

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 fourth series of 8 teachings is about "The practice of prayer". The four topics are: "A disciple is motivated to pray", "A disciple is sensitive to the physical aspects of prayer", "A disciple persists in prayer" and "A disciple is convinced about the effects of prayer". Every topic will be in two parts. Today we will learn about "A DISCIPLE IS MOTIVATED TO PRAY - PART 1". In part 2 we will consider "the conditions for prayer" "the attitudes in prayer" and "the focus in prayer". As you listen, make notes.

Christians often ask the following questions about prayer:

One. What are the conditions for prayer?

Two. Which attitudes in prayer please God?

Three. What is the right focus in prayer?

We are going to look at many Bible passages that deal with these questions. Write the Bible references down so that you can read them again.

POINT 3. CONDITIONS FOR PRAYER

There are eight conditions for prayer.

First condition for prayer. Delight yourself in the Lord. In Psalm 37:4-6 is written, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine ..." Prayer is essentially communication between God and us. The better the relationship between the two of us, the better the communication will be. When we delight ourselves in God, then God will be delighted to answer our prayers. When we love God, he will love to meet us in our prayers. When we dedicate our life to God, he will make our life like the shining sun. Probably the most important condition for prayer is to have this personal and intimate relationship with God.

Second condition for prayer. Humble yourself. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 is written, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Throughout the Bible, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. According to the monk, Benedict, who lived during the 5th century, humility is: One, "to have a constant reverence for God before our eyes." Two, "to reject our own will and desires and instead do God's will." Three, "to confess all of our evil thoughts and actions to the Lord." Four, "to cultivate silence." Five, "to avoid frivolous talk." Six, "to use plain and simple speech." Seven, "to endure with patience the injuries and afflictions we face." Eight, "to be content in all things."

Third condition for prayer. Pray in the name of Jesus Christ. In John 14:13 Jesus says, "I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father." Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God and man. By his death on the cross he saved believers from their sins. By his resurrection he lives to apply that salvation to their lives. To pray in the name of Jesus Christ has two meanings: it means to pray on the merit of Jesus Christ and to pray in harmony with the revealed will of Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ, God will not listen to any prayer.

Fourth condition for prayer. Maintain fellowship with Jesus Christ and his Word. In John 15:7 Jesus says, "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 here dependent on our relationship to Jesus Christ and our relationship to the words of Jesus Christ. To remain in Jesus Christ is to have him as "the Source of our life" as well as "the Goal of our life". To remain in Jesus Christ is to exert ourselves to receive his love again and again and to love him in return. To remain in Jesus Christ is to let his words in the Bible remain in us. His words will remain in us when we exert ourselves to obey his words, surrender to his words and allow his words to influence and change us.

Fifth condition for prayer. Pray according to God's will. In 1 John 5:14 is written, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." Prayer is the way in which we express our desire to do God's will and to be an instrument in God's hands to extend his kingdom. The more we study the Bible to know God's will, the better we can pray according to God's will. The more we pray according to God's will, the more God will answer our prayers. The more God answers our prayers, the more we will pray with confidence when we approach God.

Sixth condition for prayer. Believe that you will receive his answer to prayer. In Matthew 21:22 Jesus says, “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” Jesus confirms to his disciples that *no task in harmony with God’s will is 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 the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the apostles did even greater works than these. They raised the dead, proclaimed the gospel to the end of the known world and founded churches in all these countries. Likewise, whatever task God assigns to us is not impossible to perform when we trust his word and are dependent on his power.

Seventh condition for prayer. Obey God’s commands and do what pleases him. In 1 John 3:22 is written, “We receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands, and do what pleases him.” *Knowledge of God’s will is necessary, but obedience to God’s will is even more indispensable!* Nevertheless, God will not always do what we ask for in prayer. He will certainly not answer our selfish prayers. But God will answer prayers that will save God’s people, change the characters and lives of God’s people, build up God’s Church, extend God’s kingdom and above all glorify God himself. God’s answers to prayers are part of fulfilling his eternal plan with his creatures and his creation. Therefore, Christians should pray for the things that promote his kingdom and that bring him glory.

Eighth condition for prayer. Pray with persistence. In Luke 18:1 Jesus tells a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. If a powerless widow could persuade an evil judge to act only because she persisted in her request, how much easier would we Christians persuade our righteous God to act only because we persist in our prayers?

POINT 4. ATTITUDES IN PRAYER

There are seven attitudes in prayer that are important for God.

First attitude in prayer. Draw near to God with a sincere heart. In Hebrews 10:22 is written, “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart..... having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience.....” Sincerity is the opposite of hypocrisy. *A sincere heart will have the right motivation to pray. A clean conscience will have the right confidence to pray.*

Second attitude in prayer. Practise the presence of God. In Psalm 16:8 is written, “I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.” Like all Christians, we live in the world and yet we do not belong to this world. We are pilgrims on our way to our real home, the new heaven and the new earth. It is so easy to get so occupied with our daily work and duties that we temporarily forget about God. Our mind is preoccupied with the work we do and the people we meet. Yet God is present and sees every one of our deeds and hears every one of our conversations, even when we sideline him. King David teaches us one of the greatest disciplines in the Bible, namely, to practise the presence of God. We practise the presence of God, when we remind ourselves again and again that God is real, present and near.

Third attitude in prayer. Pray in the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 6:18 is written, “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Prayer is not confined to certain holy places. Christians may pray everywhere. But Christians should pray in the Holy Spirit. “Prayer in the Holy Spirit” means to pray while you are aware that the Spirit represents Jesus Christ and is present in your body. It means to depend on the Spirit to teach you what to pray for. And it means to be in harmony with the teachings in the Bible, which the Spirit inspired.

Fourth attitude in prayer. Pray with holy hands. In 1 Timothy 2:8 the apostle Paul says, “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.” Not the posture of your body in prayer, but the attitude of your heart in prayer is important for God! It is not the lifting up of your hands, but the *holiness* of your hands, that is important for God! We must have holy hands that are not polluted by previous crimes, like murder, fighting, adultery, theft and cheating. Our hearts must be free from anger against persons that have wronged us. Our conscience must be clear that we have no evil plans against anybody. In James 5:16 is written, “The prayer of a *righteous* man is powerful and effective.” The opposite is also true: the prayer of a *wicked* man is absolutely useless.

Fifth attitude in prayer. Pray as a godly marriage partner. The way a husband treats his wife has a tremendous effect on his relationship to God and his prayers! Malachi 2:13-15 says that if a person breaks faith with his marriage partner, God will no longer pay attention to his prayers and tears! In 1 Peter 3:7, the apostle Peter says, “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.” If a man treats his wife harshly and with disrespect, God will likewise reject all his prayers! This is a warning against all men who use violence to enforce their will in their marriage. This is also a warning against all women who use the sharpness of their tongues to hurt their husbands (cf. 1 Peter 5:1-6). Therefore, the behaviour and attitudes within the marriage relationship have a great influence on whether God hears prayers or not.

Sixth attitude in prayer. Pray with watchfulness. In Mark 14:38 Jesus says, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” At times of struggle, we must keep alert against the temptation to become untrue to Jesus. Although our spirit is eager to do what is right, our human nature is frail and prone to temptations. Prayer in such times is like standing guard against enemy attacks. When the spiritual warfare is raging, then we must cultivate an attitude of watchfulness, knowing that the devil will especially use such times to attack us with his flaming darts.

Seventh attitude in prayer. Give thanks in all circumstances. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 is written, “Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” Christians face many different kinds of circumstances. Often difficult circumstances, like troubles, fear, persecutions, hunger and poverty. How can Christians thank God for such circumstances? Romans 8:35-39 shows how “we are more than conquerors” in all such circumstances, because *God actually uses these difficult circumstances to help us reach our final goal! Only God can turn difficulties into opportunities!* That is why we can thank God for difficult circumstances.

POINT 5. THE FOCUS IN PRAYER

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. Focus on God’s wisdom. 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 perfect efficiency in all his works of creation and salvation. God’s wisdom is deeper than any man can see. When you pray, trust God’s wisdom in his answers!

Second. Focus on God’s knowledge. 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. When you pray, trust that God knows everything!

Third. Focus on God’s judgements. 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. When you pray, trust God’s decisions, even when you cannot understand them!

Fourth. Focus on God’s paths. 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! When you pray, trust that God always uses the best means to accomplish his goals!

Fifth. Focus on God’s mind. 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 as least equally astounding in his work of salvation! When you pray, continue to marvel at God’s works in creation and salvation!

Sixth. Focus on God’s sovereign and majestic independence. God never needs counsellor to tell him what to do.

When you pray, trust that God is your best Counsellor!

Seventh. Focus on the fact that no one has put God in debt to him. Our indebtedness to God is so great that an adequate response is impossible! Therefore, when you pray, be humble and thankful!

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 we must give all the glory to God.* God is the Source, Accomplisher and Goal of our salvation! Only to God be all the glory! Therefore, our prayers must focus on God’s glory. God made people for his own glory. We give glory to God by how we relate to him, especially through prayer, and by the way we live, especially in obedience to his word. Prayer is therefore an expression of our relationship to God and our dependence on God for everything in our life!

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Allow God to search your life and tell you on which condition for prayer or attitude in prayer do you need to concentrate. Make your prayers one of the important ways of expressing your relationship to and dependence of 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”.