

A Study of Prayer Part 2

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

The first part of this study covered the principle that prayer is addressed to God the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This week, another aspect of prayer is addressed. The stages of prayer are preparation, petition, pursuit. Let us follow Herman from his special on prayer, which was actually excerpts from his study of the Gospel of John. Much of what follows is just a loose transcription from Herman's special. He used John 12:27-28

John 12:27 “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

John 12:28 Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

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Prayer Preparation

Prayer preparation is when you focus on reality. What is it that I really want to pray for? Some might pray for fame and fortune. But is that really what they want? No, they want happiness. For many, especially in Hollywood, fame and fortune do not bring happiness. Joy, true joy comes from God. So, in prayer preparation, you must concentrate on what it is that you hope to receive from prayer. Does this desire line up with the Word of God? You may also consider the basis on which you are praying. Suppose for a second, that you run across a Bible passage that is totally a mystery to you. However, understanding that passage is very important to you. So, you pray for wisdom concerning this passage. You can ask yourself, why would God answer this prayer? What is that rationale?

Look at John 12:27 and a short prayer by Jesus. Herman calls this verse Jesus' prayer preparation. In John chapter 12, Greeks want to see Jesus in verse 21. This is the cue to Jesus that His hour had come. As a result, he is faced with the immanence of the cross. The physical pain is nothing compared to the separation from God the Father and the spiritual death resulting from the judgment for sin from the Father that Jesus will have to bear.

John 12:27 “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

Jesus is facing reality. What his humanity wants is not in the Father's plan, to be saved from the cross. The spiritual pain Jesus experienced is something we will never know. It is not something he longed for. But, He knows that is the reason He is on earth, to be judged for all sin on the cross.

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He goes to the Father because of His relationship to the Father. We have that same relationship to the Father because of position in Christ.

Principle: In your prayer preparation, allow reality to set in. Who am I in Christ?

Look at Jesus Christ. “For this purpose I came.”

1. He agreed to come to earth as man. Philippians chapter 2.
2. He agreed in His life to live a perfect sinless life.
3. Now something is happening. Up to now, the cross has been far away. Then came the tomb of Lazarus; then came the seeking Greeks. And it is getting very close that He is getting ready to die spiritually.
4. Then came the seeking Greeks. This brought the agony to Jesus’ soul.
5. This agony brings Jesus Christ to prayer. The first thing He does is prepare His prayer. He considers what is before Himself. He comes to the conclusion, He cannot ask the Father for avoidance of the cross. His prayer preparation led Him to the conclusion that He could not ask for what His humanity wanted.

Now apply some points to us.

1. You were first born into the human race: physically alive, spiritually dead. You didn’t get to decide on who you were.
2. Then you made a decision to believe in Jesus Christ as savior.
3. Then, as you go through life, consistency of going to Bible class, prayer, walking in the spirit, you slowly came to the decision to make Christ the center of your life.

Galatians 2:20 ... it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;...

4. Pow! Something happens in your life. You come to some crossroads about where Jesus fits into your life. Are you going to continue in that momentum? Or, will you deviate allowing human viewpoint to push you off course?
5. This brings to you to an agitated soul, troubled soul, to a prayer of preparation where in self talk you examine your life. What it is about. Here, if you follow the example of Jesus Christ, you come to the conclusion in self talk of prayer preparation, that the whole purpose of your life is to love as Christ loved, no matter the cost.

Principle: Allow your time in prayer preparation to bring you to reality. (Who you are in Christ). That will guide you in what to pray.

Verse 27 is the preparation. Verse 28 is the prayer. Note how brief it is.

Here is the process Jesus went through during prayer preparation

1. **Decision:** First step in prayer preparation is to determine where you are going for the answers, solutions, to your troubled soul? Are you going to go to God or to “flesh answers?”
2. **Form:** Prayer preparation is vital in the formation of your prayer.
3. **Content:** What are you going to ask God?
4. **Peace:** Prayer preparation calms the soul. Sometimes we enter this prayer preparation emotionally upset (in Star Trek terms, emotionally compromised). In the filling of the Holy Spirit, in prayer preparation, you start experiencing an inner peace. Prayer is conversation. Conversation requires thought.

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5. **Emotional Control.** Control of your emotions, control of a troubled soul, allows concentration on what is really going on in your life. Conversation requires thought. Now, in prayer preparation, you can think. 1. God is in control. 2. God loves me. 3. God's plan is perfect.
6. **Desires.** Prayer preparation gives valuable time to access in your mind what you are going to say to God the Father in prayer. What are your desires in the spiritual realm? What is God doing? How is God going to be glorified? Make your prayers reality. What you really want may not line up with the plan of God. The humanity of Jesus did not want to suffer separation from the Father, spiritual death and judgment for the sins of the world. But he reasons that the purpose of his life is just that. So he cannot pray to not suffer on the cross.
7. **Effective Prayer.** To formulate an effective prayer in the midst of a crisis a believer must be under the control of the Holy Spirit. What is an effective prayer. It is a prayer that is acceptable to God. It is one that God can answer. An effective prayer is one that will guide your actions once it is completed.
8. **Reality.** Prayer preparation brings you to truth, to reality to who and what you are.
9. **Transformation.** In prayer preparation a transformation takes place from being occupied with self to being occupied with God, His plan, His solutions, His power, His love and a wonderful calmness comes over your soul.
10. **Acceptable to God.** One of the most dynamic results of prayer preparation is that you are prevented from offering up a prayer that is unacceptable to God.
11. **Prayer is serious.** Don't ramble.

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//If available, play the mp3 file of D. A. Carson concerning prayer.///

Prayer (Petition)

This is perhaps the shortest part of prayer, actually praying to the Father. For Jesus, in chapter 12, it is verse 28:

John 12:28 Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

The prayer of Jesus was short, but directional, it resolves the issue at hand; it lets Jesus Christ focus on what He has got to do.

1. Prayer is calling on God to act in your life. Jesus’ prayer asks for God to glorify His name. This means the cross. Jesus is submitting to God the Father’s will, not the will of the humanity of Jesus.
2. A troubled soul in agony over death related to sin drove Jesus Christ to pray to God the Father. If you are going to follow the Lord, this is where you should go with problems in your life.
3. Note the big difference between prayer preparation and prayer.
4. Effective prayer is always for the benefit/glory of God the Father and for the benefit of Jesus Christ.

There is no required posture of prayer. You can be hanging upside down on exercise bars and pray. You can be walking outside. You can be lying down in bed. You could be kneeling next to your bed. The issue in prayer is the concentration of your mind on this communion with God the Father.

Prayer:

1. In prayer, you are communicating with the Father.

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2. In prayer, you are seeking the will of God in your life.
3. Prayer must always be in the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Prayer is not designed to take the place of faith.
5. This is a guideline:
 - A. Prayer must be in the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - B. Prayer is addressed to God the Father.
 - C. Prayer is in the name of Jesus Christ.

Prayer Pursuit

From Herman's book on Prayer Pursuit:

“Prayer pursuit is the most important stage of prayer, yet it is the most neglected by believers. Prayers are answered in joint effort between you and God for the glory of His son, Jesus Christ. You place yourself where God can answer your prayer, and God the Holy Spirit empowers you to continue your trust in God. This is the pursuit of your faith in God. The more you pursue your prayers, the more you will remain in the plan of God, and the more you will be benefited in your Christ-centered life.”

“Prayer pursuit is trusting God and living according to the content of your prayer. If your prayer was accurate, it will guide you in what to do when you close your prayer. You have taken your need to God because you knew He is the only One who had a solution for you. Now, by living according to your prayer you will glorify the Lord even before you receive the answer.”

“Since prayer pursuit is the most dynamic part of prayer, the time that transpires as you wait for God's response may affect your life much more than the specific moment when He answers your prayer. This is because in prayer pursuit you are living by faith and trusting in God. You are

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learning more about His grace and His love for you. Thus, you become courageous and confident to increase your spiritual momentum in Christ.”

For Jesus, the pursuit of what He prayed for was going to the cross. For us, it may be repeating the prayer over time. It may be that you answer your own prayer. If you prayed that someone get a clear hearing of the gospel, it may be you who gives that person the gospel.

What do we ask for in prayer?

Some classify prayer into categories according to what we ask for. Thanksgiving is a prayer that God likes to hear. We recognize what God has done and we are appreciative.

Rather than just give a list with Scripture references for you to look up as home work, it is preferable to do the “homework” in class.

Here is a list of kinds of prayer:

Thanksgiving & Praise

Starting a prayer with thanksgiving to God will focus your mind on who and what God is.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always;

1 Thessalonians 5:17 pray without ceasing;

1 Thessalonians 5:18 in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 13:15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to

God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

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

Intercession

What is intercessory prayer? Here is an explanation from GotQuestions.org:

“Quite simply, intercessory prayer is the act of praying on behalf of others. The role of mediator in prayer was prevalent in the Old Testament, in the cases of Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Christ is pictured in the New Testament as the ultimate intercessor, and because of this, all Christian prayer becomes intercession since it is offered to God through and by Christ. Jesus closed the gap between us and God when He died on the cross. Because of Jesus’ mediation, we can now intercede in prayer on behalf of other Christians or for the lost, asking God to grant their requests according to His will.”

Note: I have used GotQuestions previously. So, who are they?

“Got Questions Ministries seeks to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by providing biblical, applicable, and timely answers to spiritually related questions through an internet presence.”

“All of our answers are reviewed for biblical and theological accuracy by our staff. Our CEO, S. Michael Houdmann, is ultimately accountable for our content, and therefore maintains an active role in the review process. He possesses a Bachelor’s degree in Biblical Studies from Calvary

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University, a Master's degree in Christian Theology from Calvary Theological Seminary, and a Master of Theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary.”

From Herman:

“There are five persons involved in intercessory prayer. The five persons are: one, God the Father to whom you offer your prayer; two, Jesus Christ through whom you pray; three, the Holy Spirit who prays with you for those things of which you might not be aware; four, you, the one offering the intercessory prayer; and five, the person for whom you are praying. Intercessory prayer gives you another opportunity to apply the Word of God in your soul to the needs, interests, and circumstances of others. This benefits all persons involved in your intercessory prayer.”

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. As such, there are many Bible topics that are first addressed in the book of Genesis. There is a fascinating story involving Abraham and Sarah which leads to God directing intercessory prayer. Genesis chapter 20.

Genesis 20:1 Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar.

Genesis 20:2 Abraham said of Sarah his wife, “She is my sister.” So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

Abraham told the truth, Sarah was his half-sister. But, Abraham told a lie of omission. She was also his wife. One of the most frustrating things in life is to make an important decision based upon a lie. Once the decision

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is made and the lie is revealed, you are now trapped. This is what happens to Abimelech.

Genesis 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.”

You are a dead man. The Hebrew is much more terse and direct: Dead! The translation is not bad. It just doesn't have the force of the Hebrew. What if God looks at you through a dream and says to you, “Dead!” Abimelech made a decision based upon a lie which had divinely imposed consequences.

Genesis 20:4 Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, “Lord, will You slay a nation, even though blameless?”

Genesis 20:5 Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.”

Genesis 20:6 Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.

Genesis 20:7 Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not restore

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her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.”

Note: God says that Abraham is a prophet. God says this.

Genesis 20:7 (Watts Translation) And now, restore the man’s wife and live, for he is a prophet and he will make intercession on your behalf; but if you are not ready to restore her, know that you will surely die, you and all those belonging to you.

Note: Concerning the Watts translation, “An effort is made in this translation to reproduce distinctive features of the Hebrew text not incorporated in any existing translation. Old Testament composition reveals certain very prominent characteristics for which no clear parallels in other languages have as yet been found.”

Genesis 20:8 So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were greatly frightened.

Genesis 20:9 Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done.”

Here it is: Abimelech made a decision based upon a lie. He gets in trouble, not Abraham. God is using this incident to teach us something.

Genesis 20:10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?”

Genesis 20:11 Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.

Genesis 20:12 Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife;

Genesis 20:13 and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her, ‘This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

Genesis 20:14 Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him.

Genesis 20:15 Abimelech said, “Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please.”

Genesis 20:16 To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of

silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared.”

Genesis 20:17 Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children.

Genesis 20:17 (Watts Translation) Afterward Abraham proceeded to make intercession to the [One True] God, God to heal Abimelech, his wife, and his female slaves, and they to bear children.

Genesis 20:18 For the Lord had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

This apparently took place over an extended period of time.

Confession

David sinned by having the husband of Bathsheba murdered after having sex with her. Nathan the prophet confronted David at which time David realized his great sin. Psalm 51 was David’s response.

For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Psalm 51:1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According

to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

Psalm 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin.

Psalm 51:3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

Psalm 51:4 Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.

Note some similarities to 1 John 1:9. He acknowledged his sin. He did not list them. Both David and God knew what they were.

If time allows, read Daniel 9:1-19, Daniel's magnificent prayer for the nation of Israel that was then in exile.

Petition

2 Corinthians 12:7 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!

2 Corinthians 12:8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.

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2 Corinthians 12:9 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.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.