

What is Prayer? Communion with God. Drawing close to his heart. Entering into his presence to talk to him.

Prayer is...like building up a relationship by talking together.

Prayer is not... like using a vending machine. Prayer is not... our method in getting God to do our will.

Prayer is not a burdensome sacred duty. Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal.

All persons of the trinity are involved. Prayer is to the Father, through the Son, with the Spirit helping us.

Questions

What answers to prayer have you experienced?

God is sovereign and omniscient. Proverbs 16 v33 Acts 4 v27-28 He knows the future e.g. Genesis 15 v13

If God knows the future, why pray?

1. Jesus, understood the nature of his father, yet prayed to him. e.g. Matthew 11 v25
2. Jesus knew Peter would deny him, for example yet prayed for him. Luke 22 v31-34
3. God wants to work with us, and prayer is our way of taking part in his work
4. He has told us to pray. Obedience is more important than logic and our understanding.
Matt 26 v41
5. God can work in us when we pray. Changing us can be more important than changing events.
7. Parents may know what their children need but still like to be asked, rather than taken for granted.
8. We need prayer, more than God needs our prayers. It deepens our relationship and trust. Isaiah 55 v8-9
9. Prayer transfers our burdens onto him. It releases the pressure we put ourselves under. 1 Peter 5 v7
10. Prayer lets God be God, and lets us be us.



So, does prayer change God's mind?

This question can be best answered by breaking it into two questions: 1) Does prayer change God's mind? and 2) Does prayer change things? The answer to the first is, no, God does not change His mind. The answer to the second is, yes, prayer changes things.

God knows all things, and has perfect plans, that cannot be improved upon. Isaiah 46 :9-11

We cannot give God fresh insight, or viewpoints. So our prayers, don't make God think 'that's a better plan!'

Faith is trust, a prayer of faith isn't trust that what we ask for, will happen, but trust in God that he will answer for our good.

The greatest teacher on prayer, Jesus, prayed 'If it be thy will', that was not unbelief, but surrender to Father.

Our perfect Heavenly Father however, can have plans to change our circumstances if we pray, our seeking Him is part of His best for us. He wants us to come with faith in Him James 1:5-6 but willing to accept his highest like Jesus did Luke 22:42.

What about Exodus 32 :14 or Genesis 6:6? Repent in Hebrew is '*nacham*' often translated "repent" or "change one's mind," can also mean "sorrow" or "to bring comfort." The sin caused God sorrow.

Why do some prayers seem to go unanswered?

“When I lay these questions before God I get no answer. But a rather special sort of 'No answer.' It is not the locked door. It is more like a silent, certainly not uncompassionate, gaze. As though He shook His head not in refusal but waiving the question. Like, 'Peace, child; you don't understand.'” — C.S. Lewis

We shouldn't be afraid to look at unanswered prayer. Jesus prayed 'if possible let this cup pass from me'. Paul prayed, for something he called the 'thorn in his flesh' to be removed. So we we'll see requests turned down too.

1. Answers aren't always 'yes'. Jesus taught us that God is a father, who knows best. God's will does not always agree with our will. Something we should be very grateful for!
2. God's time isn't ours. We can get a 'yes' but we will have to wait for God's perfect time. No doubt Joseph prayed to get out of the pit he was thrown into, but years later - 'God meant it for good' Genesis 50 :20 Jesus taught about perseverance in prayer, not to be discouraged when a prayer appears unanswered straight away.
3. We need to be on God's agenda, not ours John 15 v7, James 4 v3 Does our request match up to the character and nature of God?
4. We need to get into a right relationship with God first. Isaiah 1 v15-16 Our relationship with God comes above the things we want from him. Unconfessed sin, which is rebellion, spoils our relationship with him.
5. God does not guarantee that we will get everything we ask for in the way that we envisage. James 5 :17 says pray has power, 'availeth much' (AV) but not 100% our idea. 'Ask and it will be given', but, what will be given? Paul was given grace, not thorn removal. Our plans, for what an answer looks like, or God's answer?
6. We need to ask, do I have the faith to believe God can do what I ask? Jesus taught faith is important in prayer. Matthew 9 v27-30 However there is a difference between 'faith that...' and 'faith in..'.

Questions

How do you deal with prayers that seem to be unanswered?

Who should we pray to? Does it matter?

Jesus always prayed to the Father Matthew 6 :9. When Stephen was being killed he prayed to Jesus Acts 7 :59

As Jesus is our great High Priest Hebrews 2 :10 it is logical to speak to our priest.

There is nothing in scripture to say we shouldn't pray to the Holy Spirit, however it is not the NT pattern.

The Holy Spirit's role in prayer is to help us to speak to the other persons of the trinity. Romans 8:26-27

Praying alone and with others

Both are important in our Christian lives Matthew 6 v6 Acts 1 v14, 4 v23-24

Kinds of Prayer Ephesians 6:18 talks about kinds of prayer. Some people use ACTS but many ways to pray!

Adoration Psalm 100 When you praise you recognise the good. It also means we focus on God

Confession 1 John 1 :9 Psalm 51:1-7

Thanksgiving When we are thankful, it's harder to be 'down', or full of self pity 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Supplication Asking for ourselves and others, interceding about situations

Further resources 24/7 Prayer website - 24-7 prayer.com

Questions

What tips would you give to others about prayer?