

PRAYER

MEMORY VERSE

James 5:16

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

Prayer is communication with God. Prayer may take many forms, but it is basically man talking with God and God talking with man. Prayer is a time of fellowship and sharing with God Himself.

1. What truth did Jesus reveal to us that should compel us to pray? (John 15:5b)

2. What is the one thing Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them? (Luke 11:1)

The disciples took note of Jesus' constancy in prayer (Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12, Matthew 26:39-44, Matthew 11:25-26, Matthew 19:13, Luke 22:31-32 and Romans 8:34) and realized that His intimate relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit through prayer was the key to His power. If they could learn how to pray like Jesus prayed, they could walk in the power He did as He had promised (John 14:12-13).

3. Describe the disciples' prayer lives and the results. (Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:31-33)

4. How are we commanded to pray? (Romans 12:12, Colossians 4:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:17)

5. What does the Bible say about a righteous person's prayers? (James 5:16)

Billy Graham once said, "Every man whose life has counted for the church or for the kingdom of God has been a man of prayer. You cannot afford to be too busy to pray. A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian."

Read Matthew 6:9-13. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus gives us a model of prayer to follow. His intent was not that we mindlessly repeat this prayer over and over again, but that we pray through the ideas contained therein.

6. What area of prayer does Jesus tell us to focus on in each verse?
- (v. 9) _____
 - (v. 10) _____
 - (v. 11) _____
 - (v. 12) _____
 - (v. 13) _____

We are to begin prayer in praise and worship with our focus on God Himself (V 9). Then we are to pray for God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven (V 10). Then we are to pray for our own needs (verse 11). Note that Jesus didn't intend for this to take up 95 percent of our prayer time! We are next told to make sure we are living in forgiveness toward others so that we may be able to experience God's forgiveness (V 12). Then we are to pray to avoid and be protected from temptation, for grace to remain pure, and for protection from the evil one (V 13). Finally, we are to praise and worship the Lord again, for His "is the Kingdom and the glory and the power forever!" This is not intended to be a legalistic formula where we must spend five minutes on each topic, but rather a guide so that our prayer lives are complete and productive.

7. What are some common hindrances to effective prayer?

a) Isaiah 59:1-2

b) Psalm 66:18

c) Proverbs 21:13

d) I Peter 3:7

e) James 4:3

8. What are some important principles for effective prayer?

a) I John 1:9

b) I John 3:21-22

c) Psalm 4: 3

d) Matthew 21:21-22

e) Mark 11:25-26

f) Luke 11: 5-10, Luke 18:1-8

g) I John 5:14-15

h) Matthew 18:19

i) John 15:7

9. How important is listening to God's voice when we pray? (John 10:14-16, 27, Luke 6:47-49, Psalm 81:8-16)

It is important to remember that prayer is communion, or conversation, with God. We should not only be talking to Him; we should be listening to Him. Any good relationship involves times of mutual sharing. If only one person talks the whole time and never takes times to listen to what is on the heart and mind of the other person, the strength and intimacy of that relationship would be highly doubtful.

10. How can we know that what we are hearing is really God? (John 10:27, I Thessalonians 5:19-21)

- a) _____
- b.) _____

We should test everything according to God's Word. God's word is truth (Psalm 119:151, John 14:6, John 17: 17) and it never changes (Isaiah 40:8, Hebrews 13:8). The Lord's voice will never contradict scripture.

Read James 3:14-17

This passage gives us several safeguards for discerning the Holy Spirit's voice.

1. What we hear must not be birthed out of *envy* or *selfish ambition*. (If it promotes you and/or your agenda and not Jesus, it's not of God.)
2. The Lord's voice will be in line with wisdom from heaven (see Proverbs 9:10)
3. According to James 3:17, what we hear should meet the following guidelines:
 - **Pure** (your motivation must be pure and the fruit of the message should result in purity for everyone who hears it.)
 - **Peace-loving** (God's voice will bring His peace; if you do not have peace about something NEVER immediately assume it's God—test it first!)

- **Considerate** (God's voice will lead us to serve, not dominate others.)
- **Submissive** (to the Lord, His word, and authorities in church He's established.)
- **Full of mercy** (be very wary of anything that condemns another believer!)
- **Full of good fruit** (God's voice will lead to spiritual growth and Jesus being magnified in the lives of everyone involved.)
- **Impartial** (you must truly lay down your will on the altar.)
- **Sincere** (the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth...God will never participate in deception.)

11. What should be the ultimate goal of our prayer life? (John 15:1-1)

12. What is often mentioned along side of prayer? (Mark 9:29, Luke 2:37, Acts 14:23)

Fasting is a spiritual discipline in which a person abstains from food for a period of time to devote themselves to focused prayer, study of the scripture, and communion with God. Fasting is not a diet, a hunger strike, an opportunity to impress people (or God) with our godliness, or a means of twisting God's arm to get Him to answer our prayers. Fasting is a discipline given to us by God to avail ourselves of that, coupled with prayer and ample time in His presence, can lead to significant spiritual breakthrough for ourselves and those we pray for.

13. How does Jesus tell us to behave while fasting? (Matthew 6:16-18)

14. If we honor God with true, acceptable fasting, what will He do? (Isaiah 58:6-12)

Fasting means taking a break from something that we would normally be doing. We do not eat for many hours at night while we sleep. When we get up we have "BREAK-FAST," we get to eat again.

There are many different ways to fast. The Jewish people often fasted from sundown one day to sundown the next. You can fast one meal, or all foods for one or more days. Typically fasting is referring to refraining from eating food (not water) for some extended period of time. Some people, however, are unable to fast from food because of medical conditions. Fasting can be giving up TV or some other regular activity you are involved in.

Practical tips on fasting:

1. Remember the purpose of fasting is to spend extra time with God. Spend the time you would normally spend eating, doing dishes, exercising (which becomes rather hard on extended fasts) praying, worshipping and reading the Bible and good Christian books. Use your fast to feed your spirit! If you're too busy to do that, fast at another time!

2. Start small. If you've never fasted before now is not a good time to emulate Jesus' 40 day fast. Fast one meal or one 24-hour period. As your body and spirit get accustomed to that, you can begin to fast for longer periods of time.
3. Make a firm commitment to fast. If you don't you'll be likely to quickly cave in at the first tempting food you see. Plan accordingly.
4. It's a good idea to not overeat right before a fast to "stock up." It's an even better idea to not eat like you're making up for lost time immediately after a fast! *The longer you have fasted, the more careful you need to be when you break the fast.*

