

Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. A teacher will teach from the Bible that a disciple of Jesus prays. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme.

Jesus says, "Ask and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). Paul says, "Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). And James says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16). The Bible teaches much about prayer. The first series of 4 teachings is about "The teachings of Jesus on prayer". The topics are "the Lord's Prayer" in two parts and "The other teachings of Jesus on prayer" in two parts.

Today's teaching is: A DISCIPLE LEARNS FROM THE PRAYERS OF JESUS - PART 1. We will study what Jesus Christ taught about prayer and include his own example.

Jesus Christ is the Messiah of the world. When he finally arrived in Israel, the Jews had already established traditional ways of praying. The temple stood in Jerusalem and was regarded as the most important place of prayer. Especially the teachers of the law and Pharisees loved to pray in public and to let everyone know when they were fasting, so that people would admire their piety. The teachings of Jesus about prayer were very different. Today we will discover that what Jesus taught about prayer is very different than human traditions about prayer!

### **POINT 1. PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT**

**Jesus Christ taught us that we must pray in the Spirit.**

Let us read John 4:19-24. "Sir", the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me", woman, "the time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet, a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit and his worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth."

Like the Samaritans, many people religious people pray and worship what they do not know. It is possible to have outward religious forms of worship, like a temple or church or mosque, a quiet place, prostration with the face on the ground, singing and prayers, etc. and still not belong to the redeemed people of God at all! It is possible to have some elements of worship, like self-abasement, surrender, admiration, etc. and still not worship God in an acceptable way! It is possible to worship God and really mean to worship God and still not worship God in a way acceptable to God! Nobody can worship God acceptably without knowing what kind of a God he really is! The person, who does not know the living God, the God who has revealed himself in the Bible, cannot pray to God in an acceptable way.

Therefore, God takes the matter of worship and prayer away from our traditions and out of our control and puts it into the control of his Holy Spirit! "God is Spirit and his worshippers must worship him in Spirit and in truth." It is impossible to worship God acceptably unless you have the Holy Spirit living in your heart and life! Jesus says, "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7) – You must be born again by the Holy Spirit. Through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and through our faith in Jesus Christ, we gain a personal relationship with the living God. Only then can we truly begin to pray and to worship God in a way that is acceptable to him.

### **POINT 2. PRAYER IN THE TRUTH**

**Jesus Christ taught us that we must pray in the truth.**

**First. The truth is found in the Bible and not in philosophy or religion.**

Many philosophies or religions in the world have changed the truth. They have reduced God, modified God and changed God until he is no longer the God of the Bible. These philosophies and religions believe in a "god" whom they can discuss and argue about. Or they have changed God into a god that is so high that no one can have a personal relationship with him!

But knowledge of God is impossible without revelation. If God does not reveal himself to us, then we cannot know the truth about God. As a matter of fact, we cannot know anything about God. It is impossible to worship or pray acceptably to God without knowing the truth about God. Jesus says, "I am the truth. No man comes to the Father except

through me” (John 14:6). The Bible says that God gives us knowledge of his glorious character in the person of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Whatever the *invisible* God is, the *visible* Christ is (Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). God gives us knowledge of himself through Jesus Christ. Therefore, when we pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not displeasing God the Father!

The God who revealed himself in the Bible is not “the reduced god” of philosophy or “the changed god” of the religions of the world. The Bible reveals the truth about who God really is and what he wants people to be and to do. The truth about God is that God is transcendent. This means that God cannot be understood or comprehended by any of our human means, like science or philosophy. Precisely because God is transcendent, we *worship* God. Moreover, the truth about God is that God is a consuming fire and that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 12:29, 10:31)! Precisely because God is a holy God, we worship him in holiness of life. Because God is an awesome powerful God, we worship him with respectful fear. Because God is transcendent and awesome, we throw our hearts open and ask God to shine himself into our understanding. We ask God to open our minds so that we can understand everything he has revealed about himself (Luke 24:44-45). The truth about God is that God is at the same time holy and loving. If God were not holy, he would not be just and fair. If God were not righteous, he would not be God, but a demon. But because God is holy and righteous, he must punish sin! And God were not love, nobody would want him as God. If God were not love, nobody would be saved. But because God is love, he saves sinners! The Bible reveals God as being holy, righteous and love at the same time! When we know the truth about who God is and what he wants us to do, then we can also pray in the right way to God.

### **Second. The truth is found in the Bible and not in religious traditions.**

In Matthew 15:7-9 Jesus says to the Pharisees, “You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: ‘These people ... worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’” Jesus taught that it was possible to pray in vain. The Jewish teachers after the exile wanted to serve God wholeheartedly, but in their eagerness they went beyond the Bible and made hundreds of laws and regulations, which became traditions after some time. The teachers of the law taught children in synagogue schools to memorise hundreds and even thousands of these laws and traditions. These traditions were regarded as binding as the Law. For example, if you touched a Gentile or something belonging to him, then you were unclean and could not pray in the temple. Outward conformity to traditions became more important than true prayer and sincere attitudes of the heart. For example, the Jews prayed three times a day and always faced in the direction of Jerusalem when they prayed. Jesus therefore accused the Pharisees of making their traditions more important than the Bible. Jesus warns us that if we hold on to traditions that violate the teachings of the Bible, then also our prayers are *in vain*. Jesus teaches us to pray in accordance with the truth revealed in the Bible.

### **POINT 3. PRAYER IN SECRET**

**Jesus Christ taught us that we must pray in secret.**

#### **First. Where should Christians pray?**

During the Old Testament period, the appointed place of prayer was the temple. In Isaiah 57:7 is written, “My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” This proves that already under the Old Covenant, God intended people from all nations to bind themselves to the God of the Bible and to worship him (Isaiah 57:6). In Matthew 21:12-13 we read how Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all the people that were buying and selling there. And he rebuked the Jews for changing the place of prayer into a den of robbers, because they made the temple a place of commerce and politics! After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the temple lost its meaning and prayer in the Spirit and truth replaced prayer in temples or any other building. In Acts 17:24 we read, “The God, who made the world and everything in it, is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.”

The place *where* we pray is not important anymore! What is important is *to whom* we pray and *how* we pray! Prayer should be directed only to God the Father. We should pray according to the truth of the Bible and under the control of the Holy Spirit. Again the motives and attitudes of prayer are important, but not the place of prayer. In the New Testament Matthew 6:5-6 Jesus taught, “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” The Bible does not condemn public prayer or public prayer in a building. But what Jesus condemns in Matthew 6 is to make a show of your prayers! One Pharisee in Luke 18 stood in the front in the temple in full view of everyone praying his *private* prayer! Other hypocrites chose to stand and pray on the corners of the busiest streets at the hour of prayer and for a show made long prayers. Jesus condemned the people whose motive was to be seen by the people and to be admired by them. He warned that such hypocrites would be punished most severely (Luke 20:46-47). Jesus teaches us to pray our private prayers in a private room, where we can be alone and even shut the door to pray undisturbed. We should not try to make ourselves conspicuous. The emphasis of

Jesus is not on *secrecy*, but on *sincerity*, not on the place of prayer, but on the motive of the mind and the attitude of the heart during prayer.

Jesus himself often went to a lonely place to pray. In Mark 1:35 we read, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Especially during times when he was extremely busy with his work, Jesus withdrew to lonely places to pray. In Luke 5:15-16 we read, "The news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Jesus also prayed in secret when he had to make an important decision, like choosing his disciples. In Luke 6:12-13 we read, "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles."

### **Second. How much time should Christians spend in prayer?**

In Matthew 6:7-8 Jesus teaches, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Non-Christians pray on and on, because they think that the longer and the louder they pray, the greater will be their chance of success in receiving what they desire. That is what the priests of Baal did in 1 Kings 18. They prayed and raved from morning till noon. Prayer wheels and strings of beads serve to turn out an unceasing stream of prayers to the gods. And people pray several times a day in special places of prayer. But Jesus commands, "Do not be like them!" God knows our needs the best of all and he desires that we come to him for help. He hears our prayer request the first time we pray to him. We should not pray the same request over and over in one prayer.

## **POINT 4. PRAYER OF AGREEMENT**

### **First. Jesus Christ taught us to pray in agreement with him.**

He taught us to pray in his name. In John 14:13-14 he said, "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it." To pray in the name of Jesus Christ means "to pray on the basis of Christ's merits and to pray in accordance with Christ's revealed will." Christ merited our salvation. Because Christ died on the cross and was resurrected from the dead, he is the living Mediator between God and people. As Mediator, he is our Prophet, Priest and King. As Prophet, Jesus Christ revealed God to us, so that we can know who God really is and to whom we pray. As Priest, Jesus Christ died for our sins, was resurrected and ascended into God's presence, where he speaks to God on our behalf. Through Christ, we have direct access into the presence of God to whom we pray. As King, Jesus Christ directs our life in the ways of God, so that we can know what we should pray for.

And if Christ is our Lord and Master, then we will not pray for anything that is against his will. We know it would displease him and we already know that he will not give to us anything that is against his will. Therefore, to pray in the name of Jesus Christ is also to pray in accordance with his will. And when we pray in accordance with his will, then we will have confidence that he hears our prayers! Therefore in John 15:7 Jesus said, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." Answers to prayer are dependent on our relationship to Jesus Christ and our relationship to the words of Jesus Christ in the Bible. To remain in Jesus Christ is to exert ourselves to trust him, to obey him, to love him, in short, to have him as the source of our life as well as the goal of our life. And when Christ's words remain in us, then we will surrender to his words and allow his words to transform us.

### **Second. Jesus Christ taught us to pray in agreement with one another.**

In Matthew 18:19-20 he said, "I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them." The context shows that these verses especially refer to the matter of dealing with church discipline. When two brothers show another brother his fault, then they need wisdom what to say and love how to say it. Jesus said that if they prayed in agreement with one another and in agreement with God's will and wisdom, they would receive an answer how to deal with that particular case of church discipline. Even where two or three Christians are together in Jesus' name, Jesus himself is spiritually in their midst.

## **POINT 5. PRAYER OF FAITH**

### **Jesus Christ taught us to exercise faith when we pray.**

In Matthew 21:22 he said, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Jesus confirmed to his disciples that no task in harmony with God's will, as revealed in the Bible, would be impossible to perform to those who do not doubt. The disciples had already performed miracles that would have been considered just as "impossible" as casting the Mount of Olives into the Dead Sea. They cast out demons, healed the sick and Peter had walked on water. And after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the apostles did even greater works than these. Likewise, whatever task God assigns to us Christians today is not impossible to perform when we trust his word and are dependent on his power.

### **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Choose one of these ways of praying that Jesus taught and practise to pray in this way to God.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.