

PANEL DISCUSSION ON PRAYER

Sunday, July 12, 2020

INTRO: Welcome to Christ First Church! Today we are doing something we've never done before on a Sunday morning. We are having a panel discussion on the subject of prayer. This idea was actually birthed from a conversation that Steve Schaub and I had, a few weeks ago, at one of our Wednesday morning men's prayer meetings. In that conversation, we discussed that many of the teachings of Christ, and of the apostles, while the church was in its infancy, was in conversation style. Meaning, groups of people would sit down together with Jesus, or the early church leaders, and ask questions. Much of the teaching we read in scripture comes as a response to those questions.

So, after praying about our conversation, and having already sensed the need to speak on the importance of prayer through this difficult time we are in, I felt it would be good to open up today's service to questions on the subject.

I realize that many of you find it difficult to pray. You are not alone in that, and I don't want you to feel embarrassed by it. Some of you pray, but you're not sure that you are praying correctly. Many of you are new in your relationship with God and are just getting your feet wet, so to speak, and you are eager to know all you can about the subject. SO, the format of today is going to be very similar to what we've been doing over the past several weeks on Wednesday nights. We will begin a panel discussion on prayer. During the discussion, we will break from time to time to take questions from you, or hear your comments on the subject. Now, you can raise your hand and Filip will come to where you are and let you share, or you can by the use of your device, leave your question in the comment section of today's FB live stream. My prayer is, that today will encourage you and give you confidence in your prayer lives. So, let's jump right in.

I) IS PRAYER REALLY IMPORTANT TO OUR DAILY LIVES? **We**

know that prayer is important because of the emphasis scripture places on it.

Colossians 4:2 *"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."*

1 Thessalonians 5:17 *"Pray without ceasing,"*

Luke 18:1 *"And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart."*

What makes prayer so important?

A) Prayer brings us into close proximity to God: **James 4:8** *"Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you ..."* **Psalms 145:18** *"The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth."*

B) Prayer opens the doors of Heaven: **Matthew 7:7-8** *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened."* **Mark 11:24** *"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."* **James 5:13** *"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray"*

II) HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M PRAYING CORRECTLY? This is a question that many people have. Praying can be intimidating! Just think about it. We are mere mortals, who are flawed, sinful, and full of... well, junk! And when we pray, we are calling on an almighty, and Holy God. If that doesn't cause you some scare, it's probably because you haven't ever thought about it.

The good news is, God has taken mercy on us and through His Son, Jesus Christ, He has made us, who believe on Him, part of His divine family. And as family, we are extended the courtesy of calling on Him in prayer at any time. When we pray, we do so at the invitation of our Father. And He loves to spend time with His children! SO, it's not so much how we pray, but that we pray, that God is concerned with. However, there is much said in the Bible about the way we should pray.

Matthew 6:5-8 *"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

Here, we see that God desires truthfulness and sincerity in our prayers. **PRAYER IS NOT A PERFORMANCE, IT'S A POURING OUT OF OUR HEART TO GOD!**

Matthew 6:9-13 *"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*

There are many elements associated with prayer...

James 4:10 *"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."*

Hebrews 4:16 *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

Bold humility is a thing!

Scripture also gives us some practical advice when it comes to prayer...

Matthew 5:23-24 *"So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."*

Psalms 66:18 *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear."*

It's easy to see from these scriptures that prayer is a matter of the heart. It has nothing to do with eloquence of speech, but a right heart before God! Because it's a heart communication, anyone can pray, and everyone should pray!

III) WHO SHOULD I PRAY FOR, MYSELF OR OTHERS? YES! That's the short answer. The truth is, we are commanded to both pray for ourselves and to pray for others.

A) Prayers of Supplication: The Zondervan Bible Dictionary defines supplication as "a plea for personal help." **Philippians 4:6-7** "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." **Ephesians 6:18** "Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication." **1 John 1:9** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." **Luke 11:3** "Give us each day our daily bread,..." **2 Chronicles 7:14** "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

B) Prayers of Intercession: The Zondervan Bible Dictionary defines intercession as "petition on behalf of another." **James 5:16** "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." **1 Timothy 2:1** "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people," **Colossians 1:9** "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding," **Matthew 5:44** "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

When it comes to intercessory prayer, Jesus is our perfect example! The Word of God tells us that Jesus intercedes on our behalf on a daily basis.

Romans 8:34 "Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." **Hebrews 7:25** "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." **Isaiah 53:12** "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."

CONCLUSION: There are many different elements to effective prayer. But when pursued with a passion for knowing God and loving others, there is great reward available to those who pray.

It is true, that prayer is a battleground. Satan does not want God's children to receive the goodness of God that comes from time spent in prayer. He will try to distract, hinder, fight, and keep us from prayer. He knows it is our best defense against him. So pray! Pray hard. Pray long. We stand tallest when we are on our knees!