



Biblical Principles of Prayer

Prayer is essential to our daily Christian life. This is what plugged us into the presence of God where we are strengthened, encouraged and empowered for living. All prayers are therapeutic in nature, but the only prayer acceptable to God is the prayer expressed within the biblical framework. This is the prayer we want to pray.

In Matthew 6:5-13 Jesus taught His disciples how to pray.

In this passage, Jesus is not teaching us a pattern of prayer. In fact, nowhere in the Bible where we can find that Jesus taught us a pattern of prayer. Pattern is good but it is not the main thing in prayer. Let's take a look to the two widely known prayers prayer by Jesus. The first one is in the book of Matthew 26, which covered just two verses (39, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." 42 My Father, if it is not possible, for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done",) and the second one is in the book of John 17 covering the whole chapter where Jesus prayed for himself for His disciples and for those who will believe in Him through the teachings of his Disciples. These two prayers vary in length, yet, they are both very touching, heart-warming, intense, and effective and there is no specific pattern they suggest that should be followed.

When Jesus taught His Disciples the Lord's Prayer, He is showing them an example of prayer that reflects several "principles of prayer" relevant to a clear understanding of a biblical prayer.

I. What are the Biblical Principles of Prayer? There are seven:

v. 5-6 ⁵"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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The first principle, "Prayer is privacy with God." PRIVACY is defined as: The quality or state of being apart from company or observation. Freedom from unauthorized intrusion and it is also a place of seclusion.

Two venues where we can have privacy with God

- **Outward venue** is a place where we can be alone in the presence of the Lord without distractions and interruptions. This could be our bedroom, living room, the park, or any place where we can pray free of distraction.
- **Inward venue** is the heart. This venue is the indispensable venue that we need to establish in our lives because this venue provides flexibility which means we can pray everywhere and anytime of the day. To establish this venue, we must clear our hearts from all forms of idolatry (idolatry is anything that take place of God in our lives), we must develop the habit of putting God first in everything we do before we make a move or decision. The best way to do this is by keeping God's Word in our heart.

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Prayer is a private matter between the believer and God their Father. Jesus is advising discretion because according to Him displayed prayer loses its value in the eyes of God and according to the Scripture loses its

reward. Remember that every prayer is measured internally through the intentions of the heart. Self-examination is a needed every time we pray

We should always ask ourselves questions: When we pray...

Are we praying out of a sincere heart or out of an insincere heart?

Are we praying with a humble heart or with a haughty spirit?

Are we praying out of our love for god or out of our love for the praise of men?

Are we praying out of our sincere out of our desire to acquire things from Him?

God perfectly knew the intentions behind every prayer because He sees our hearts. *Jesus said and when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men but when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

II. PRAYER IS INTERACTION WITH GOD

v. 7-8 ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Paganic prayers are repetitive and must be memorized and recited at a given schedule. This prayer is like the prayer prayed by the 400 prophets of the idol god Baal as recorded in First Kings Chapter 18 when they were praying for fire from their god that will burn their sacrifice. This type of prayer is useless and a waste of time because it does not generate answer. The modern equivalent of this prayer is the rosary and all the memorized prayers that people of religion do today. When Jesus said do not be like them is not a command to stop the pagans from praying their prayers nor it is a command for us to straighten up their prayers we are

never authorized to do that. Rather, He is commanding us to pray the right prayer which is interactive in nature. It must be a dialogue not a monologue. What God wants is to converse with us not to listen to our recital and one sided ranting.

Prayer is interaction with God. It is not a one-way but a two-way communication with Him. It is not a recital where you stand in His presence and recite your memorized prayer. Prayer is engaging God into a conversation.

When we interact with God we tell Him our feelings, fears, desire, frustrations, our heartaches, even our wants while He listens. On the other hand as we interact with Him, He also tells us through the Bible His will, promises, warnings, even His instructions how we should live our lives so that we are best positioned to receive His answer to our prayers.

In Exodus Chapter Three, Moses is engaged in lengthy dialogue with God in a burning bush at Mt. Horeb. I believe that this is the best example of biblical prayer in the Old Testament.

I am not sure if Moses was aware then that Mt. Horeb is also known as the mountain of God, but I am sure that deep within His heart there was a longing led him to that mountain hoping somehow that God would speak to him. His longing was however granted because God showed up in a burning bush. The best part of this encounter is the lengthy interaction that transpired between them that resolves the issue of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian enslavement for 400 years with Moses as the deliverer.

Jesus said And when you pray, do not keep of 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.

Prayer is not just asking. Jesus is pressing up to interact with the Father because when we do, we will not only receive what we asked, we will also receive more than what we asked for. The Bible is indispensable in an interactive kind of prayer because it is the one that provides substance to a biblical prayer.

III. PRAYER STARTS WITH GOD AND ENDS WITH GOD (v. 9a)

v.9 “This, then, is how you should pray:”Our Father in heaven...13...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Prayer is God’s idea. These two verses mentioned above record the opening and the closing phrases of this prayer. The principle here is “Prayer starts with God and ends with God.”

In the New Testament, the three persons in the Godhead were involved in prayer. We address our prayer to the Father, We express it through the Holy Spirit. We close it in the Name of Son “Jesus”

Here are some scriptures that support this principle.

Matthew 6:9 This, then, is how you should pray. Our Father in heaven

Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the minds of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.

John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

John 6:23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

Every prayer that starts with God and ends with God is a prayer that always finds its place in the heart of God the Father.

IV. PRAYER IS INTIMACY WITH GOD v. 9...”Our Father”

In the heart of a father there is always a special space reserved only for his child. And no one else except the child can access this space. I call this space, “space of intimacy.” This space where the father expresses his intimacy to his child by welcoming him and listening to him every time he entered that space for what every reason

When Jesus said when you pray say “Our Father” is an affirmation that God had reserved a special spot in His heart for his children. God will never get tired of listening to us. In fact, He loved that we should always pray because that is the only time where we can commune with Him in spiritual intimacy.

Intimacy is defined as intrinsic, essential, deep and close association, contact or familiarity by two objects.

Prayer is intimacy with God. Jesus commanded us to address God “Our Father” in our prayers because He is indeed our heavenly Father (John 1:12). God is also the loving Father (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). “Our Father,” is the same phrase Jesus use in his prayers.

When Jesus said “This then is how you should pray, “Our Father,” He is showing us the need to call God our Father for that’s what He is to us. A loving, caring, forgiving, and merciful Father who loved and care for us as reflected in the parable of the “Prodigal Son” (Luke 15:11-31).

This is why no matter how far we have ran away from God, no matter how deep the hole we put ourselves into, no matter how big the mistakes we made, not matter how ugly our lives have became because of disobedience and rebellion, His desire to see us come back to intimacy through prayer has not changed and He longs every minute of it.

It is only in prayer that we can truly experience His forgiveness, His love and His power that transforms our weaknesses into strength, our hatred into forgiveness, our tragedy into gain, our failures into victory, and our ugliness into godly beauty.

V. PRAYER IS RECOGNITION OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

9b-10a “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom came...”

God is sovereign. He is All-powerful, All –knowing, All present God. He is the God who created everything out of nothing. He is the God who protected Noah’s Arch against shipwreck from the worst flood in the world. He is the God who made the dried and barren womb of Sarah to produce an heir to Abraham. He is the God who accompanied Joseph from the wilderness of Canaan to the dungeons of Egypt until he became the most powerful ruler of that land. He is the God who parted the Red Sea, when the people of Israel cried out for deliverance from Pharaoh’s advancing army. He is the God in whom nothing is impossible because to Him all things are possible. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our Bible. He is the God who conquered death when He raised Jesus from the grave. He is the God whom Jesus called ABBA FATHER, the God whom we call Father in our prayers.

He is the God who has the power to turn every problem into opportunity, every dead end into fresh start, every failure into fruitfulness, and every defeat into victory. He is the only living and loving God yesterday, today, and forever. And He is only a prayer away.

Every time we pray, we are recognizing the Sovereignty of God.

Jesus said when you pray, “Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come.”

There are three expressions in this segment of this prayer that denotes God’s sovereignty over everything.

The first one is “Who art in heaven “this speaks of the sovereignty of God’s abode over everything.

The second one is “Hallowed be Thy Name” this speaks of the Sovereignty and sanctity of God’s name. Therefore, it is a must that we should respect and honor His name and never use His name in vain.

The third one is “Your kingdom come” this speaks of the reality that the kingdom of God is coming to be established in this world and every time we pray we prepare the way of the coming of that superior and sovereign rule of God. There are two aspects in this coming of God’s rule. The first one is the imminence of its coming. Imminence means unstoppable. The coming of the Kingdom of God is absolute and nobody can stop it. The second aspect is the immanence of its coming. Immanence means it comes, it is staying and nobody can push it around it will remain in place whether the world likes it or not.

If you are listening to the news every day, you will get the impression that the governments of the world seem helpless in dealing with the problems that threatened not only human existence, but also the very existence of the planet itself. The world has been struggling with the problems of wars, terrorism, poverty, and diseases; this is compounded by the worsening problem of global warming.

Furthermore, if you look back in history up to this point of time, the possibility of living in a nice and peaceful world is almost in the threshold of impossibility in spite of the efforts of the world leaders and hundreds and billions of dollars spent every year to correct the problem.

If you look at the future through these facts, you can only say that the future of this earth is bleak and it is heading towards the road of no return.

But, if you look at the future through the TRUTH of the Word of God, in particular the coming of the Kingdom of God, you cannot help but rejoice in the midst of sufferings, and you can shout halleluiah in the midst of hopelessness and pain because the kingdom of God is coming and its coming is imminent and immanent that means it is unstoppable and it is going to stay and nobody...nobody can push it away because the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords Jesus Himself will bring that kingdom down with all its power and He will reign with His righteous right hand. And the sweetest part of this for us is the promise that we will reign with Him. **2**

Timothy 2:12 *if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;*

The coming of the Kingdom of God restores peace and order, restores unity, and restores beauty. Every time we pray we are not only expressing our hearts to God we are also acknowledging His sovereignty over our lives and over everything. And we are preparing the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

VI. PRAYER IS SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD. 10b *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

Jesus said: “When you pray, Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Your kingdom come, ***“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*** This segment of the Lord’s prayer, expresses that the will of God is supreme both in heaven and in earth.

Yet despite of the fact that His will is supreme because we are under the dispensation of His grace, God will never enforce His will on earth without our permission. God will never use His supreme will to intrude into the affairs of men unless we let Him. The Will of God will not intervene in our lives unless we asked Him. That is why Jesus said when you pray ***“your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*** He is making it very clear to us that the fulfillment of the Will of God is contingent on the prayers of His people.

Submission to the will of God is exemplified by Jesus Christ at the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His arrest.

Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will. Matthew 26:39

“My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” Matthew 26:42

Jesus knew that the Father's will is always perfect that is why He willingly and absolutely submitted to it.

We have our own will in every aspect of our lives. God also has His Will over every aspect of our lives. Our will is good but God's will is the best. When we pray God reveals His perfect will and we should submit to it.

VII. PRAYER IS THE PIPELINE THAT CONNECTS US TO THE PROVISION OF GOD.

V.11-13 "Give us this day our daily bread, Forgive us our sins as we forgave those who sinned against us, And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"

In This segment of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is stating very clearly the four basic things that we need daily. They are...

"Give us this day our daily bread" reveals our need for our daily material and financial subsistence.

"Forgive us our sins" reveals our need for our spiritual subsistence.

"And lead us not into temptation" reveals our need for the power of God to stand against all kinds of temptation

"Deliver us from evil" reveals our need for God's total protection against harm, danger, the evil one, and evil influences.

These needs expressed by Jesus within the context of prayer, made it very clear that prayer is the pipeline that connects us to God's abundant provisions.

Matthew 7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ "Which of

you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Base on this challenge that Jesus gave we can conclude that the more we spend time in prayer, the more Divine provisions flow into our lives from the reservoir of God's abundant provision.

Prayer should not be the last resort in our lives. It should be the main ingredient in our every desire, plan, execution, goal, decision. We need to make prayer our utmost priority in life. We need to value prayer more than any precious jewel. We need to guard our prayer life more than life itself because there is no amount of success that can compensate for our failure in prayer.

We should not take our prayer life for granted the cost is too high our survival is at stake let us be prayerful because Prayerfulness multiplies the little that we have to abundantly supply all that we need and even desires. On the other hand Prayerlessness shrinks the many that we have so that we would not even have enough to cover our needs.

There is no shortage of men and women with talents, gifts, even abilities in the Church. We failed to make a difference in the workplace and marketplace, in the lives of our non-believing family, relatives, and friends, not because of the lack of resources, not because of the lack of opportunity, not because of the lack of boldness or courage, but because of the lack of prayer. A crippled prayer life always results to a powerless spiritual life.

Remember this, the distance of our progress and prosperity cannot go beyond the distance of our prayers. The amount of blessings we receive is always in the same amount of prayers we offered.

CONCLUSION:

Note that Prayer has no side effects. The more you pray the better your life would become. Never plan to pray, just pray. Don't wait for the right time to pray because it will never come. Don't hesitate to pray it will become a habit. Don't wait, don't hesitate, by all means just do it, pray when you wake up in the morning, pray during the day, pray before you go to bed, and even when you are in bed pray, even in sleep ask God to engage your spirit in a communion with Him so that even in your dreams you are praying.

Prayerfulness is obedience to God. **Prayerlessness** is rebellion against God.

It is a must then that we have to keep our prayer life healthy by consistently incorporating these seven Basic Principles of prayers in our daily prayers, so that our prayers will become meaningful, fulfilling, delightful, and enjoyable. In this way we can fulfill the Scripture that says, "Pray without ceasing."

It my prayer that through this lesson, we will continue to be inspired to keep prayer as our first priority, our first course of action, if every decision we make, in every job we take, and in every option we choose.