

Prayer: Introduction

I Thessalonians 5:17

Bible study, fellowship, and prayer. Well, we know what Bible study is. That's opening the Word of God and studying the Word of God, and we're going to do that in just a moment. Fellowship is when we gather our hearts together. I don't have to be with you personally to have fellowship with you. If you know Jesus as your Savior, we can have fellowship right now. We join our hearts together through the Lord, and the Lord bonds us together with His Spirit. Bible study, fellowship, and prayer.

Today, we want to start a series of studies on prayer, "Study #1." What is prayer? Well, prayer is very important, and as a saved person, you should already know this. God's people are a praying people. Prayer has been called the thermometer of the spiritual eye. When love and adoration of God are lively and warm in the soul, this will be reflected in much prayer. When spiritual activity is cool, this will result in little prayer. Prayer is a measurement of spiritual temperature. Prayer is worship. It is a matter of the heart, not only of the understanding.

In I Thessalonians 5:17, the Bible says, *Pray without ceasing.* James chapter 5 and verse 16, the last part of that verse says, *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* To pray is to talk to God. Praying is communicating with God. Effectual prayer is effective prayer; it produces results. Fervent prayer is heartfelt with sincerity and passion. Availing prayer produces results; it accomplishes.

Well, who can pray? To Whom pray? What, where, and when are prayers to be offered? Well, why pray? Jesus gave an outline as to how to pray in Matthew chapter 6, verses 9 through 13. He said there, ⁹*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.* ¹⁰*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in*

earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹*Give us this day our daily bread.* ¹²*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* ¹³*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

Now, as a child growing up and going to school at the time I was in school, we recited this every morning when I went to school, "Our Father, which art in Heaven," and as I grew, I understood that there was a God. I understood that I could pray to God, but I soon came to realize as I grew into an adult, that there was a problem here. I soon realized that God was not everybody's Father, and we're going to read that in just a moment. But I want you to understand that we were so privileged in my day and time of growing up in a time when we could actually pray and look at the Bible and talk to God as children growing up. Well, things have changed, and I would remind you also that this is not actually the Lord's Prayer. This is the model prayer. The Lord's Prayer can be found in John chapter 17.

Well, as we look at this section of Scripture in Matthew chapter 6, we see that there are certain words in there that we want to look at right now. "Hallowed" means reverent, or kept special with deep respect. To confess, that means *forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.* That's confession; it means to reveal, make known, or declare.

Well, who can pray to God as their Father? Actually, it's only those who have done what Jesus said to do. In Luke chapter 6 and verse 46, he says, *And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*

John 3:16 says, *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever*

believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 14:6 says, *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Now, if you have not done what Jesus says, and He says this in John 8:44, *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.* God is not your Father if you have not received Jesus as your Savior.

Who are we to pray to? We are to pray to God, our Father. In Galatians 3:26, it says, *For ye are all the children of God*, and it goes on to say you are *the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*.

Romans 8:16 says, *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*. How are we made the children of God? Galatians 3:26 that I just read tells us that, *by faith in Christ Jesus*. If you have never asked Jesus into your heart, you are not a child of God. Now, this may seem harsh to you, but the Bible is plain. The Bible tells us that we are born again by receiving Jesus Christ into our hearts.

How does God hear our prayers? First, He hears the prayer of that sinner who comes to Him and says, "God, have mercy upon me and save me for Jesus' sake." And then He hears the prayers of that person who has made that prayer, who has said that prayer. Because they make requests to God the Father, He is now their Father because that person has asked Jesus to come into the heart. Have you done that today? Have you asked Jesus to save you? If not, my prayer for you right now is that you will bow your head and ask Jesus to save you right now.

Well, what are we to pray for? We are to give thanks according to I Timothy 2:1. We are to ask for forgiveness according to Matthew chapter 6 and verse 12 and I John 1:9. We are to ask for our daily needs according to Matthew 6:11. We are to ask for protection from evil, Matthew 6:13. We are to ask for peace according to I Timothy 2:1-2. It says there, *I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

We are to share our burdens with God, according to the Scriptures. And this is when we pray. Philippians 4:6 says, *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

Forgiveness comes when we as a Christian, we've done things in our life that we should not have done. Yes, Christians sin. This flesh is sinful, but thank God, the real person has been covered by the blood of the Lamb. The real person one day will go to be with the Lord, but this flesh is dirty; it's rotten, and therefore, this flesh has to die.

But while we are here in this life, we will do things wrong as Christians, but God says there's a remedy for that. First John 1:9 says, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

David in Psalm 51, verses 1 through 7, talks about this. He says, *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

Psalm 51:12 says, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.* Notice, it does not say, "Restore unto me my salvation." David said, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation....* He was a saved person and he knew it. And when we do something wrong, we

grieve the Holy Spirit and that Holy Spirit of God will let us know. We will not only grieve the Holy Spirit but we are grieved as we grieve Him. And the Bible tells us, as David prayed, we need to pray, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*. We shouldn't be unhappy as Christians, but we should have the joy of fulfillment of knowing that we're serving the living God.

We are also to share our burdens with our Father. Philippians 4:6 says, *Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God*.

Well, where are we to pray? We may pray in secret. This is privately, according to Matthew 6:6. We may pray anywhere, everywhere. First Timothy 2:8 talks about that. And when are we to pray? Well, frankly, we may pray anytime. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, *Pray without ceasing*.

Psalms 5:3 and Psalm 88 verse 1. In Psalm 5:3, it says: *My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up*. I find it best for myself to pray early in the morning so that my day will be started right, so that I know that I have spoken to my Heavenly Father. I speak to Him through prayer. He speaks to me through His Word, the Bible.

Well, we can pray anytime, but there are certain other times. We can pray anytime, but also we can pray during our mealtime. In Matthew 14:19, it says, *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude*.

Why do I pray at meals? My Father wants me to pray to Him. He wants me to thank Him. Jesus set the example by praying to the Father and thanking

Him for the food that we just read about in Matthew chapter 14.

Why should we pray? We should pray for peace. We should pray for forgiveness. We should pray for health. We should pray to know God better. We should pray to know ourselves better. And we should pray to become dependent on God. And the best thing and the most important thing that we should pray and why we should pray is because God wants us to. He wants us to talk to Him.

Now, on and on, the Bible talks about prayer, and as I have spoken to you today, I Thessalonians 5:17 says, *Pray without ceasing*. At all times, our hearts should be looking up to God and this upward look of the heart will be frequently uttering itself in a cry to Him.

Do you know Him today as your Savior? Why not trust Him right now? And then you, too, can say, "My Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." You can go to the Lord in prayer after you've said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I receive You as my Savior right now." Why not trust Him right now. Bow your head where you're at and ask Him to come into your heart.

If you are saved, you may be needing the joy of your salvation restored. You, too, can have that joy restored today by confessing that sin specifically to God, not to man, but to God.

Next week, we're going to continue our study in prayer and the next thing we're going to look at is praise. Let me invite you to view our website today, www.LRWM.org. On the website, you'll be able to leave prayer requests and you'll be able to download transcripts of this program, "It's a Good Life." You can also write to me, Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, Florida 34731.

I trust that you'll tune in again next week when you'll hear me say, "It's a good life." May the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.