

Brian Chesemore SESSION 2 | Prayer

I. INTRODUCTION

The Habits of Grace are his “regular channels...the well worn pathways along which he is so often pleased to pass and pour out his goodness on those waiting expectantly. The chief thoroughfares are his word, his church, and prayer. Or his voice, his body, and his ear.”¹

Lord, teach us to pray. Luke 11.1

II. WHAT IS PRAYER? PRAYER IS OUR PART OF THE CONVERSATION

“Wonder of wonders, not only does he express himself and bid us hear his voice, but he wants to hear ours. The speaking God not only has spoken, but he also listens—he stops, he stoops, he wants to hear from you. He stands ready to hear your voice. Christian, you have the ear of God. We call it prayer.”²

Each day, God by his Word, continues to speak to you and me—initiating the conversation, beckoning our response.

“Our prayers should arise out of immersion in the Scripture. We should ‘plunge ourselves into the sea’ of God’s language, the Bible. We should listen, study, think, reflect, and ponder the Scriptures until there is an answering response in our hearts and minds...that response to God’s speech is then truly prayer and should be given to God.”³

When we think about prayer, let’s think of ourselves as responders. God has spoken and as we speak, we have the ear of God.

“Prayer, for the Christian is not merely talking to God, but responding to the One who has initiated toward us. He has spoken first. This is not a conversation we start, but a relationship into which we’ve been drawn. His voice breaks the silence. Then in prayer, we speak to the God who has spoken. Out asking and pleading and requesting originate not from our emptiness, but his fullness.”⁴

¹ Mathis, David. *The Habits of Grace*. Pg. 93

² Mathis, David. *The Habits of Grace*. Pg. 94

³ Keller, *Prayer*, 55.

⁴ Mathis, David. *The Habits of Grace*. Pg. 94

III. WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

A. The Example of God's Old Testament Saints:

B. The Example of Jesus:

- Luke 6.12: "In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God."
- 11.1: "Now Jesus was praying in a certain place." (see also Lk. 9.28; 10.21)
- Hebrews 5.7: "in the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears..."

C. The Example of the Early Church

- Acts 6.4 The Apostles were devoted to the ministry of the word and prayer
- Acts 7.60 Stephen's final words
- Paul's letters contain numerous prayers (Eph. 1.16-23; Phil. 1.9-11; Col. 1.9-12)

The Bible preaches to us the vital and responsive role prayer plays in the life of the believer. God acts to save. We respond in faith. Prayer is a central expression of faith.

D. The Example through Church History⁵

"Even in the busiest periods of the Reformation Luther averaged two hours of prayer daily." –Andrew W. Kosten

It is, therefore by the benefit of prayer that we reach those riches which are laid up for us with the Heavenly Father. For there is a communion of men with God."
John Calvin

"I love prayer. It is that which buckles on all the Christian's armor." Matthew Henry

"I fear the prayer of John Knox more than the combined armies of Europe."
Queen Mary of Scots

⁵ The quotes in this section come from Joel Beeke and Brian Najapfour's, *Taking Hold of God*. Reformation Heritage Books, 2011.

IV. WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF PRAYER?

A. We get God

“It is not wrong to want God’s gifts and ask for them. Most prayers in the Bible are for the gifts of God. But ultimately every gift should be desired because it shows us and brings us more of him...When this world totally fails, the ground for joy remains. God. Therefore, surely every prayer for life and health and home and family and job and ministry in this world in secondary. And the great purpose of prayer is to ask that—in and through all his gifts—God would be our joy.”⁶

“Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.” James 4.8

“You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father! The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Ro. 8.15-16

B. We get God's provision

- Forgiveness for sins
- Assurance of salvation
- Provision of peace
- Provision of persevering grace
- Provision of boldness and confidence
- Provision of healing

V. HOW SHOULD WE PRAY?

A. Pray in Secret: Matthew 6.5-6

- Create your prayer closet
- Begin with Bible
- Prayer that is Fixed: Adore, Confess, Thanks, Supplication (Ask!)
- Prayer that is Free: Let the prayers of Scripture serve “as guides for the shaping and expressing of our desires toward God.”⁷
- Keep it Fresh: Try journaling prayers for a month, try fasting a meal and instead going for a walk to pray.

B. Pray with Constancy

“When we follow the lead of the Scriptures, we not only practice prayer in private, but take its spirit of dependence and trust into the rest of the day, and

⁶ Piper, John. *When I Don't Desire God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway: 2004) pg. 142-143 as quoted in Mathis's *Habits of Grace*.

⁷ Mathis, David. *The Habits of Grace*. Pg. 104

into times of focused prayer together with fellow believers.”⁸

“Prayer is part and parcel of an ongoing relationship with God.”⁹

“Pray without ceasing...” 1 Thess. 5.17

“Be constant in prayer...” Rom 12.12

“Continue steadfastly in prayer.” Col. 4.2

“These texts charge us not to stay all day in the closet, but to carry a posture of prayer in the soul as we give ourselves fully to our daily tasks and engagements—and that in a moment, we be ready to go consciously godward in the car, waiting in line, as we walk, before a meal, in the midst of a difficult conversation, and in anything else.”¹⁰

C. Pray with Company

Jesus said, “Pray then like this, ‘Our Father...’” Matt. 6.9

The clear pattern in the book of Acts (1.14; 2.42; 4.24; 6.6; 12.5; 12.12; 13.3; 14.23; 16.25; 20.36)

VI. PUTTING THE HABITS OF GRACE TOGETHER

A. A sample approach to spending time with the Lord

- Pray a brief prayer for God’s presence and help such as:

“Father, I come to you now through the way opened to me by your Son’s sacrifice. I come to you in the presence of your Spirit. I pray with the Psalmist in Psalm 119.18, “Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”

- Read a chapter of Scripture.
- Take some time to meditate on a specific verse or two. Write it down. Pray for a minute or for an extended time from that verse(s).
- Pray a fixed-form of prayer that you find helpful
 - A Psalm: Read and pray through a psalm. Let it’s content shape you.
 - The ACTS model: Regain potentially missing components.
 - The Lord’s Prayer: Double-click on each line of the prayer.

⁸ Mathis, David. The Habits of Grace. Pg. 108

⁹ Mathis, David. The Habits of Grace. Pg. 94

¹⁰ Mathis, David. The Habits of Grace. Pg. 108

- Paul's prayers: Perhaps the surest path to gospel-centered prayers.
- Thank your Father that he has heard your prayers. Ask for grace to enjoy his presence and "pray without ceasing".

"Prayer turns theology into experience. Through it we sense his presence and receive his joy, his love, his peace and confidence, and thereby we are changed in attitude, behavior, and character."¹¹

B. Ways to Grow as a Church in Prayer

- Recommit ourselves to private prayer this fall.
- Combine scripture with prayer (conversation with God)
- Use Elexio to Pray for your fellow church members
- Find a way to pray with others: In Community Group, on Sundays, Monthly Prayer Night—begins September 11th
- Come to next week's class

¹¹ Keller, Timothy. Prayer. Pg. 80.