



***INSTITUTE OF  
SPIRITUAL FORMATION***

**Spring Semester - 2010**

***“THE PRINCIPLES AND  
PRACTICE OF PRAYER”***



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**PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER**

**WHAT IS PRAYER? THE DEFINITION OF PRAYER:**

TAKE A MOMENT AND WRITE A QUICK DEFINITION OF PRAYER:

*The Book of Common Prayer:* “Christian prayer is \_\_\_\_\_ to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit.”

*The Westminster Confession:* “Prayer, that is \_\_\_\_\_ by God, is to be made in the name of the \_\_\_\_\_, by the help of His \_\_\_\_\_, according to His \_\_\_\_\_ . . .”

**QUESTION:** Is prayer primarily a \_\_\_\_\_ activity or is it \_\_\_\_\_?

1. Consider the mental aspect of prayer:



2. Consider the verbal aspect of prayer:

**A PRACTICAL DEFINITION OF PRAYER**

1. Prayer is \_\_\_\_\_ to God.
  
2. Prayer is very simply \_\_\_\_\_ to God.
  
3. Prayer is also \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

**SOME COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PRAYER**

1. Prayer is not a form of \_\_\_\_\_.
  
2. Prayer is not a technique for \_\_\_\_\_ our problems.
  
3. Prayer is not withdrawal from the \_\_\_\_\_ world.



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4. Prayer is not just \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
  
5. Prayer is not \_\_\_\_\_ action.
  
6. Prayer is not a human technique for \_\_\_\_\_ the will of God or forcing God to do what God is not \_\_\_\_\_ in doing.

### **THE IMPLICATIONS OF PRAYER**

1. Prayer implies that we are in some \_\_\_\_\_ and expresses our utter \_\_\_\_\_ on God.
  
2. It also implies that we see ourselves as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to meet those things we struggle against.
  
3. Prayer implies there is a \_\_\_\_\_ God who has \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to do something about our need.



## **THE PROBLEM OF UNANSWERED PRAYER**

Consider this statement of frustration from an Army Chaplain concerning unanswered prayer:

“I wish that people would stop writing about people who pray on rafts and get rescued. Because they don’t all get rescued.

“We had prayed together before the altar, a young pilot and his chaplain. Then he had climbed into his ship and flown away toward the desert with God’s blessing and peace in his heart. But I must tell my story as I saw it. It had a sad ending, in a way; for the plane crashed and the young pilot was killed. Only those who believe in certain things as he did could see the part that wasn’t sad. He was in God’s grace. He was prepared. He was ready to meet death, and that is not sad but glorious.

“Is there such a thing as getting the ‘breaks’ in prayer? What about the fellows who pray regularly, but got killed regularly? What was wrong with their prayers? That’s why I’m beginning to get a little touchy about all these stories of successful raft-praying. That’s why I wish people would stop writing about the soldiers who pray and have their prayers answered by not getting killed. Why do all the other soldiers seem to get the wrong answer?

“What I want to know is this: what sort of an extra-special, super-powered prayer is needed to make everything turn out the way you want it? That sounds facetious, almost irreverent, but I’m serious. I really want to know. I’m an Army Chaplain, and could use some special prayers with my men—and heaven knows, we need them badly at times. Because the fact is there are always more men who pray to come back than there are men who get back. Quite a lot more. What is the deciding factor?

“When I talk to soldiers about prayer I try to tell them that they must be adults. God expects us to be men. Only children demand a happy ending to every story. How old must we be before we begin to realize that even prayer can’t get us everything we want, unless the thing we want is right for us to have? For grown-ups know only too well that there is much of life which appears to have an unhappy ending.

“But to end my little story—the one about the young pilot who was killed. If anyone deserved to live, it was he. For he wasn’t one of these fellows who forget God until the bad moment comes, and then begin to pray hysterically. His practice of prayer had small reference to a panic-stricken emergency, for he prayed daily and well.



“He flew the Atlantic to Africa, alone. But before he had been in a foreign land 24 hours he had found a chaplain and a chapel. Early in the morning he was there, kneeling at the altar. This to him was home. As he said his prayers, he thanked God for many things—for having been born in a good land, for having parents who taught him to love God. For himself he asked little, save that he might repay the debt, that he might stay in God’s grace.

“What if he did ask that he might be allowed to live? I should think it very strange of him if he didn’t, for he had everything to live for. But I am sure that what he asked for most of all was strength to face whatever might lie ahead. If it were the gift of lengthened life, he would live it well. If it were the call of sudden death, he would take it like a man. Surely God must know about such things.

“After all I have said about being adult in our prayers, I am ashamed to confess that it was I, not he, who fell back upon the childish praying. As he knelt quietly at the altar, so fine and young and full of promise, I secretly asked for him a happy ending.

“Let him have a long life and a happy ending. Hold him up. Don’t let him fall.

“What was wrong with my prayers? I asked myself as I stood by the tearful wreckage of the place he had tried so bravely to bring safely in. Other people’s prayers are answered. What’s the matter with ours?

“Who gets the breaks in prayers?”<sup>1</sup>

HONESTLY NOW, HAVE YOU EVER FELT THIS WAY AFTER PRAYING FERVENTLY FOR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE? The Bible is filled with examples of frustrated cries of God’s people that seemingly did not receive an answer:

- Psalm 22:2
- Lamentations 3:44
- Habakkuk 1:2
- 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 (especially verses 8 and 9)

CAN YOU THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOU PRAYED EARNESTLY AND FELT DISAPPOINTED WHEN YOU DIDN’T GET AN ANSWER? (write it here):

<sup>1</sup> *Essays on Prayer*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1968), p.69-72.



**THE NORMAL WAYS GOD RESPONDS TO OUR PRAYERS**

1. God sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ but not \_\_\_\_\_.
2. God might answer \_\_\_\_\_ but not the \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ it done.
3. Thankfully there are times when God answers with a loud and clear \_\_\_\_\_!
4. And there are plenty of times when God answers with an equally clear \_\_\_\_\_!

**WHY GOD WOULD ANSWER WITH A “NO”**

1. God will say no if our request is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. God will say no when our \_\_\_\_\_ are wrong.
3. God will deny our prayers when there is \_\_\_\_\_ that has not been \_\_\_\_\_.
4. We will receive a no if our \_\_\_\_\_ is faulty.
5. God will deny our request if our \_\_\_\_\_ needs development.
6. We will receive a negative answer if our praying is not in harmony with the clear \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.



**PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PRAYER**

**THE FIRST QUALIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_**

- We must recover the concept of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord.
- We must not deal with God in a \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ way.
- Approaching God with reverence means that the \_\_\_\_\_ distinction is maintained at all times.

**THE SECOND QUALIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_**

- The one warning Jesus gave most frequently concerning prayer was the danger of \_\_\_\_\_.
- Sincerity is evidenced in our prayers in the following ways:
  1. When we are willing for God to answer our prayer \_\_\_\_\_ to his will and not according to our \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. When we sincerely pray that God might be \_\_\_\_\_ in the granting of our request.
  3. When we admit our \_\_\_\_\_ and lay aside our \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. When we pray with fervency and passion from the \_\_\_\_\_ of our \_\_\_\_\_.



**THE THIRD QUALIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ is the great model and example of submissive praying.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ is a good example of submission in prayer.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ Hebrew captives are great examples of submission in prayer.

**THE FOURTH QUALIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Faith is only as good as its \_\_\_\_\_
- To pray with faith is to pray with a belief that certain things are \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Since faith is a gift from God, make sure you use \_\_\_\_\_ you have and ask for \_\_\_\_\_

**THE FIFTH QUALIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Answered prayer is not a \_\_\_\_\_ for obedience!
- Three important areas where we need to be attentive to obedience:
  1. We must \_\_\_\_\_ all known \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. We must be \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ all those who have \_\_\_\_\_ against us.
  3. We must be obedient to all the clear \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.



**THE SIXTH QUALIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- See James 5:16b (NIV): "...the prayer of a righteous man \_\_\_\_\_ is powerful and effective."
- We don't have an adequate righteousness \_\_\_\_\_ – Isaiah 64:6
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of righteousness:

**THE SEVENTH QUALIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Persistence does not mean that we have to \_\_\_\_\_ God somehow to \_\_\_\_\_ our prayer.
- One way to show your persistence is by \_\_\_\_\_ when we pray.

See 2 Samuel 12:15-23 and also Ezra 10:1-15 for examples.

**THE EIGHTH QUALIFICATION OF EFFECTIVE PRAYER:**

\_\_\_\_\_

- This is prayer that first and foremost seeks the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
- This is prayer offered solely based on the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus Christ.
- This is prayer offered in the way \_\_\_\_\_ would be praying if he were in the same situation.
- This is prayer offered according to the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.



**THE CONTENT OF OUR PRAYERS**

When we pray, for what do we pray? I suggest the following six things:

**THE FIRST ELEMENT OF PRAYER: \_\_\_\_\_**

- The Lord’s Prayer \_\_\_\_\_ with adoration.
- In adoration we \_\_\_\_\_ for nothing—we are simply occupied with God.
- Sometimes adoration involves \_\_\_\_\_.
- Adoration can take the shape of one word: \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- We adore God for \_\_\_\_\_ he is and for \_\_\_\_\_ he has done and is doing.
- How can you cultivate this aspect of prayer? By increasing in your \_\_\_\_\_ of God. Here are five simple ways to increase your knowledge of God:
  1. Ask God to help you to know God in a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ way.
  2. Become more sensitive to \_\_\_\_\_. But be careful here!
  3. Study carefully the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
  4. Reading and studying the \_\_\_\_\_ deepens our knowledge of God.
  5. Look for specific ways God is at \_\_\_\_\_ in your \_\_\_\_\_ and in the lives of others.



**SECOND ELEMENT OF PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- In fact ,adoration will automatically lead to \_\_\_\_\_.  
See Isaiah 6:1-7.
- The meaning of confession: \_\_\_\_\_ with God about his  
\_\_\_\_\_ of our sin.
- Confession should be as \_\_\_\_\_ as possible.
- Private or secret sin is confessed \_\_\_\_\_.
- Public sins are in need of public \_\_\_\_\_.

**THE THIRD ELEMENT OF PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Here is what happens: adoration of the person of the Triune God leads to an awareness and acknowledgement of our sin which produces a heart of praise!
- Ingratitude is actually more than a human weakness in reference to God, it is \_\_\_\_\_.
- How can you be better at offering your praise? Read the \_\_\_\_\_!
- Here's something to think about: Of all the elements of prayer certainly \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will follow us to heaven and form part of our worship there!



**THE FOURTH ELEMENT OF PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- The formal name for this element is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Here is a good general rule for you to follow: \_\_\_\_\_ things first and your \_\_\_\_\_ last.
- Ask God for whatever is on your \_\_\_\_\_.
- Ask God to help you see and understand \_\_\_\_\_ what it is you need.

**THE FIFTH ELEMENT OF PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- The formal name for this element is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Intercessory prayer is turning prayer into a \_\_\_\_\_ to others.
- Intercessory prayer is a very \_\_\_\_\_ aspect of prayer.
- Intercessory prayer mostly \_\_\_\_\_ the person(s) for whom we are praying, but the one \_\_\_\_\_ will also be blessed.

**THE SIXTH ELEMENT OF PRAYER:** \_\_\_\_\_

- All prayer should include an element of \_\_\_\_\_ to God.
- As we walk with God we will become aware, almost daily, of \_\_\_\_\_ of our lives that need to be brought under the Lord's control.



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## **PRACTICE OF PRAYER**

(Taken from Daily Prayer, a DVD by Robert Benson)

**“WE NEED A PLAN FOR PRAYER” – BY ROBERT BENSON**

**“HISTORY OF THE DAILY OFFICE” – BY ROBERT BENSON**



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**“ELEMENTS OF THE DAILY OFFICE” – ROBERT BENSON**

**“WHY PRAY THE DAILY OFFICE” – ROBERT BENSON**



**THE VESPERS OFFICE<sup>1</sup>**

**(To Be Observed on the Hour or Half Hour Between 5 and 8 p.m.)**

**The Call to Prayer**

But I will call upon God,\* and the Lord will deliver me.

In the evening, in the morning, and at noonday, I will complain and lament,\* and he will hear my voice.

He will bring me safely back...

God, who is enthroned of old, will hear me.

(Psalm 55:17ff)

**The Request for Presence**

I cry out to you, O Lord;\* I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living."

(Psalm 142:5)

**The Greeting**

I will confess you among the peoples, O Lord;\* I will sing praises to you among the nations.

(Psalm 108:3)

**The Hymn**

We walk by faith

And not by sight;

No gracious words we hear

From him who spoke

As none ever spoke;

But we believe him near.

We may not touch

His hands and side,

Nor follow where he trod;

But in his promise

We rejoice; and cry,

"My Lord and God!"

<sup>1</sup>*The Divine Hours, Prayers for Springtime*, by Phyllis Tickle, Doubleday. This prayer is taken from The Vesper Office of April 6, pages 398-400.



Help then, O Lord,  
Our unbelief;  
And may our faith abound,  
To call on you  
When you are near,  
And seek where you are found:

That, when our life  
Of faith is done,  
In realms of clearer light  
We may behold  
You as You are,  
With full and endless sight. (Henry Alford)

### **The Refrain for the Vespers Lessons**

The Lord will hear the desire of the humble;\* you will strengthen their hearts and your ears shall hear. (Psalm 10:18)

### **The Vespers Psalm**

#### **Let All Who Seek Your Rejoice**

You are the Lord; do not withhold your compassion from me;\* let your love and your faithfulness keep me safe for ever,  
For innumerable troubles have crowded upon me; my sins have overtaken me and I cannot see;\* they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me.  
Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me;\* O Lord, make hast to help me.  
Let them be ashamed and altogether dismayed who seek after my life to destroy it;\* let them draw back and be disgraced who take pleasure in my misfortune.  
Let those who say "Aha!" and gloat over me be confounded\* because they are ashamed.  
Let all who seek you rejoice in you and be glad;\* let those who love your salvation continually say, "Great is the Lord!"  
Though I am poor and afflicted,\* the Lord will have regard for me.  
You are my helper and my deliverer, do not tarry, O my God.  
(Psalm 40:12-19)



**The Refrain**

The Lord will hear the desire of the humble;\* you will strengthen their heart and your ears shall hear.

**The Small Verse**

The Lord is my shepherd and nothing is wanting to me. In green pastures He hath settled me

**(Place Your Own Prayers Here)**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**The Prayer Appointed for the Week**

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of my faith, that I may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**The Concluding Prayer of the Church**

Lead me not into temptation. Deliver me from evil. Yours are the kingdom and the glory.

## NOTES