



# Truth Matters

*A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters*

## Scripture Reading

Week of

June 19<sup>th</sup> - June 25<sup>th</sup>



### Monday

- ❖ 2 Kings 21, 22
- ❖ Psalm 119:17-24
- ❖ Romans 4

### Tuesday

- ❖ 2 Kings 23, 24
- ❖ Psalm 119:25-32
- ❖ Romans 5

### Wednesday

- ❖ 2 Kings 25
- ❖ Psalm 119:33-40
- ❖ Romans 6

### Thursday

- ❖ 1 Chronicles 1, 2
- ❖ Psalm 119:41-48
- ❖ Romans 7

### Friday

- ❖ 1 Chronicles 3, 4
- ❖ Psalm 119:49-56
- ❖ Romans 8

### Saturday

- ❖ 1 Chronicles 5, 6

### Sunday

- ❖ 1 Chronicles 7, 8

## How to Pray Series

### *One Feeble Attempt at Systematizing the Doctrine of Prayer*

The disciples of Jesus once asked of him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). That question has been on the heart of each of Jesus' disciples down through the centuries - if we only knew how to pray. I have not yet met a Christian who is content with his prayer life and the more I talk with men and women of the faith, the more I hear the same concerns with prayer.

I am finding that when a person says they do not know *how* to pray, they mean they do not know *what* to pray. Most believers, I think, can give you a basic theology for prayer. They understand that God is the all-sufficient and benevolent Father who longs to give good things to his children when they ask. They know that they are commanded and exhorted to pray. They know that prayer is powerful. But down deep in their souls, they honestly believe that it all hinges on whether or not they do it right. Christian after Christian honestly believes that the reason so few of their prayers get answered is owing to the fact that they must have messed up the process.

It is my aim in this series of articles to alleviate the belief or assumption that prayer is nothing more than a few well-crafted incantations. Instead,

prayer is our heart crying out to God's heart. The way we pray communicates more than anything what we believe about God. Do you ever think about what you are praying?

Sometimes I wonder if Christians ever think about what they say in their prayers - that the way they pray indicates their view of how God works. For thoughtful people, how you pray is governed by how you believe God acts. So, for example, if you believe God changes people's hearts so that they make new and right choices, then you will ask God to make those heart-changes through evangelism and instruction. But not everybody is thoughtful about the way they pray. They don't think about what view of God is behind their praying.

So what I suggest is that we learn to pray the way the Bible prays. If we do that, then our prayers will probably be good prayers, and in the process we will also learn about how God works. I want to provide a series of lists (though I hate lists - Christianity can never be reduced to an easy 1-2-3 list) that enumerate some of the ways the Bible prays for certain categories. We will examine how we should pray for our own souls, the lost, the

sick and suffering, the church, the mission, one another, etc. In these lists I will hope to provide you with *what* to pray so that you may see *how* to pray for these categories of people.

Before we dive into a category, let me provide a list of principles that I find in Scripture as it relates to prayer. This list is one man's feeble attempt to systematize the doctrine of prayer. As I said earlier, this is the part I assume you all already understand and embrace. But a quick review will help to set a foundation for thought.

1. Prayer is communicating with God.
  - ❖ There is private prayer (Matt. 6.6) and public prayer (1 Cor. 14.16; 1 Tim. 2.8).
  - ❖ There is petition (Philip. 4.6), supplication and intercession (1 Tim.2.1).
2. All prayer is for the glorification of God - the all-sufficient supplier of all things (John 15.8; James 1.17).
3. All prayer must be prayed "according to the will of God" (1 John 5.14-15) and "in Jesus' name" (John 14.13-14; 15.16; 16.23-24; Eph. 5.20) in order to be answered.

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### *One Feeble Attempt at Systematizing the Doctrine of Prayer*

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4. When a prayer goes unanswered, meaning you did not receive that for which you made request, it may be because you "ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (James 4.3). In other words, it was not asked according to God's will or in Jesus' name.
5. From our earthly standpoint, not all prayers get answered. I reject the popular notion that all prayers get answered with either "Yes!" "No!" or "Wait!" This is an impossible assertion on our part. How do I know if the delay of my request for the salvation of my spouse is "No!" unless God tells me? If God has answered that prayer with a "No" response, I would be sinning to keep praying. How do I know if the answer to that prayer is "Wait" unless God reveal to me that he has, in fact, purposed to save my spouse? Instead, from our vantage point, a prayer is unanswered until I receive that for which I am pleading.
6. Praying in accord with the "will of God" means both revealed will of command and secret will of decree (Deut. 29.29).
7. To pray in accord with God's revealed will of command means to pray in accord with the commands and promises of Scripture. Thus, we must learn to pray Scripture (John 15.7-8).
- ❖ When those commands and promises are the result of the HS working in my life, they may be prayed believing that you have received them.
  - ❖ When those commands and promises are prayed on behalf others, I am not sure that they are in accord with God's secret will of decree. For example, God has clearly commanded all people everywhere to believe in His name for salvation; however, it is obvious not all will obey that command. Therefore, the will of decree is that the will of command be broken. I must pray fervently that God's will of command be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt.6.10).
8. When I do not know what God's will of command is for a particular situation, and since I never know what his will of decree is for a particular situation, I must learn to always pray along three veins:
- ❖ "Nevertheless your will be done" (Matt. 26.39) - this is a request that aligns my will with God's will. It holds all my requests in check to see if I am asking wrongly in order to heap up my lusts. (Is it wrong to pray for the safety of loved ones, success in surgery, employment, etc.?) Consider some examples this week in your own prayer time:
    - ◆ Negative example: Gen. 18.23-33 (cf. v.17)
    - ◆ Positive example: 2 Sam. 12:13-15, 16-17, 20, 21-23
    - ◆ Positive example: Habakkuk 3.1-2, 13, 16-19
  - ◆ Positive example: Acts 4.23-31
  - ❖ "If it is the Lord's will" (James 4.15) - this is a request that acknowledges God's sovereign rule in governing his universe in providence.
  - ❖ Pray "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8.27; Eph. 6.18; Jude 20) - this is allowing the Holy Spirit to intercede with our requests in which we do our best to put into words that which we do not really understand or that which we are not really able to formulate into words.
- "Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to the Word of God for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God."
- John Bunyan.
- Church, I want us to become a people of prayer. I pray that we will become passionate for prayer at every level of our fellowshiping - individual meetings, growth groups, business meetings, deacon meetings, elder meetings, worship meetings, Bible studies, etc. I also pray that we might be moved to pray as we understand more of how God acts and pray accordingly.
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