

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will teach from the Bible what is a disciple of Jesus Christ. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: **A DISCIPLE PRAYS IN RESPONSE TO WHAT GOD SAYS AND DOES**.

The Bible says, "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." In this teaching we will discover what is prayer and discuss practical ways of prayer.

(S) **POINT 1. PRAYER IS A CONVERSATION.**

True prayer is a two-way conversation, not a one-way conversation. In your prayer, you first of all respond to what God is saying to you in the Bible. If God speaks to you through the Bible about holy living, then you should speak to God through prayer about holy living. If God speaks to you through the Bible about love, then you should also speak to God through prayer about love. Through the Bible and prayer, God and you should be speaking about the same subject. Prayer is a two-way conversation with God!

(T) In this two-way conversation with God, should I always wait until God speaks to me before I respond to him in prayer? No, the two-way conversation may start with God or it may start with me.

Often God takes the initiative and speaks to me through the Bible. Then I should respond in prayer to what God has been saying to me. As we will see a little later, God may reveal himself to me and then I should respond in a prayer of praise. God may expose my sin and then I should respond in a prayer of confession. God may teach me the right way to live and then I should respond in a prayer of petition. God may tell me what he is going to do to the wicked and then I should respond in a prayer of intercession. Or God may say or do something wonderful to me and then I should respond in a prayer of thanksgiving. What God says is the first half of the conversation and what I say in response is the second half of the conversation.

But often I take the initiative and pray to God. Then I should expect that God will respond to my prayer. In Psalm 5:3, king David takes the initiative to pray to God. He says, "Morning by morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; morning by morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation." David's prayer is only the first half of the conversation. After his prayer, king David waits patiently and expectantly for God to speak to him or act on his behalf. He expects God to speak or to act. God's response is the second half of the conversation. In Philippians 4:6-7 Paul teaches that we should not hesitate to take the initiative to pray to God. He says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." God promises to answer by taking our anxiety away and by giving us his peace instead! Of course, God will not always give us the things we ask for, because sometimes we ask for things that would not be the best for us. But God will give us peace about his answer. We will be able to accept his answer as the best answer to our prayer!

(S) Therefore, it does not matter who begins the conversation, God or me. What is important is that when God speaks to me through the Bible, I should respond to what God is saying to me in the Bible. And when I speak to God through prayer, then I should expect God to answer me through the Bible or through his acting in my life.

The first conclusion is that *prayer is a two-way conversation. When God speaks to you through the Bible, then you should respond in prayer to God. And when you speak to God through prayer, then you should expect God to respond to you.*

(T) **POINT 2. PRAYER IS A SPECIFIC RESPONSE.**

Let me read Psalm 33:2-4. "Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song; play skilfully, and shout for joy. For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does." What are God's words and deeds to the Psalmist?

(S) God's word to him is right and God's deeds to him are faithful! God reveals himself as righteous and faithful.

(T) Therefore, how does the Psalmist respond in his prayer?

(S) The Psalmist responds in his prayer by praising God, making music and singing to God.

(T) Here prayer is *a response to God's words and deeds by praising God.*

(S) Let me read Psalm 51: title -2,10-12. A Psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Batsheba. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me."

What are God's words to king David?

(T) God speaks to king David through his prophet Nathan. God's word exposes David's sin of adultery and murder. And God's word judges David's sin.

(S) Therefore, how does king David respond in his prayer?

(T) King David responds in his prayer by confessing his sin to God, by asking for forgiveness, cleansing and renewal.

(S) Here prayer is *a response to God's word by confessing sin.*

(T) Let me read Psalm 119:34-37. "Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of all your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart towards your statutes and not towards selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; renew my life according to your word."
What are God's words to this man?

(S) God speaks his words to this man in his laws, commands, statutes and promises. God reveals the needs of this man through his just laws and commands.

(T) Therefore, how does this man respond in his prayer?

(S) This man responds in his prayer by asking God for right understanding, for wholehearted obedience, for unselfish motives and for help to turn away from worthless things.

(T) Here prayer is *a response to God's word by asking for the right things for yourself.*

(S) Let me read Genesis 18:17,20-26. Then the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" Then the Lord said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." The men turned away and went towards Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing - to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The Lord said, "If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

What are God's words to Abraham?

(T) God tells Abraham that Sodom is wicked and that he is going to destroy Sodom. God's words reveal the great needs of the wicked city of Sodom to Abraham.

(S) Therefore, how does Abraham respond in his prayer to God?

(T) Abraham responds in his prayer by interceding for the righteous people living in Sodom. He pleads with God to spare the righteous.

(S) Here prayer is *a response to God's word by interceding for the needs of other people.*

(T) Let me read Psalm 107:10-15, "Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains, for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. So he subjected them to bitter labour; they stumbled and there was no one to help. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men."

What were God's deeds to the Israelites?

(S) God saved them from their distress and set them free from their bondage.

(T) Therefore, how should they respond in their prayer to God?

(S) They respond in their prayer by giving thanks to God for his unfailing love and wonderful deeds.

(T) Here prayer is *a response to God's deeds by thanking God.*

The second conclusion is that in all these five examples of prayer in the Bible, *prayer is a specific response to something God said or did. The response may be one of 5 different specific responses, namely to praise God for revealing himself, to confess sin, to ask for things we need, to intercede for the needs of others, or to thank God for his words and deeds.*

(S) **POINT 3. PRAYER FOCUSES ON GOD, ON OTHERS OR ON YOURSELF.**

Psalm 77:7-14 is a prayer that focuses on God. It says, "Will the Lord reject us forever? Will he never show his favour again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?" Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High," I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds. Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples."

This prayer focuses on God's character: his love, his faithfulness, his mercy and his anger. It also focuses on God's words and deeds: namely, his promises, miracles and mighty deeds.

(T) Colossians 1:9-12 is a prayer which focuses on other people, their needs and their interests. It says, "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully give thanks to the Father."

(S) Psalm 31:2-5 is a prayer which focuses on yourself, your needs and interests. It says, "Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress,

for the sake of your name lead and guide me. Free me from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; redeem me, O Lord, the God of truth.”

The third conclusion is that *prayer focuses sometimes on God, his character, words and deeds, sometimes on other people, their needs and interests and at other times on yourself, your needs and interests.*

(T) POINT 4. PRACTICAL WAYS OF PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD’S WORDS AND DEEDS.

First. Use prayer as a response to God during your quiet times. After you have meditated your “favourite verse” or “favourite truth” from the Bible passage, pray the important thoughts of your favourite truth as a response back to God. Pray your favourite truth for yourself, for someone in your family, for someone nearby and for someone far away. When two of you pray together, you may also want to pray your favourite truth for one another.

(S) Second. Use prayer as a response to God during your Bible studies After you have studied a Bible passage, pray the important truths God has shown you as a response back to God. Pray especially about how God wants you to apply the truth of this Bible passage to your life.

(T) Third. Use prayer as a response to God in your Scripture prayers. In Scripture prayer you choose a passage of Scripture to meditate upon its truths and to pray about its truths. After you have meditated through the Bible passage, pray the truths from each verse, verse by verse as a response back to God. When two of you use “Scripture prayer” to pray together, then you can take turns to pray a verse as a response back to God.

(S) POINT 5. ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.

First. Practise prayer in response to God’s words by making use of a Psalm. Read Psalm 23. Alone or two by two, pray the truths from each verse, verse by verse as a response back to God.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www.etc.

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