

Some Instruction on Prayer

- I. Scripture has much to say about *discretion* (ability to discern or distinguish what is right, befitting or advisable, esp. as regards one's own conduct or action; the quality of being discreet; discernment; prudence, sagacity, circumspection, sound judgment).
- A. The word of God is designed to give knowledge AND discretion. **PRO 1:4.**
 - B. Discretion has a preserving quality. **PRO 2:11.**
 - C. Discretion tempers one's response to offenses. **PRO 19:11.**
 - D. Discretion regulates one's distributions. **PSA 112:5.**
 - E. "...a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment" (**ECC 8:5**).
 - F. Instruction is needed in the area of prayer to facilitate discretion. **LUK 11:1.**
 - 1. "...we know not what we should pray for as we ought..." (**ROM 8:26**).
 - 2. Christ's disciples *knew not* what they asked for. **MAT 20:22.**
 - 3. We may "...ask amiss..." (**JAM 4:3**).
 - 4. We may errantly pray for the benefit of those for whom no such prayer should be made. **JER 7:16; 14:11; 1JO 5:16.**
 - 5. We should examine our ways in prayer as would examine our ways in other things. **LAM 3:40-41 c/w 1TI 2:8.**
 - 6. For the lack of discretion, one may be praying "against the grain" of God's will for oneself and for His kingdom in general.
 - 7. For the lack of discretion, one may be assuming false burdens in prayer.
- II. Consider in overview the model of prayer Jesus Christ gave for disciples. **MAT 6:9-13.**
- A. This instruction immediately followed instruction in how NOT to pray. **vs. 5-8.**
 - B. This prayer is succinct.
 - C. This prayer is simple.
 - D. This prayer magnifies God and His government.
 - E. This prayer treats of our fundamental needs for food, mercy and deliverance from evil.
 - F. In this prayer we do not find a compulsory, specific mention of every detail of concern nor of every person everywhere.
- III. In **MAT 6:9-13**, Christ set forth an appropriate *manner* of prayer.
- A. manner: The way in which something is done or takes place; method of action; mode of procedure.
 - 1. Christ is not teaching that this is an exclusive requisite scripted prayer.
 - 2. Christ prayed differently than this at times and advised His disciples of other prayers. **MAT 9:38; 24:20.**
 - 3. Christ even altered this prayer's form in **LUK 11:2-4.**
 - 4. This manner of prayer juxtaposes the unacceptable manners of prayer in **vs. 5-8.**
 - a. Two things are condemned in **vs. 5-8**: vain-glory and vain repetition.
 - b. Hypocrites pray for show and for men's approval.
c/w **MAT 23:5; JOH 12:43.**
 - c. Hypocrites and heathen think quantity and formula superior to sincerity.
c/w **1KI 18:26; MAT 23:14.**
 - d. This does not condemn all repetition or lengthy prayer.
 - (1) Christ repeated His words of prayer in the garden. **MAT 26:44.**
 - (2) Christ once prayed all night. **LUK 6:12.**
 - (3) It is *vain* repetition that presumes to move deity by monotony and

it is *prodigious* length that are condemned.

- B. “...Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (v. 9).
1. God is the Father of all things in a creative sense (**1CO 8:5-6; ACT 17:28**) but rabbits and reprobates cannot make acceptable prayer.
 2. Christ was here teaching His *disciples* (**MAT 5:1-2**) which implies a spiritual relationship to God by grace and covenant which is not shared by all men.
EPH 1:3-6 ct/w JOH 8:44.
 - a. His elect cry unto Him. **LUK 18:7.**
 - b. By *the spirit of adoption* we cry, “Abba, Father.” **ROM 8:15; GAL 4:6.**
 3. God deals with His elect in a special fatherly sense. **2CO 6:17-18.**
 - a. As a Father, He is concerned with our needs (**MAT 6:31-32**) and gives good gifts to those who approach Him on His terms. **MAT 7:7-11; HEB 11:6.**
 - b. As a Father, He chastens us as needed. **HEB 12:6-7.**
 - c. As a Father, He pities us. **PSA 103:13-14.**
 - d. As a Father, He spares His faithful children. **MAL 3:16-17.**
 - e. He is to believers much more than a Creator and fearful Judge!
 4. He is in heaven.
 - a. We pray to Him there without concern to a “father” in Rome or any other place in this world. **MAT 23:9.**
 - b. That He is our heavenly father admits to His sovereignty over all things, including ourselves and our wills. **PSA 115:3; PHIL 2:12-13.**
 - c. That He is in heaven reinforces Christ's warnings against prodigious, long prayers. **ECC 5:1-2.**
 5. “Hallowed (sanctified, blessed) be thy name” is an expression of desire and worship.
 - a. In our prayers we ought to seek the glory of the Father's name as did Christ. **JOH 12:28.**
 - b. It is His name that is blessed and revered (**PSA 111:9**) and should never be taken in vain. **EXO 20:7.**
 - c. Those who call upon His name should make mention that his name is exalted. **ISA 12:4.**
- C. “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (v. 10).
1. “Thy kingdom come” is the imperative voice, subjunctive mood (an idiomatic supplication expressing a state of desirability or necessity).
 - a. kingdom: Kingly function, authority, or power; sovereignty, supreme rule; the position or rank of a king, kingship.
 - b. We should desire and pray for the kingdom of God.
 - (1) Pray for the church which is His kingdom in this world. **MAT 16:18-19.**
 - (2) Seek His kingdom and its character above all else. **ROM 14:17 c/w MAT 6:33.**
 - (3) Pray for the eternal, heavenly kingdom's arrival. **2PE 1:11; 3:13.**
 2. “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”
 - a. God's will in heaven is absolute. **DAN 4:35.**
 - b. The angels worship Him and do His bidding, even warring against evil spirits. **PSA 103:19-21; DAN 10:20.**
 - c. The redeemed worship Him also and are told to rest. **REV 7:9-10; 6:11.**
 - d. These are core elements of the submitted believer's life now in the church:

- worship, obedience, warfare, rest. These we ought to desire from God.
- e. Above all else, God's will is to be desired above our own, as Christ showed us (**MAT 26:39**) and we should be satisfied with His management. **2CO 12:7-10.**
- D. "Give us this day our daily bread" (v. 11).
1. This plea admits that all belongs to God and we are beholding to Him for supply. **1CH 29:11-12.**
 2. "...THIS day..." shows us that we should not fret about future needs, especially to the neglect of spiritual values. **MAT 6:31-34.**
 3. "...our daily bread" reminds us that simple fare is sufficient; we need not *fare sumptuously every day* (**LUK 16:19**). Remember **PRO 30:8-9; 15:17; 17:1.**
 4. "We ask for *our* bread; that teaches us honesty and industry: we do not ask for the bread out of other people's mouths, not the *bread of deceit* (Pro 20:17), not the *bread of idleness* (Pro 31:27), but the bread honestly gotten." (Matthew Henry)
- E. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (v. 12).
1. The debt here is a debt owed to the law of God for sin. c/w **LUK 11:4.**
 2. God's fatherly, temporal forgiveness of our sins is affected by our treatment of others who sin against us and repent. **MAT 6:14-15; 18:21-35; JAM 2:13.**
 3. Christ's mercy in forgiving us is our incentive and pattern. **EPH 4:32.**
- F. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (v. 13).
1. This is a prayer that is based upon a correct understanding of God.
 - a. God will never lead someone into temptation in the sense of alluring them to do evil. **JAM 1:12-14.**
 - b. God will lead us into temptation in the sense of putting us in a position of testing. **GEN 22:1, 12 c/w HEB 11:17; MAT 4:1; 1PE 1:6-7.**
 2. Temptations should be expected and defended against by prayer. **MAT 26:41; PSA 19:13; 119:33.**
 3. Temptations are not unique, irresistible or without a way of escape. **1CO 10:13.**
 4. God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations:
 - a. by exhorting them to put on Christ and avoid making provision for the flesh. **ROM 13:14.**
 - b. by instructing them to submit to Him and resist the Devil by faith. **JAM 4:7 c/w 1PE 5:8-9.**
 - c. by direct interruption of their folly if necessary. **2PE 2:7-9 c/w GEN 19:16.**
 5. God does not promise to rapture us from this world and its temptations prior to Christ's return but He does promise to honor faithful desire for holiness. **JOH 17:15; 1JO 2:14; 5:4, 18.**
 6. "...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."
 - a. The expectation of victorious living is based upon the sovereign rule of God over Satan. **JOB 1:12.**
 - b. The wicked can do no more than God allows. **PRO 21:1 c/w JOB 38:11.**
 - c. God's kingdom, power and glory has been given to Christ because of His victory over death. **MAT 28:18; 1PE 1:21; HEB 2:9.**
 - d. His victory is the basis for our victory over this world. **ROM 6:9-11.**

IV. One of the most important duties of a minister of Jesus Christ is to set forth His burdens in contrast

to the burdens that Satan, other men, and our own faulty thinking would cause us to bear. These latter are imaginations that need to be *cast down*, per **2CO 10:5**.

- A. Following Christ is not a burden-less proposition but His burden is bearable. **MAT 11:29-30**.
- B. Christianity is a *reasonable* (rational, not absurd or ridiculous, not going beyond the limit assigned by reason, not extravagant or excessive) service. **ROM 12:1**.
 - 1. When the apostles were faced with excessive secondary responsibilities, they said unto the disciples, "...It is NOT REASON that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables" (**ACT 6:2**).
 - 2. Grace and faith are commensurate with a *sound mind* (a mind in full accordance with fact, reason or good sense). **2TI 1:7**.
 - 3. We need deliverance from "...unreasonable and wicked men..." (**2TH 3:2**), including those who would heap absurd, ridiculous or excessive burdens upon believers, as did the Pharisees. **MAT 23:4**.
- C. Recall that where God might expect much of us, and we are willing but actually hindered, "...it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (**2CO 8:12**). c/w **MAR 14:8**.
- D. These are legitimate factors in the area of prayer.
 - 1. Jesus once "...continued all night in prayer to God" (**LUK 6:12**), but is it reasonable that He expects this to be a constant model for all believers?
 - 2. We are told to "Pray without ceasing" (**1TH 5:17**), but is it reasonable to conclude that every saint should be constantly praying? c/w **LUK 11:1**.
 - 3. We read of widows that prayed *night and day* (**LUK 2:37; 1TI 5:5**), but is it reasonable to conclude that every believer (or even every widow) should do basically nothing but pray?
 - 4. Is it reasonable to expect that believers should be praying for every specific need of every specific member of the church by name every time they go to prayer?
 - 5. Inasmuch as prayers are to be made for all saints (**EPH 6:18**), is it reasonable to expect that believers should be praying for every specific need of every saint they know by name every time they go to prayer?
- E. Have you ever felt overwhelmed with all the prayer requests that friends, family or "causes" request of you?
- F. Have you ever entertained the notion that the very fabric of civil society is hinged upon your personal prayers for the remedying of all injustice?
- G. Have you ever felt obligated to honor prayer requests for the health or prosperity of someone you don't even know?

V. Here are some areas where knowledge and discretion are needed in our prayer life.

- A. What about the idea that the more people we have praying for something, the more likely it is that the prayer will be answered?
 - 1. What about **JAM 5:16**, "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"?
 - 2. Here is a single prayer made by a single man which avails much.
 - 3. See **JAM 5:17-18; GEN 20:7; 1SAM 7:5-10**.
 - 4. The idea of getting lots of people to pray for something is fed by the mistaken notion of "prayer power."
 - a. The reasoning is that if the power is in prayer, then more prayers would mean more power.

- b. “Prayer power” is not a Scriptural expression.
 - c. The power is not in prayer but in God Who hears prayer. As such, our confidence should be in God, not in prayer. **1JO 5:14-15.**
 - d. If a multitude are in agreement on a wrong petition, it does not make their petition acceptable. They may well receive an answer in judgment. **PSA 106:14-15.**
- B. Should we indiscriminately pray for the health or prosperity of people we don't even know?
- 1. What if that person is a fool who would be destroyed by prosperity? **PRO 1:32.**
 - 2. What if that person is suffering in the flesh for disobedience to God? **2CH 26:19.**
 - 3. Our first concern about any person should be their salvation from sin and ignorance unto the obedience of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the great blessing we should pray for. **ACT 3:25-26.**
 - 4. What profit would there be for a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul? **MAR 8:36.**
 - 5. Sometimes it takes ill-health or the threat of death to save the soul. **NUM 21:6-7; PSA 78:34.**
 - 6. John's prayer for Gaius was “...that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (**3JO 1:1-2**).
 - a. Mind that this was a prayer for a faithful believer whom John knew as such.
 - b. Prosperity of soul should be our first concern in praying for other believers; how much more so should it be for those whom we do not even know?
 - 7. A suggested prayer for people we don't know: “Lord, you know best the state of that person's soul and if health or prosperity are in the best interests of the soul, so grant. And if not, then withhold as You see fit.”
- C. Sometimes we are asked to pray for unconverted family or friends when they are facing surgeries or major health issues.
- 1. I have striven to make such prayers, both in public and in private, to be for the sake of the faithful saint who is affected by what their unconverted acquaintance is facing. Ergo, I am really praying for God to have mercy upon you.
 - 2. When it came to praying for deliverance from evil, Christ prayed for His own, not for the world. **JOH 17:9, 15.**
 - 3. The unconverted need our preaching more than our prayers for their health. It is by preaching that faith comes so that unbelievers may call upon God for deliverance. **ROM 10:13-17.**
 - 4. The most important things that unconverted souls need are repentance and faith, not successful medical treatment.
 - 5. If unbelievers reject our preaching, God will not hear their prayers for deliverance in their calamity. **PRO 1:20-33; 28:9.**
 - 6. Recall that when Judah continually refused to heed the preaching of God's servants, Jeremiah was told to NOT pray for them. **JER 7:13-16; 11:10-14; 14:10-12.**
 - 7. If unbelievers regard our church enough to solicit our prayers, why do they not attend our church?
 - 8. Someone might say, “If we pray for someone's healing and they are healed, they might want to come to our church.” But we should not want someone to join our church because of our prayers for them but rather for what Jesus Christ did for sinners on the cross and for what He expects of all men: repentance. **ACT 17:30.**
- D. We are told to pray for all men and for those in authority “...that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (**1TI 2:1-2**).

1. The “we” here is the church, the saints.
 2. Obviously, we cannot pray for *every specific person in particular* in or out of authority.
 3. What we are actually praying for here is not the prosperity of all men and all in authority but for the wellbeing of the church of Jesus Christ!
 4. If others' prosperity means our wellbeing, then God grant it.
 5. If others' judgment means our wellbeing, then God grant that.
 6. We are praying that God would so order men that our godly, honest conversation would be attended by a quiet, peaceable existence.
 7. See **JER 29:7**.
- E. We are commanded to be “...praying always with all prayer...and supplication for all saints” (**EPH 6:18**).
1. Saints are holy persons. This is the term Paul uses to designate baptized believers, the members of the local church.
 - a. Even though saints are holy, they still have needs for salvation and mercy. **PSA 86:1-3**.
 - b. Saints in general on earth are the targets of Satan's attacks and should thus be prayed for. **REV 12:17; 14:12; 13:7; 18:24**.
 2. **EPH 6:18** commands prayer not only for ourselves but for all saints, i.e., all members of all churches everywhere, from the least to the greatest.
 - a. We cannot possibly know and name them all but we can pray for them in general terms.
 - b. Mind that the model prayer of **MAT 6:9-13** is in the first person *plural* (“our,” “us”).
 - (1) As such, it is supplication for *all saints* as Paul instructs.
 - (2) Have you ever wondered how you could obey **EPH 6:18** if Paul intended that we are to pray for the specific name and need of every saint, given the limitations of knowledge, time, energy and conflicting obligations? Wonder no more.
 - (3) Mind how that in this prayer the glory and will of God are foremost.
 - c. A review of Paul's prayers shows that he focused on spiritual concerns (**1CO 1:4-6**), and he is our pattern to follow for the abiding of the God of peace. **PHIL 4:9**.
 - d. We can, like Paul, pray in general terms for all saints, emphasizing spiritual concerns and knowing that fleshly concerns come as a bonus. **MAT 6:33**.
 - e. The conflicts that other believers face should be included in our prayers for saints. **HEB 13:2**.
- F. We are commanded to pray for Christ's preachers. **EPH 6:19-20; COL 4:2-4; 2TH 3:1-2**.
1. These are ultimately prayers for the conversion of souls by preaching.
 2. Praying for evangelism is a critical part of our warfare since Satan hates the spread of the gospel which turns men from his power unto God. **ACT 26:15-20**.
 3. When Peter was imprisoned, “...prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him” (**ACT 12:4**).
 - a. This was prayer for a preacher's life so that he could continue the work of Christ.
 - b. This was prayer which accorded with Paul's instruction, above.
 - c. This was prayer made by a single church for a preacher they knew.
 - d. There is a big difference between a whole church praying for an apostle of

- Christ to be spared and a whole church praying for the successful surgery of some member's neighbor's first cousin's son whom they do NOT know.
- e. Paul's instruction to the churches to pray for evangelism was for specific churches to pray for ministers that they knew.
 - f. We are not required to be informed of every minister or every “ministry” so as to labor in prayer for all in specific detail.
 - g. Pray specifically for the ministers you know and for the cause of Christ in general.
- G. God has divided up the work of His kingdom among local churches so that no one man or group has to do all the work, including the work of praying.