me, Do not turn Your servant away in anger; You have been my help; Do not abandon me nor forsake me, O God of my salvation! 10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me, But the Lord will take me up.

Appropriate for Every Occasion

Prayer is appropriate for every occasion, an essential part of our daily lives. Paul said, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). He admonished the Colossians, "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2). Moreover, the apostle followed the same rule that he proclaimed (Rom. 1:9-12; 2 Tim. 1:3-4).

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NASB95) — 17 pray without ceasing;

Colossians 4:2 (NASB95) — 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

Romans 1:9-12 (NASB95) — 9 For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, 10 always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you. 11 For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine.

2 Timothy 1:3-4 (NASB95) — 3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, 4 longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

Regular prayer is an identifying mark of New Testament Christianity. Those who were baptized on the day of Pentecost continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayer (Acts 2:41-42). Delegating certain responsibilities, the apostles devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-4, esp. vs. 4). When Peter was imprisoned, "prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God" (Acts 12:1-5, esp. vs. 5).

Acts 2:41-42 (NASB95) — 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. 42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 6:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. 2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3 "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Acts 12:1-5 (NASB95) — 1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. 3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. 4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. 5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

May we, like the Psalmist, cast our burdens upon the Lord (Psa. 55:22). Fervent prayer causes anxieties to fade and flee (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Pet. 5:6-7).

Psalm 55:22 (NASB95) — 22 Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NASB95) — 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 5:6-7 (NASB95) — 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

WILL GOD ANSWER PRAYER?

God Answers Our Prayers

The Bible teaches that God answers prayer (Psa. 34:15-17; 1 Pet. 3:12). Elijah's example proves that the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much (James 5:16-18).

Psalm 34:15-17 (NASB95) — 15 The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the Lord is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry, and the Lord hears And delivers them out of all their troubles.

1 Peter 3:12 (NASB95) — 12 “For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

James 5:16-18 (NASB95) — 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

We Must Follow His Will

God answers prayer, but certain spiritual laws must be heeded. This fact should come as no surprise. A successful farmer follows certain rules: The soil must be prepared, seed must be planted at the correct time, weeds and insects must be controlled, etc. Appropriate amounts of rain and sunshine are also essential. All are necessary if one expects to raise a crop. So also in God’s vineyard. His spiritual laws must be followed if we are to receive the hoped for blessings.

PRINCIPLES OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

Ask!

First, we must ask (Matt. 7:7-11). God knows our every need, but asking is an acknowledgement of His sovereignty, and also demonstrates our faith in Him as our protector and provider (James 1:17).

Matthew 7:7-11 (NASB95) — 7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 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, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? 10 “Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? 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 what is good to those who ask Him!

James 1:17 (NASB95) — 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

Ask According to His Will

We must ask according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). Rather than merely seeking our own selfish ends, our aim should be to glorify God. Facing the agony of the cross, Jesus prayed, “Thy will be done!” (Matt. 26:36-44).

1 John 5:14-15 (NASB95) — 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Matthew 26:36-44 (NASB95) — 36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.” 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” 40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? 41 “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.” 43 Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.

Ask in the Name of Christ

We must ask in the name of Christ (John 14:13-14; 15:16). More than ritualistic language, this involves understanding our relationship with the Redeemer: we approach the Father through Jesus Christ, our mediator and intercessor (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25), respecting His absolute authority (Matt. 28:18-20; Col. 3:17).

John 14:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

John 15:16 (NASB95) — 16 “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

1 Timothy 2:5 (NASB95) — 5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

Hebrews 7:25 (NASB95) — 25 Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB95) — 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Colossians 3:17 (NASB95) — 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Ask in Faith

We must ask in faith (James 1:5-8). Christian faith is rooted in the inspired message of truth (Rom. 10:17). We must have faith in God, His word, His power and providence. Saving faith expresses itself in obedience: we must hear and heed heaven’s message (Matt. 7:24-27).

James 1:5-8 (NASB95) — 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Romans 10:17 (NASB95) — 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Matthew 7:24-27 (NASB95) — 24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. 26 “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

Ask with Thankfulness

We must ask with a heart filled with thankfulness (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Thess. 5:17-18). No occasion is so dark and desperate that we cannot give thanks. If Paul and Silas could sing praises after having been wrongly beaten and imprisoned, we can be thankful despite adverse circumstances. (Acts 16:25).

Philippians 4:6-7 (NASB95) — 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 (NASB95) — 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Acts 16:25 (NASB95) — 25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

Ask with a Patient Attitude

We must ask with a patient attitude. God answers prayers that are in accordance to His will. Sometimes He answers, "Yes" and sometimes He says, "No" (2 Cor. 12:7-9). At other times, He may say, "Wait awhile." A rose does not blossom in a day. Forcing petals open before they are ready will destroy the flower's beauty and fragrance. There are many questions that I cannot answer, and also many answers that I cannot question. In His time, our Heavenly Father blesses His children.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (NASB95) — 7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

Live According to His Word

We must live accord to God's will and word. Holiness is essential (1 Pet. 3:12). Elijah was a man "with a nature like ours" yet his prayers were effective (James 5:17). Obedience is essential (1 John 3:21-22).

1 Peter 3:12 (NASB95) — 12 "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

James 5:17 (NASB95) — 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

1 John 3:21-22 (NASB95) — 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

WHO HAS THE RIGHT OF PRAYER?

Those who Abide in Christ

God hears those who abide in Christ (John 15:7).

John 15:7 (NASB95) — 7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Those who Pray in the Name of Christ

God hears those who pray in the name of Christ (John 14:13-14; Col. 3:17).

John 14:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

Colossians 3:17 (NASB95) — 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Those who are Forgiving

God hears the prayer of those who are forgiving (Matt. 6:12, 14-15; Mark 11:25-26).

Matthew 6:12 (NASB95) — 12 ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NASB95) — 14 “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 “But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Mark 11:25-26 (NASB95) — 25 “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. 26 “But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.”

Those who are Humble

God hears those who are humble (Luke 18:9-14).

Luke 18:9-14 (NASB95) — 9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 “The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 ‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ 13 “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast,

saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' 14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Those who are Persistent

God hears those who are persistent (Luke 18:1-8).

Luke 18:1-8 (NASB95) — 1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, 2 saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. 3 "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' 4 "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, 5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.' " 6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; 7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? 8 "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Those who are Upright

God hears those who are upright (Prov. 15:8, 29; 1 Pet. 3:12; 1 John 3:21-22).

Proverbs 15:8 (NASB95) — 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Proverbs 15:29 (NASB95) — 29 The Lord is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.

1 Peter 3:12 (NASB95) — 12 "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

1 John 3:21-22 (NASB95) — 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

WHOM WILL GOD NOT HEAR?

Those who are Evil Doers

God will not hear those who are evil doers (Psa. 34:12-16; 66:16-20; James 4:1-3).

Psalm 34:12-16 (NASB95) — 12 Who is the man who desires life And loves length of days that he may see good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil And your lips from speaking deceit.

14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the Lord is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth.

Psalm 66:16-20 (NASB95) — 16 Come and hear, all who fear God, And I will tell of what He has done for my soul. 17 I cried to Him with my mouth, And He was extolled with my tongue. 18 If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear; 19 But certainly God has heard; He has given heed to the voice of my prayer. 20 Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer Nor His lovingkindness from me.

James 4:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Those who are Rebellious

God will not hear those who are rebellious (Prov. 1:20-31; 28:9; Isa. 1:10-20).

Proverbs 1:20-31 (NASB95) — 20 Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; 21 At the head of the noisy streets she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings: 22 “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge? 23 “Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. 24 “Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; 25 And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; 26 I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, 27 When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. 28 “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me, 29 Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the Lord. 30 “They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. 31 “So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices.

Proverbs 28:9 (NASB95) — 9 He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

Isaiah 1:10-20 (NASB95) — 10 Hear the word of the Lord, You rulers of Sodom; Give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah. 11 “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” Says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. 12 “When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? 13 “Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn

assembly. 14 "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. 16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. 18 "Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. 19 "If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; 20 "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Those who are Faithless

God will not hear those who are faithless (James 1:5-8).

James 1:5-8 (NASB95) — 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Those who are Hypocritical

God will not hear those who are hypocritical (Matt. 6:5-6).

Matthew 6:5-6 (NASB95) — 5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. 6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Those who are Unforgiving

God will not hear those who are unforgiving (Matt. 6:12, 14-15; Mark 11:25-26).

Matthew 6:12 (NASB95) — 12 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 6:14-15 (NASB95) — 14 "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 "But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Mark 11:25-26 (NASB95) — 25 "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your

transgressions. 26 “But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.”

Those who are Unmerciful

God will not hear those who are unmerciful (Prov. 21:13).

Proverbs 21:13 (NASB95) — 13 He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered.

WHERE ARE WE TO PRAY?

In Private

We should pray in private (Matt. 6:6; 14:22-23; Luke 6:12).

Matthew 6:6 (NASB95) — 6 “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Matthew 14:22-23 (NASB95) — 22 Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He sent the crowds away. 23 After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

Luke 6:12 (NASB95) — 12 It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

In Public

We should pray in public (Acts 2:41-42; 12:5, 12).

Acts 2:41-42 (NASB95) — 41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. 42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 12:5 (NASB95) — 5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

Acts 12:12 (NASB95) — 12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

We should pray at all times (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Ephesians 6:18 (NASB95) — 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

Philippians 4:6 (NASB95) — 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Colossians 4:2 (NASB95) — 2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NASB95) — 16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

Standing

We read of those who prayed while standing (1 Kings 8:22-24; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:13).

1 Kings 8:22-24 (NASB95) — 22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven. 23 He said, "O Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart, 24 who have kept with Your servant, my father David, that which You have promised him; indeed, You have spoken with Your mouth and have fulfilled it with Your hand as it is this day.

Mark 11:25 (NASB95) — 25 "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.

Luke 18:13 (NASB95) — 13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

Bowing

We read of those who prayed with bowed heads (Neh. 8:6; Luke 18:13).

Nehemiah 8:6 (NASB95) — 6 Then Ezra blessed the Lord the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Luke 18:13 (NASB95) — 13 “But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’

Kneeling

We read of those who prayed with bended knee (Luke 22:41; Acts 20:36; Eph. 3:14).

Luke 22:41 (NASB95) — 41 And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray,

Acts 20:36 (NASB95) — 36 When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

Ephesians 3:14 (NASB95) — 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

Lifting Hands

We read of those who prayed with outstretched hands (Psa. 63:4; Luke 24:50; 1 Tim. 2:8).

Psalm 63:4 (NASB95) — 4 So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.

Luke 24:50 (NASB95) — 50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

1 Timothy 2:8 (NASB95) — 8 Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

Falling Down

We read of those who fell down and prayed prostrate (Job 1:20; Matt. 26:39; Rev. 5:8).

Job 1:20 (NASB95) — 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

Matthew 26:39 (NASB95) — 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”

Revelation 5:8 (NASB95) — 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

CONCLUSION

Let us implement these principles in our daily lives, living in harmony with God's Word, leaning upon Him for guidance, petitioning Him regularly in prayer. May we pray to God in a time when He may be found (Psa. 32:6-7), and call upon Him while He is near (Isa. 55:6-13).

Psalm 32:6-7 (NASB95) — 6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. 7 You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

Isaiah 55:6-13 (NASB95) — 6 Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. 8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. 12 "For you will go out with joy And be led forth with peace; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap their hands. 13 "Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up, And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up, And it will be a memorial to the Lord, For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off."

Sources: Robert Harkrider, *First Principles of Christianity: Basic Bible Doctrine*, Vol. 1, p. 70f.