

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 second series of 6 teachings is about "The focus of prayer". Prayers can be divided into three groups. There are prayers that focus on God, prayers that focus on you and prayers that focus on other people. Therefore, the topics are "Prayers for relating to God" "Prayers for yourself" and "Prayers for others". Every topic will be in two parts.

Today we will learn about "A DISCIPLE PRAYS IN ORDER TO RELATE TO GOD - PART 1". Although all prayers are directed to God, in these prayers, God himself is the main focus of our attention or the central object of our prayers.

Let us read Romans 11:33-36. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." These words *focus on God's glory!*

First. *God's wisdom* is God's ability at all times to select the best means for the attainment of the highest goals. God's wisdom is God's efficiency in all his works of creation and salvation. God's wisdom is deeper than any man can see.

Second. *God's knowledge* is God's insight into the very essence of things, people, ideas and events. God's knowledge is God's omniscience. God's knowledge is richer than any man can imagine.

Third. *God's judgements* are God's sovereign decisions and the execution of these decisions that carry out God's plan of salvation on earth. God's decisions cannot be fathomed or grasped by the human mind.

Fourth. *God's paths* are God's means to put his decisions into effect. How impossible is it to trace or track down the means God uses to put his decisions into effect!

Fifth. *God's mind* cannot be defined. Just like a cup cannot hold the water of the Pacific Ocean, likewise the human mind cannot hold the wisdom, understanding and decisions of God! The Bible says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9)! Real scientists are beginning to see how marvellous and incomprehensible is God in his work of creation. God is at least equally astounding in his work of salvation!

Sixth. God needed no counsellor to tell him what to do.

Seventh. No one has put God in debt to him. Our indebtedness to God is so great that an adequate response is impossible!

Let me draw a conclusion. From God's mind comes God's plan and choice of our salvation. Through God's grace and power our salvation becomes a reality in our lives. Therefore also to God all glory is due. God is the Source, Accomplisher and Goal of our salvation! Only to God be all the glory!

Therefore, prayers must focus on God's glory. The prayers, which we will learn today, *focus on God's character, God's words and God's deeds*. God made people for his own glory. The purposes of these prayers are to bring glory to God. We give glory to God by how we relate to him and by the way we live. The prayers that focus on God and his glory can be divided into five kinds: Prayer is confessing sin to God. Prayer is practising the presence of God. Prayer is praising God's character. Prayer is surrendering to God. And prayer is dedication to God. In part 1 we will study the first two.

## **POINT 1. PRAYER IS CONFESSING SIN TO GOD**

### **First. Prepare for prayer.**

Let us read 1 Peter 1:15-16. "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy!' "Hebrews 12:29 warns, "God is a consuming fire!" and Hebrews 10:31 warns, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" God is holy and actively hostile to sin! We can offer no prayer wholly pleasing to God if we know that we are harbouring things in our life that are displeasing to him. No prayer is wholly pleasing to

God until there is nothing in me that is displeasing to God. That is why we must prepare to pray to God. We must repent and confess our sins. Sin must be eliminated and destroyed. This is not always pleasant, because revolutionary changes may have to take place in our lives.

### **Second. Repent in prayer.**

Much of our problem in continuing fellowship with a holy God is that many of us Christians repent only of *what we do*, rather than for *what we are*. David confesses, “*I am a sinner from birth*” (Psalm 51:5) and Isaiah laments, “*I am a man of unclean lips*” (Isaiah 6:5). The tax collector would not even look up to heaven, because he felt ashamed of who he was. He beat his breast as an expression of anguish, and said, “God, have mercy on *me, a sinner!*” (Luke 18:13). We need to have an awareness of our sinfulness and this ought to cause us pain. This encounter with a holy God ought to cause a personal crisis. And when we repent of our sins, then there ought to be a real and genuine cry of pain. Repentance is not simply receiving a Bible verse with a promise of forgiveness. Repentance is a turning to Christ with a cry of remorse and pain. In his kingly majesty God will deal with our pride and conceit and self-sufficiency.

### **Third. Confess in prayer.**

Let us read Psalm 32:1-5. “Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of the summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ - and you forgave the guilt of my sin.” What are the possible consequences of not confessing our sins to God? The Bible says if we do not confess our sins, then we can become sick, we can feel depressed, we can experience spiritual struggle or simply be powerless! However, if we confess our sins to God, then God will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Then we will again experience God’s protection, deliverance, counsel, security and joy. Psalm 32:6 urges us to pray and confess our sins to God, saying, “Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.”

### **Fourth. Here are some examples of prayers of confession in the Bible.**

*Psalm 139:23-24.* Sometimes we do not know our sins as well as God and need to ask God to search our hearts. “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

*Psalm 38.* Sometimes God punishes us for our sins and causes us to quickly confess our sins to him. In response to God’s discipline of his sin, David prays a prayer of remorse. He says, “My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear (vs.4). All day long I go about mourning (vs.6). I am utterly crushed (vs.8)” David groans and sighs, his strength fails, the light has gone out of his eyes and his friends avoid him. Then he confesses his sin and says, “I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin (vs.8). O Lord, do not forsake me; be not far from me. Come quickly to my help” (vs.21-22). David knows that a holy God cannot leave sin unpunished. Therefore, he says, “You rebuke and discipline men for their sin” (Ps 39:11).

*Psalm 51.* Sometimes we are overwhelmed by our sinfulness and need to cry to God for help. “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. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proven right when you speak and justified when you judge (vs.1-4). ... 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” (vs.10-12).

When you know that you have sinned against God or other people, then pray a prayer of confession. Use these prayers in the Psalms to express your own guilt and your own feelings of remorse to the Living God.

## **POINT 2. PRAYER IS PRACTISING THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

### **First. There are times we do not experience God.**

Let us read Psalm 27:9. “Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; ... Do not reject me or forsake me.” Like David, at times we also think that God is hiding from us. We suspect that God must be angry with us. We feel rejected and forsaken by God! These experiences of God’s absence cause us to despair and feel very lost. The reasons of our experiences of God’s absence may either be our rebellion against God or God’s purposeful training of our character. We will not discuss these reasons now.

The burning question is, is God really absent? Read Psalm 139:1-12 for yourself. The Bible says that God is present everywhere! He is in the highest heaven and in the deepest depths. He is in the East and in the West. He is in the light and in utter darkness. There is no place where we can flee from God's presence (Psalm 139:7-12)! Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight! Everything is uncovered and lies bare before the eyes of God. And all people must give an account of how they have lived to God (Hebrews 4:13). God knows our inner thoughts. God knows our words even before we speak them. God is familiar with all our ways (Psalm 139:1-4).

Although God is present everywhere, yet *we are not always aware* of God's presence! Because we are earthly and unspiritual, we often lack a sense of God's reality or God's nearness. That is why we often lose the sense of divine sacredness in our times of prayer or worship services.

### **Second. How can we experience God?**

How does King David again restore the awareness of God's reality? How does he again experience the presence of God? How does he again feel the nearness of God? Let us read Psalm 27:4,8,13-14. "*One thing I ask* of the Lord, this is what I *seek*: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. ... My heart says to you, "Seek his face!" Your face, Lord, I will seek. ... I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." David's heart says to him, "Seek God's face!" Then David deliberately and consciously enters into God's presence. David stands or kneels down before God's face and begins to gaze upon the beauty of God. That means that David meditates on God's wonderful attributes, on God's beautiful character. While David thinks about God's love for him and God's faithfulness to him in the past, David patiently waits for God to act. That means, David waits with expectation and with assurance that, in his own time, God will again make his nearness felt to him. This is how David practises the presence of God. This practising of God's presence is the one thing David seeks every day of his life.

Likewise, practising the presence of God is something we should practise every day of our lives. Every day, seek God's face. Deliberately and consciously enter into God's presence. Meditate on God's characteristics. Wait with expectation and assurance that God will again make his reality, presence and nearness felt.

### **Third. What are the right attitudes in God's presence?**

In Hebrews 12:28-29 we read, "Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." In this prayer, we worship God. We enter into God's presence with awe for his majesty and power; with respectful fear for his holiness and righteous judgements; and with humility with regard to our own weakness, failures and powerlessness. We enter into God's presence in breathless silence, because with our inner consciousness we are deeply aware of his existence, presence and nearness. We enter into God's presence with respectful admiration of his characteristics. But we may also enter into God's presence with confidence, because Jesus Christ opened the way to God. Ephesians 3:12 says, "Through faith in Christ we may approach God with freedom and confidence." And Hebrews 4:16 says, "Approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." We may freely enter God's presence, ask him for help and thank him for answers given.

### **Fourth. Here are some examples of prayers of practising God's presence in the Bible.**

*Psalm 61.* King David cries to the Lord and says, "From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings" (vs.2-4). King David knows loneliness, he knows the feelings of being forsaken and he knows the fear of enemies. So he prays to God that he may again experience the reality, presence and nearness of the living God. And the poet prays for the king, saying, "May the king be enthroned in God's presence forever; appoint your love and faithfulness to protect him" (vs.7).

*Psalm 63.* King David wrestles in prayers to again experience the presence of God. He prays, "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you" (vs.1). On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night. Because you are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me" (vs.6-8).

When you do not experience the reality of God, or do not sense the presence of God, or do not feel the nearness of God, then pray a prayer of practising the presence of God. Use these prayers in the Psalms to seek God, to think of God and to cling to God.

### **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Prepare your heart for prayer by confessing all your sins to God. Remember “God is a consuming fire” and no prayer is completely pleasing to God until there is nothing in me displeasing to God. Make it your habit to seek to experience God’s reality, presence and nearness.

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”.