

Living Word
November 18, 2007
What is Prayer?

Make a memory card with 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and ...

One of the most essential tenets of the Christian faith is prayer. Jesus prayed like a madman. Often times we see Jesus *withdrawing* to communicate with the Lord. In Paul's Epistles, he often promotes the importance of humbling oneself to their knees.

What is prayer?

Talking with God? Is it asking for forgiveness? Is it asking for help? Is it praising God's holiness? Is it laying your heart out there and confessing your sins?

The definition of *prayer* is: address a solemn request or expression of thanks to a deity or other object of worship.

Or the Westminster Shorter Catechism defines it as:

"an 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 acknowledgment of his mercies"

Put plainly prayer is *communication between God and us*.

Now when we think of communication though, is communication a one-way medium, or do both parties communicate?

Sometimes people make prayer too big of a deal. Sometimes people are afraid to pray. People who know God, who believe in Jesus. Yet they are hesitant to speak with God. I guess this is somewhat biblical, yet we are called to pray. We are to understand that it is just speaking to God, and He wants to hear from us. Big fancy words and long, drawn out sentences don't please God. Like all things, it's about the attitude you take when coming to the Lord in humble prayer.

Sometimes people make prayer no big deal. For example, saying a prayer for a million dollars. Sometimes people forget that we are communicating with the Almighty here. That we actually have a direct line with the Creator and Sustainer of *all* life. Prayer is supposed to be taken seriously. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't enjoy it. Prayer should be a delight. It should be a wonderful thing that you do all the time.

In prayer, we can discover and discern the Will of God.

There are four major areas of prayer that Scripture supports. They are: Adoration and Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, and Petition and Intercession. In adoration and praise, we recognize God's Magnitude, Magnificence, and Sovereignty. We lift up His name. In thanksgiving, we thank Him for his many blessings, answered prayers, gift of salvation, etc. In confession, we acknowledge our sinfulness, we bring to Him our shortcomings and repent. Lastly, in petition and intercession, we ask. Petition is asking for ourselves, whereas intercession is for others. We ask for knowledge, for discernment, for help, for guidance, for many things. Sometimes for us, other times for others.

I think there is a negative idea of praying for ourselves, but it is totally wrong. We are supposed to pray for ourselves. Jesus prayed for Himself often. Just as He prayed for others. But it is not selfish to pray for ourselves.

We can pray to God, and only God. Now that means we can pray to anyone in the Godhead, but not to any other people. We should pray to Jesus, to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, we are supposed to pray to certain persons for certain things, but we won't hit on that too much. The important thing to know is that God loves it when we pray.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 - Pray without ceasing or all the time.

Ephesians 6:10-19

What is this passage of Scripture titled? (The Armor of God) What does it mean that we are to *wear* armor? Why do we have to *arm* ourselves?

What are some of the pieces of the Armor of God?

Do you think it's important to note that prayer is last on the list?

How are we supposed to pray (verse 18)?

What does it mean to *pray in the Spirit*? What *Spirit*?