



Pray: Growing in our Direct Access to God

Sermon Notes for Message #2 DDM: When Do We Pray (1 Thess. 5:17) – Pastor Jeff

- In our modern world, we have access to every conceivable means of communication, yet age-old prayer remains the most critical and comprehensive communication resource known to man because it is always available (Eph. 6:18: “*prayer at all times*”), always applicable (Phil 4:6: “*in everything by prayer...*”), always accessible (Heb. 4:16: “*draw near to the throne of grace in time of need*”), and always amazing (Eph. 3:20: “*able to do more abundantly beyond all that we can think or ask*”).
 - If we need supernatural help (and we do) and God is our supreme Helper (and He is), then we cannot expect to thrive (as sufficiently supplied saints) in our walk of faith without pouring out our hearts to God (Ps. 62:8). But when should we pray? When there is a need? Crisis? At scheduled times?
 - God answers the “*when*” question in two ways:
- ❶ **Pray habitually** (1 Thess. 5:17 and other selected Scriptures)
- Sometimes we tend to think for prayer to be appropriate, it must require a certain posture or location or circumstance or time. When you examine our Lord’s prayer life in the gospels, we learn much by His example and instruction:
 - Jesus always prayed to His heavenly Father showing His intimate relationship with His Father in the Godhead.
 - Jesus’ prayers did not make Him passive or inactive (He prayed, taught, healed, and worked).
 - Jesus prayed by Himself as a habit. It was His custom (Luke 22:39) and He got away from the distractions (Matt. 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42; 5:15-16; 6:12; 9:18; 22:39-41).
 - Jesus prayed in community (Matt. 17:1; 18:19; Mark 9:2; Luke 9:28).
 - Jesus prayed before meals (Mark 6:41; 8:7; 14:22; Luke 24:30).
 - Jesus prayed with thanksgiving (Matt. 11:25).
 - Jesus prayed before and around important events and decisions because it was His desire to “*do the will of His Father*”: At His baptism (Luke 3:21); before choosing His disciples (Luke 6:12-13); before asking His disciples about His identity: “*who do people say that I am*” (Luke 9:18ff); before extending His famous invitation, “*Come to Me...*” (Matt. 11:28, Lk 10:21); before He taught the Lord’s prayer (Lk 11:1); at Lazarus’ tomb (John 11:41-42); for Peter, before His denial (Lk. 22:32); with great intensity in Gethsemane before His crucifixion (Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; Mark 14:32, 35-36, 39; Luke 22:42).
 - Jesus prays for His followers on earth (John 17:9-26) and from heaven as our High Priest (Heb. 7:25; 9:24; Rom. 8:34)
 - Jesus believed and taught that God worked through prayer (Matt. 7:7-11; 21:22; Mark 9:28-29; 11:24, John 14:13-14; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24).
 - BUT notably Jesus “*would often slip away to the wilderness and pray*” (Luke 5:16) and He instructed His disciples through a parable that “*at all times we ought to pray and not lose heart*” (Luke 18:1)

- As Jesus instructed and modelled, the New Testament writers emphasized that prayer should be a continual exercise as well (1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2 – note the word “*devoted*”). So, praying is not about a particular posture or location or circumstance or set time, but most importantly about a continual devotion.
 - This teaches us to relate our lives to God as it unfolds in the moment.
 - This motivates us to develop a constant God-awareness that looks to the Lord in any and every part of life whether it be a word of praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, petition for yourself or others.

② Pray honorably (Selected Scriptures)

- God is highly concerned that He be rightly represented, respected, and revered for who He is and how we approach Him. He’s not some cosmic concierge just waiting to wait on us and meet our every need (though as our heavenly Father, He generously meets our needs).
- Sometimes God doesn’t listen to the prayers of His people (Deut. 3:26) or did not want His people to be prayed for (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11). He can be angry with our prayers (Psalm 80:4).
- God provides some ground-rules for approaching Him in prayer and they can be categorized in two ways:
 - 1: Adopt the prayer boosters (“...*the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much*” – Jms 5:16b)
 - A righteous life (1 Pet. 3:12 quoting Ps. 34:15-16; Jesus in Heb. 5:7)
 - A believing heart (Matt. 21:21-22)
 - A Word-saturated life (John 15:7)
 - A God’s will focus (1 John 5:14-15)
 - A persistent attitude (Luke 18:1, 7; Eph. 6:18; Matt. 7:7-8, Luke 11:9-10)
 - An alert mind (Matt. 26:41; Luke 21:36)
 - 2: Avoid the prayer busters
 - Unconfessed sin (Psalm 66:1; Isa. 59:2)
 - Unclean motives (James 4:3)
 - Unchecked pride (Elihu in Job 35:12-13)
 - Unwilling ear to the Word (Prov. 28:9)
 - Unresponsive husbands (1 Pet. 3:7)
 - Unforgiving spirit (Matt. 6:12, 14-15)
 - Unbelieving heart (James 1:6-8)
 - Unmet needs of others (Prov. 21:13)
 - Unoffered petitions (James 4:2)