



mothers of adults Lesson 3

Prayer

by Ann Dykstra

*And this is the confidence that we have in Him,
that, if we ask any thing according to His will,
He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us,
whatsoever we ask, we know that we have
the petitions that we desired of Him.*

1 John 5:14-15

Prayer is the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Elements of Prayer

Worship and Praise

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Psalm 95:6-7

Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. ² While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. Psalm 146:1-2

“It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men.” C. S. Lewis

“O Jesus, Master and Center and End of all, how long before that Glory is Thine which has so long awaited Thee? Now there is no thought of Thee among men, then there shall be thought for nothing else. Now men are praised; then none shall care for any other’s merits. Hasten, hasten, Glory of Heaven; take the crown, subdue Thy kingdom, enthrall thy creatures.” Jim Elliot

Supplication

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Thanksgiving

In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Confession

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Proverbs 28:13

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10

Prayer is an act of faith in God's promises and obedience to His word.

Effectual Prayer

The Bible speaks of effectual prayer – which means prayer that attains to the desired result for which it is sent. In my mind, the most effectual prayer the Lord Jesus ever prayed was; *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”* Luke 23:34. We know the Father is able to forgive because of the blood that was being shed, even in that moment. That request puts the very heart of Jesus on display – His compassion for sinners – just as the words in Philippians 2:5-11 teach us again about His great heart. *Let this mind (attitude) be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.* A heart that wills to do the will of God! Oh, dear sisters, how can I speak so briefly about such a profound truth! The very heart of the Savior calling out for my forgiveness and your forgiveness in that terrible moment. I have a note in my Bible at that scripture saying, “this may be the most perfect statement spoken at the most perfect time since God gave the gift of language.”

In Acts 9 we have the story of Paul journeying to Damascus to do mischief to the believers there when *suddenly there shined round about him a light from Heaven: and he fell to the earth and heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"* Paul answers, *"Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."* Paul, trembling and astonished said, *"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" "Arise, and go into the city. . ."* Paul went and was told what great things he would suffer and how wide his ministry would be. Near the end of his life he could testify, *"I was not disobedient to the Heavenly calling."* His prayer was effectual.

Surely the most effectual prayer I ever prayed, before or since, was the life changing request for the Lord Jesus to come live in my heart and forgive me of all my sin. That prayer was efficacious – I am standing here today to testify of His power and faithfulness. That was 45 years ago.

Prayer works and prayer is work. Prayer is a command. Prayer is a duty – but duty will not keep you. Like an obligation, it can become a burden. Duty must become love, the great motivator. *If you love me, keep my commandments.* John 14:15. Command = duty but love makes the keeping possible. Prayer is an ache in the heart and soul thirst for God. *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?* Psalm 42:2; *Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in Thee do I trust. Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee.* Psalm 143:8



- *ASK and it shall be given you* Matthew 7:7
- *SEEK and ye shall find* Matthew 7:7
- *KNOCK and it shall be opened unto you.* Matthew 7:7
- *DELIGHT thyself also in the Lord and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.* Psalm 37:4
- JESUS said; *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are.”* Matthew 6:5
- JESUS said; *“Men ought always to pray and not to faint.”* Luke 18:1
- JESUS said; *“When thou prayest, enter into thy closet (inner room) and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”* Matthew 6:6

We do not find the Lord Jesus praying in a closet. He sought His Father in the open, resorting to a mountain, a garden or a solitary place. The idea is **aloneness** with God. Henry wouldn't look for me in the closet but we each have a particular place where we seek the Lord. We need not get in bondage about place or position of the body. Some can spend time on their knees while others walk about or as David “sat before the Lord.” Let the leaning of your mind lead you.

Prayer is a determined effort to put first things first even if it is not convenient. It is a setting of the will toward God. It means as much as possible the shutting out of interrupting things.

Praying is caring enough to spend time with God and saying ‘no’ to the flesh which prefers its own way. It is THAT which is of value to the Lord.

Pray often: for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God and a scourge for Satan.

“When thou prayest rather let thy heart be without words than thy words without heart.”

A Puritan Golden Treasury

Discouragements in Prayer

Hindrances and Distractions

Do not be discouraged if no thoughts or words come, but only distractions and inward confusion. This has been problematic for saints through the ages.

“Ah! Dearest Lord, I cannot pray, My fancy is not free;
Unmannerly distractions come, and force my thoughts from
thee. The world that looks so dull all day, glows bright on
me at prayer; And plans that ask no thought but then, wake
up and meet me there.” Frederick W. Faber

The 16th century poet John Donne said it this way:

“I throw myself down in my chamber, and I call in and invite
God, and his angels thither, and when they are there, I
neglect God and his Angels, for the noise of a fly, for the
rattling of a coach, for the whining of a door. I talk on, in
the same posture of praying; eyes lifted up, knees bowed
down; as though I prayed to God; and, if God or his Angels
should ask me, when I thought last of God in that prayer, I
cannot tell. Sometimes I find that I had forgot what I was
about, but when I began to forget it, I cannot tell. A memory
of yesterday’s pleasures, a fear of to-morrow’s dangers, a
straw under my knee, a noise in mine ear, a light in mine
eye, an anything, a nothing, a fancy, a chimera [imaginary
creature] in my brain troubles me in my prayer.”

This is true. Is there a command in the Bible so difficult to obey or so penetrating in power, as the command to be still?

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

Fortunately, God know this about us and He also knows the desires of our hearts and sooner or later He will fulfill them.

Psalm 66:18 says; *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*

Times of sickness, sorrow, loneliness, grief, loss, can be great deterrents to prayer because we are focused on our circumstances and not on the Lord. Things that are lent to us may be taken away, but things that are given are not taken away. Joy is given, *(and ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.* John 16:22) sorrow is lent. We are not our own, we are bought with a price, “and our sorrow is not our own” (said Samuel Rutherford a long time ago). It is lent to us for a little while that we may use it for eternal purposes. Our Lord promises that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* (Romans 8:18) – when our Father shall wipe away all tears from off all faces (Revelation 21:4).

“Suffering is wanting what you don’t have and having what you don’t want;” according to Elisabeth Elliot, whose suffering has eternally ended.

Encouragements to Prayer

Prayer is a thing of the heart expressed before uttered because God looks on the heart.

“Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer keeps the Christian’s armour bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”
William Cowper

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:12-13

Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? Jeremiah 32:27

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit . . . John 15:7-8

. . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. John 16:23-24

“The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel.” Thomas Watson

Our Lord Jesus was the Man of Sorrows Who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. In His love and in His mercy He redeemed us and carried us. Lord, to Whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life? (John 6:68). Run into Him and be safe – He is our refuge, He knows, hears, understands, loves, cares. Let us make our prayers to this GOD who is our God forever and ever; He will be our Guide even unto death. Isaiah 53:4; 63:9; John 6:68, Psalm 48:14

THE PRAYER THAT NEVER FAILS: THY WILL BE DONE.

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