



1 Timothy 4:7, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness"

## Lesson 6: The Discipline of Prayer

### Introduction

**Jonathan Edwards**, "Prayer is as natural expression of faith as breathing is of life"

**Martin Lloyd Jones**, "[Prayer] is the highest activity of the human soul, and therefore it is at the same time the ultimate test of a man's true spiritual condition. There is nothing that tells the truth about us as Christian people so much as our prayer life ... Ultimately, therefore, a man discovers the real condition of his spiritual life when he examines himself in private, when he is alone with God ... And have we not all known what it is to find that, somehow, we have less to say to God when we are alone than when we are in the presence of others? It should not be so; but it often is. So that it is when we have left the realm of activities and outward dealings with other people, and are alone with God, that we really know where we stand in a spiritual sense."

Prayer is:

1. Essential for spiritual life
2. The natural expression of faith
3. The ultimate test of true spirituality
4. Difficult and there are many obstacles

## The meaning of prayer

- What is prayer? Prayer is personal communication to God
- Why do we pray?
  - God wants us to pray for it nurtures our relationship with Him
  - God wants us to pray for it expresses our trust in Him
  - God wants us to pray for it acknowledges our dependence on Him

## The example of prayer

- Prayer is a spiritual discipline exemplified by Jesus
- *Heb 5:7* In the days of his [Jesus] flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

## The expectation to pray

- **Don Whitney**, “Don’t think of prayer as an impersonal requirement. Realize that it is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ, with all authority and with all love, who expects us to pray”
- Jesus said:
  - **Matt 6:5**, “And when you pray ...”
  - **Matt 6:6**, “But when you pray ...”
  - **Matt 6:7**, “And when you pray ...”
  - **Matt 6:9**, “Pray then like this ...”
- Paul said:
  - **Col 4:2**, “Continue steadfastly in prayer ...”
  - **Col 4:3**, “Pray also for us ...”
  - **1 Thess 5:17**, “Pray without ceasing ...”

## The privilege of prayer

- **Heb 4:16**, *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

## The time of prayer

- **Matt 6:6**, *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.*

## The obstacles to prayer

- **Sin**
  - **Psalm 66:18**, *If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*
- **Greed**
  - **Prov 21:13**, *Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.*
- **Unbelief and doubt**
  - **James 1:6-8**, *But let him **ask in faith**, with **no doubting**, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, **unstable in all his ways.***
- **Wrong attitude toward spouse**
  - **1 Peter 3:7**, *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*
- **Boredom**

# The necessity of prayer

- **John Piper**, “Prayer is a walkie-talkie for warfare, not a domestic intercom for increasing our convenience”

## A method of prayer

- **Pray the Psalms**
  - Choose a Psalm
  - Pray the Psalm line by line
  - Continue praying until you run out of time or Psalm
  - Try beginning with Psalm 23
- **Points to note**
  - If you don't understand the meaning of the verse move on
  - If you know the meaning but nothing comes to mind, move on
  - Speak to the Lord about everything that comes to mind from the text
- **Benefits**
  - Prayers most likely in line with the will of God
  - It provides a framework
  - It brings freshness to your prayers
  - It keeps your mind and heart focused
  - It can be done in as little or as much time as available
  - It stops you praying empty and repetitive phrases
  - You come to know the Bible better
  - You are praying supernaturally
- **Robert Murray M'Cheyne**, “Turn the Bible into prayer ... This is the best way of knowing the meaning of the Bible, and of learning to pray.”