

Biblical Theology

U2L16: Prayer

Defining Prayer

- Definition: Prayer is personal communication with God.
 - Requests, intercession, confession, adoration, praise and thanksgiving.
- Using Lord's Prayer to Define:
 1. **Prayer is not mere religion.**
 - *Matthew 6:5-6 - And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.*
 2. **Prayer is not mere ritual.**
 - *Matthew 6:7-8 - And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*
 3. **Prayer is active relationship with Holy God.**
 - *Matthew 6:9 - Pray like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."*
 4. **Prayer is verbal submission to God.**
 - *Matthew 6:10 - Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*
 5. **Prayer is expressed dependence on God for every need.**
 - *Matthew 6:11-12 - Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*
 6. **Prayer is seeing from a spiritual perspective.**
 - *Matthew 6:13 - And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

Obstacles in Understanding Prayer

- Balancing Theology
 - ***If God knows everything, why should I tell him what I need?***
 - Prayer is not an informational exchange, it's a relational exchange.
 - Bringing your needs to God decreases ungodly stress and anxiety.
 - *Philippians 4:6 - Do not be anxious...present your requests to God.*
 - ***Why should I pray if God is immutable?***
 - God is able to respond to prayer while maintaining immutability
 - God responds differently to different situations that may change as a result of prayer.
 - ***Why should I pray if God is sovereign?***
 - God's sovereignty and providence factors in human choice and requests.
 - *Ephesians 1:4-5 - For he chose us in him before the creation of the world*
 - ***Why do some prayers go unanswered?***
 - God is omniscient - He knows what's best
 - God is immutable - Asking to do something that is not in keeping with who he is.
 - God is sovereign - God is in control.

Effectiveness of Prayer

- Factors that impact effectiveness of prayer:

1. Praying God's Will

- 1 John 5:14-15 - ... we ask anything according to his will he hears us.
- John 15:7 - If you abide in me...ask whatever you wish, and it will be done...
- Matthew 26:39 – "...not as I will, but as you will."

2. Praying with Faith

- Mark 11:24 - believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.
- Matthew 21:22 - whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."
- James 1:5-8 - But let him ask in faith, with no doubting,

3. Praying with Jesus: Our Mediator

- 1 Timothy 2:5 - there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ
- Hebrews 4:14-16 - high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus

4. Praying with Holy Spirit: Our Intercessor

- Romans 8:26-27 - Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings
- Ephesians 6:18 - And pray in the Spirit on all occasions
- Jude 20 - praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love

5. Praying Amidst Right Relationship

- Proverbs 28:9 - even their prayers are detestable.
- 1 Peter 3:12 - his ears are attentive to their prayer
- James 5:16 - The prayer of a righteous person has great power
- Matthew 5:23-24 - First go and be reconciled to them
- 1 Peter 3:7 - so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

6. Continual and Earnest Prayer

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 - pray continually
- Colossians 4:2 - Devote yourselves to prayer
- Hebrews 5:7 - During prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears
- Psalm 88:1-2 - I cry out day and night before you.

7. Praying and Waiting

- Psalm 38:15 - For you, O Lord, do I wait; it is you
- Psalm 130:5-6 - I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope

8. Praying with Others

- Matthew 18:19-20 - two of you agree on earth about anything they ask...
- 1 Timothy 2:8 - men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

9. Praying and Fasting

- Dependence and Self-Discipline

Discussion Questions

1. Do you often struggle with praying? What truths in this lesson will help you most in this regard?
2. When have you had the most effective times of prayer in your life? What were the main contributing factors to this effectiveness?
3. Prayer is more about relationship than getting what we want from God. Does this truth challenge you to approach prayer differently in your own walk before him? How?

Reading Assignment

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem – Chapter 19: Angels