

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 2". 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. Last week we looked at confessing sin to God and practising the presence of God. Today we look at praising God's character, surrendering to God dedicating to God.

POINT 3. PRAYER IS PRAISING GOD'S CHARACTER

First. Prayer to God is worshipping God in 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 worship what they do not know. It is possible to have outward religious forms of worship, like a temple, 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, cannot pray to God in an acceptable way.

Therefore, God takes the matter of worship and prayer 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 without the impartation of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'" (John 3:7). 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.

Second. Prayer to God is worshipping God in truth.

Many philosophies or religions in the world 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. 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 God is, Christ is (Hebrews 1:3). Therefore, when we are worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not displeasing God the Father!

The God who revealed himself in the Bible is neither "the reduced god" of philosophy nor "the changed god" of the religions of the world. In the Bible, God reveals the truth about who he is and what he is like. 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 must worship him in holiness of life. Because God is an awesome powerful God, we worship him with respectful fear. Therefore, because God is transcendent and awesome, we must

throw our hearts open and ask God to shine himself into our understanding. We must 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 did not love, nobody would be saved. But because God is holy, he must punish sin, and because he loves, he saves sinners. When we know the truth about God’s character, then only can we praise and adore God’s wonderful characteristics. Then the truth about God’s wonderful attributes will fill us with astonishment, fascination and wonder. Then we will break out in lofty admiration and joyful praise of God!

Three. A prayer of praise.

Let us read Psalm 103:2-5 and 8-14. “Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s, ... The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens is above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.”

When you remember all the good things God has done for you and think about all the characteristics of God, then pray a prayer of praise. Use this Scripture prayer in Psalm 103 to praise God’s character and God’s wonderful deeds for you. Express your adoration for God in prayer or in song. Proclaim to other people who God is and extol all God’s benefits to those who fear him. The more you read your Bible, the better you will know God. The better you know God, the more you will praise him!

POINT 4. PRAYER IS SURRENDERING TO GOD

First. Prayer to God is to give up worldliness.

Read Psalm 73 for yourself. Asaph saw the prosperity, success and carefree life of the wicked people in the world. From man’s point of view, the wicked are healthy and have no burdens. With violence they do evil things. With arrogance they oppress the weak. With their mouths they lay claim to heaven and take possession of the earth. They win the support of many people. And they scoff that God does not exist and does not know what they are doing.

Asaph envied the prosperity, power and popularity of the wicked. He compared their wicked life with his righteous life. And he could not understand why his righteous life brought difficulties along with it. From his own point of view it made no sense to him and it oppressed him. He began to think that he kept his heart pure in vain. His feet almost slipped and he almost lost his foothold.

Only when Asaph entered God’s presence, he was able to see these same people from God’s point of view! From God’s point of view, the wicked people were heading towards sudden destruction! From God’s point of view, Asaph realised how fortunate he was, and said, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25-26).

God calls us to give up our desire to be like the people of the world. Instead, God calls us to surrender *our* point of view, *our* value system, in short, *our* world-view to *his* point of view, *his* value system and *his* world-view! God calls us to surrender to his kingdom, to its point of view and its claims on our life. Our prayers must often include prayers of giving up worldliness and surrendering to God’s kingdom!

Second. Prayer to God is to give up selfish ambitions.

Read Acts 22 and 26 for yourself. When Paul was still a non-Christian, he was convinced that he ought to do everything possible to oppose the name of Jesus. He resisted the gospel and destroyed the Christian Church. He had his own ambitions and plans and these were anti-Christian. However, one day Jesus Christ himself appeared to Paul and warned him that it was useless and very difficult to keep on kicking against God’s plan. That day, Paul surrendered his life, his ambitions and his plans to Jesus Christ. He asked two of the most important questions in the Bible, “Who are you, Lord? and “What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:8,10). He stopped to rebel against God and resist God’s plan in this world. He surrendered his own will to do the will of God. Jesus taught Christians to pray, “Your will be done on earth as it is done in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). And just before he died on the cross, Jesus also prayed “Not my will, but your will be done.”

God calls us to give up our own plans and selfish ambitions. Instead, God calls us to surrender our plans, ambitions and will to God's plan and God's will. Our prayers must often include prayers of giving up our selfish ambitions and surrendering to God's plan!

Third. Prayer to God is to give up independence.

Read Romans 8:5-8 for yourself. Any person, who is still controlled by his sinful thoughts and desires, is hostile to God. He does not submit to God's Word and he cannot even submit to God's Word. A person who wants to be in control of his own life and affairs and of his own decisions and direction of life cannot please God. Independence from God is the root of sin. Independence from God cannot please God!

God calls us to give up our spirit of independence and surrender to the control of the Holy Spirit. God desires that we give the control of our thoughts, desires and decisions to the Holy Spirit. When we give the control of every aspect of our life to the Holy Spirit, then we will submit to God's Word and we will please God! We please God most, not by trying frantically to make ourselves "good", but by surrendering ourselves just as we are, into God's hands; by throwing ourselves together with all our imperfections, with our "warts and pimples", into God's loving arms. We please God most when we allow him to mould us into the person he wants us to become. Our prayers must often include prayers of giving up our spirit of independence and surrendering to the control of God's Holy Spirit, who lives in us.

Fourth. A prayer of surrender.

Let us read Psalm 25:4-5 and 7-10. "Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth ... for you are my Saviour, and my hope is in you all day long. ... Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; ... Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant."

When you are tired of going your own rebellious way, then pray a prayer of surrender. Use this Scripture prayer to express your desire to change from walking in your own rebellious way to walking in God's chosen way for you. Surrender your way to God's way. Then you too will experience what the writer experienced in verse 12: "the Lord will instruct you in the way chosen for you". And you will experience what the writer experienced in verse 14: "The Lord confides in those who fear him". And you too will pray with conviction the words of verse 15, "My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare." Surrender to God's way will lead you to experience God's love and faithfulness!

POINT 5. PRAYER IS OFFERING OR DEDICATING TO GOD

"To offer", means to willingly and wholeheartedly give something to God so that he may possess, control and use it. Prayer includes the offering or dedication of yourself, what you possess and what you do to the Living God.

First. Prayer to God is to bring offerings that are meaningful to God.

Read Isaiah 1:12-17 for yourself. God says, "Stop bringing meaningless offerings to me!" Incense, special holy days and religious festivals as well as prayers offered by unchanged people are detestable to God! God hates outward religious practices! God desires, not the gifts we bring and not the religious exercises we perform. God desires us! The Bible says, "Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. *This is your spiritual worship.* Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1-2). God desires that we offer to him our whole living life, every day of it. We should not wait till we reach the end of our lives. God desires that we offer to him a holy life, not a sinful life. He says, "Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow!" And God desires that we offer to him a life that pleases him, not a life of pleasing self or a life of pleasing the selfish interests of others. God says, stop bringing meaningless offerings! In our prayers, we must bring ourselves to God, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Second. Prayer to God is to bring offerings that reflect God's excellent characteristics.

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus says, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." God desires that we show forth the excellent characteristics of God in our daily living. We must show God's love, purity, holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, mercy, etc. to the people around us. The Holy Spirit living in us reflects Christ's patience and kindness, humility and gentleness, joy and peace, faithfulness and self-control. If I am *living in* God's nature, then I can also *live out* God's nature. Then I can also pray and worship in God's nature. In our prayers we must dedicate ourselves to reflect God's excellent characteristics through the way we live.

Three. A prayer of dedication.

Let us read Psalm 15. “Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbour no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, who despises a vile man but honours those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.”

When you desire to dedicate yourself to God, then pray a prayer of dedication. Use this Scripture prayer to express your desire to live a blameless life in God’s presence. Together with this writer, express your belief in speaking the truth, doing what is right and hating corruption. May be there are other areas which you would like to dedicate to the Living God. Then pray these things to God.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. In prayer, throw open your heart and ask God to reveal himself and his characteristics to your understanding so that you may praise him. In prayer, give up your spirit of independence and surrender yourself just as you are with all your weaknesses and failures into God’s hands. Surrender yourself to the control of the Holy Spirit. In prayer, offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

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

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