

# Is Prayer An Essential Requirement In Worship?

## Bible Answers About Worship

As the church was established in Acts the second chapter we read of the Christians worshipping in harmony with God's will. We read, "And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42 NAS). Among the acts of worship mentioned is "prayer."

Unfortunately there are many in our modern world that refuse to believe that God hears and answers prayers. These skeptics consider prayer a delusion. Even among Christians there are many who do not make use of prayer as God intended. With them prayer is often infrequent and ineffective. While they say they believe in prayer, they act as if they do not. Perhaps this is because they have never been taught from the Scriptures the full significance of prayer and the major role that it can play in the life of the Christian and the church.

All of the great people of God in the Old Testament were mighty in prayer, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, Hannah, and Anna. It is quite evident also both in the teachings of Jesus and in the life which He lived that He believed in prayer. The people whom Jesus left behind believed in prayer. The early church also believed in prayer. (Cf. Mk. 1:35; Acts 1:14, 24; Acts 2:42; Acts 12:5; Acts 14:23)

Our belief concerning the Almighty, as to who, and what kind of Being He is, will determine our estimate of the value of prayer. If the Almighty is only the sum of all things—an impersonal Force that moves the Universe—then prayer is indeed meaningless. But if He is a Personal God—the Father of our spirits—who is deeply concerned in our welfare, and who has revealed Himself as a God who hears and answers prayer, then prayer has infinite value.

It should be understood that prayer is not only commanded by the highest authority, and commended by the highest examples, but it is rooted and grounded in man's moral and religious nature. It is impossible to conceive of the exercise of man's religious nature without prayer, in some of its elements, as invocation, supplication, intercession and thanksgiving. But why should man have a religious nature if it is to find no natural expression? Prayer, then, is essential to the integrity of man's constitution as a moral and religious being. To oppose it, therefore, is to make war on human nature as well as on a divine ordinance, and to neglect it is to slight both a supreme duty and a royal privilege.

We can talk to God about anything we "need" (Mat. 6:8); but, at no time are we to pray out of selfishness and "greed" (Jas. 4:3). That being true, the Lord's "Model Prayer," implicitly presents us with several ways to avoid petty and personal desires when we pray.

"In this manner, therefore, pray: our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amem" (Matt 6:9-13 NKJ).

First, we should pray for the "people of God: "Our Father in heaven.... Your kingdom come." This "kingdom" is identified as the Lord's church (Matt. 16:18-19; Heb. 12:23, 28). The kingdom has already come as the Scriptures clearly show (Col. 1:13). However, we should be interested in the growth of the kingdom. We need to follow the lead of Jesus in putting the church ahead of our personal desires.

Second, we should pray for the "will of God being done on earth as it is in heaven." We are to live by "every word.... of God" (Matt. 4:4).

Third, we should pray for the provisions of God: "Give us this day our daily bread." This is a prayer of dependence manifesting "submission," not selfish "ambition." It is a prayer for the things we need today, not the things we want tomorrow.

Fourth, we should pray for the pardon of God: "Forgive us our debts (sins) as we forgive our debtors (those who sin against us). To pray for forgiveness promotes a selfless posture in prayer in that it reminds us of our "disgrace" and our need for God's grace.

Fifth, we should pray for the protection of God: "Deliver us from the evil one." God has already fought against Satan and won. He knows how to deal with the devil. We can, therefore, maintain a selfless posture in prayer by trusting in God's "care" and in his "commands."

There are others things for which to pray. We need to understand and appreciate the power of prayer and use it both in the public assemblies and in our private lives. As one poet expressed it:

*"More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."*

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