

# *Principles of PRAYER*

## *Selected Scriptures*

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*A message by Dr. James K "Tommy" Pierce preached Sunday, August 4, 2024 at the Towering Oaks Baptist Church, Greeneville, TN.*

The disciples recognized Jesus power and ability in prayer and that is why they one day asked Him... Luke 11:1 (NASB) *<sup>1</sup> And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples."*

I would hope that is the desire of our hearts before the Lord today, that He would teach us to pray. It is interesting that the disciples did not ask "Teach us **HOW** to pray.".... They asked "Teach us **TO** pray." (They did not need more information... They simply needed more motivation

### **SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER.**

#### **THE BELIEVERS' ACCEPTANCE IN PRAYER.**

Did you ever start to pray, and suddenly you had this overwhelming sense of "Un-worthiness?" You suddenly remembered things you had done that were sinful and wrong, and you remembered how little you had done in way of service for the Lord, and somehow you felt you had no right to be asking God for anything?

I think when we begin to pray, sometimes Satan comes along side us to try to discourage us by saying, "Hey, I know you, and you know you. We both know what you are really like. We both know you don't have any business trying to talk to God. What right do you have to ask God to give you some of His attention. He's not going to listen to someone like you."

Understand that God accepts us into His presence when we pray on the basis of the Blood and the Intercession of Jesus, not on the basis of our own merit or self-worth.

I am convinced one of Satan's most effective tactics in discouraging God's children in prayer is to haunt them with a sense of "Unworthiness" and a sense of "Guilt." And to convince them God has no interest in hearing from them because of the unworthy condition of their lives.

#### **1. The BLOOD of Jesus Christ gives us acceptance before God in prayer.**

Hebrews 10:19 (NASB) *<sup>19</sup> Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,*

DO WE THINK GOD IS IMPRESSED WITH OUR CREDENTIALS??...

- Do we think God is impressed with **our good works**?
- our **benevolence**?
- our success in business?
- our social status?
- our personal accomplishments?
- with our spirituality?
- our religiosity?

If we think we have anything that will impress Almighty, Holy God, we are only kidding ourselves. God is impressed with the precious blood of His own Son, Jesus Christ.... Nothing else. And the only thing that gives us access into the presence of Holy God, is the atoning blood of His own Son Jesus.

But on the basis of Jesus atoning blood we can enter God's throne room with **"BOLDNESS."** (Heb.10:19)

"Boldness"... Parresian... Means literally "Freedom of speech, openness or frankness." It means you can come before God and because you have been made acceptable by the blood of Jesus: You can tell God everything that is on your heart.

You can be completely open and frank with God.

You can speak boldly without fear of reprisal or rejection.

You can share every burden, every doubt, every pain, everything...

You can speak openly and frankly with the Father.

## **2. The *PRIESTLY INTERCESSION* of Jesus Christ gives us acceptance before God in prayer.**

Hebrews 4:14–16 (NASB) <sup>14</sup> Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are, yet without sin.* <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Jesus is our Great High Priest. He knows us and understands us, and sympathizes with every temptation and every crisis we will ever face. We never enter the presence of God alone. Jesus goes with us when we pray as our High Priest, making intercession with us and for.

Heb. 7:25 says *"He always lives to make intercession"* for those who come to God by faith through Him. Jesus has made all of us a Kingdom of Priests... and He is the Great High Priest.

1 Pet.2:9 says we are a *"Royal priesthood."*

Rev.5:10 says Jesus has made us *"kings and priests."*

This is why the true New Testament church never had an official office for a Priest. The church was led by PASTORS not PRIESTS. Jesus, the Great High Priest, makes you a priest, and He alone mediates between you and God. You have access to God yourself, through your one and only Great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

## **II. THE BELIEVER'S AUTHORITY IN PRAYER.**

Once you have experienced blood redemption in your life, you have AUTHORITY TO PRAY IN JESUS' NAME! It is the NAME OF JESUS that gives us great power and authority in prayer. Have you ever scanned the New Testament and studied all that we are invited to be and do in the Name of Jesus...?

Lk.10:17 the disciples told Jesus, *"Even the devils are subject unto us through your name."*

Lk.9:48 Jesus said, *"Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receives me."*

Mt.18:20 We are given the promise, *"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them."*

Mt.28:19 We are commanded to *"baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."*

Eph.5:20 tells us we are to be *"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Acts 3:6 Peter told the lame man at the temple gate, *"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."*

Acts 4:12 *"There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."*

Acts 4:17 A council of the Jewish leaders commanded the disciples, *"That they should speak henceforth to no man in this name."*

Acts 9:22 After Saul's miraculous conversion records how he *"preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."*

Rom.10:13 *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

1Cor.6:11 says, We have been *"justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."*

Col.3:17 says, *"And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."*

The greatest privilege we have associated with the name of Jesus is the privilege to PRAY IN HIS HOLY AND POWERFUL NAME.

John 14:13-14 *And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (NKJ)*

John 15:16 *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (NKJ)*

John 16:23 *"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. (NKJ)*

John 16:24 *"Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (NKJ)*

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PRAY IN JESUS' NAME?** The name of Jesus is not a secret code word that works like a magical spell when it is invoked... It is not a tool to manipulate God. Praying in Jesus' name involves more than words.

**Praying in Jesus' name involves three things...**

### **1. Praying in Jesus' involves being *SAVED* by believing on His name.**

No one can rightfully pray in Jesus name, or do anything in Jesus' name until they have believed on His name and been saved. How can you pray or act in the authority of His name, when His name does not rightfully belong to you, since you have refused to believe on His name and be saved. You can not pray or act in the authority of Jesus name, as long as you are still trusting in your own name for your salvation (trusting in your own self-effort to be saved) Any person who has not believed exclusively on the Name of Jesus to be saved, has no right to invoke His name in any other situation.

In Acts 19 there is a perfect example of some men who tried to invoke the name of Jesus to exercise demons even though they had never believed on Jesus for their salvation. Let's take a look at what happened to them....

Acts 19:13–17 (NASB)

*<sup>13</sup> But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." <sup>14</sup> And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. <sup>15</sup> And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" <sup>16</sup> And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. <sup>17</sup> And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.*

You have no authority or right to pray in Jesus' name until you have believed on His name and been supernaturally saved.

### **2. Praying in Jesus' name involves *CONFORMING* to His character.**

Praying in Jesus' name means that we are praying in the same spirit and character as Jesus Himself. You can't live in total disobedience and disregard for God's will for you life, and then expect to be able to pray in Jesus' name. Praying in Jesus' name involves an entire lifestyle that is lived in conformity with Christ and His character.

Colossians 3:17 (NASB) *<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

You cannot live your life with total disregard for His name, and then expect to be able to pray effectively in His name. Praying in His name means your entire life is governed by His name.... You represent Him. You bear His name.

### **3. Praying in Jesus' name involves *COOPERATION* with His will.**

To pray in Jesus' name means you pray in cooperation with His will and His desires. You pray for the very same things He prays for, in the very same way He prays for them. You can not pray in Jesus' name and be at the same time be praying in a way that is contrary to His will and desires. Praying in His name means praying in His perfect will... And everything we pray for that is in His perfect will, shall come to pass. Every prayer prayed in cooperation with His perfect will, shall be answered exactly as it is prayed.

1 John 5:14–15 (NASB) *<sup>14</sup> And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.*

On the other hand, when we pray in our own name (praying for our own selfish desires) we will not have our prayers answered...

James 4:3 (NASB) *<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Maybe a way to illustrate what it means to pray in Jesus' name is to think about what happens in marriage. When a woman marries a man, she takes on his name. She no longer acts under her maiden name, but under the name of her husband. If a poverty-stricken woman marries a wealthy man, she immediately shares all her husband's wealth the moment she assumes his name. The moment she assumes his name, she can act on his behalf, and transact business in his place.

The church is the Bride of Christ... And we have assumed his name, which gives us the privilege to act on his behalf. Praying in Jesus' name, we are praying in cooperation with Jesus, as though we were married to Him and acting under the authority of His name which has become our assumed name.

### III. WHAT DOES A PERSON WANT TO ACCOMPLISH IN PRAYER?

What is the greatest thing any person can hope to achieve in prayer?

There are some who would answer that question by saying, the primary aspiration a person should have in prayer is to.... Claim your prosperity, healing and good fortune "Name it and claim it."

The "prosperity gospel" teaches that you to claim your rightful fortune and healing by shaping certain faith formulas... Just speak the right words, and you get it. They tell you there is power in your words when fashioned just the right way. The problem I have with the "Prosperity Gospel" is IT IS NOT BIBLICAL!!

It reduces God to a utilitarian God who can be manipulated and controlled by our skillfully crafted "faith formulas" It makes God subservient to our wishes, lusts and selfish demands. It subtly reverses our entire created order. It is man centered rather than God centered. It teaches that God is here for us. The truth is, we are here for God.

"Our highest aspiration in prayer is not to MANIPULATE God to do our will, but **to position ourselves to DISCOVER and DESIRE Gods' will**, praying His will into reality." I think sometimes we see prayer as our attempt to "arm twist God" into doing something He is not already predisposed to do. We see ourselves as trying to beg and plead with a reluctant God to give us what we want. We sometimes even find ourselves trying to bargain and barter with God.... trying to cut a deal with Him to get Him to do what we want.

When you stop and think about Who God is and who we are, it is foolish for us to try to tell God How to run His world, to tell Him what is best for our lives what we need most from Him. I mean, let's not forget who is really God here. If we knew what was best for our lives, we wouldn't need God.

The truth is **IF WE KNEW WHAT GOD KNOWS, WE WOULD ALWAYS WANT WHAT GOD WANTS!** So the primary goal of a believer in prayer is not to try to CHANGE God, or to CONTROL God... But to let God CHANGE us, and to position ourselves so God can CONTROL us. The primary goal of a believer in prayer is to connect with God and to understand His will and then pray in agreement with His will, praying His will into reality.

This is exactly how Jesus lived His life, and how Jesus prayed....

John 5:19 (NASB) <sup>19</sup> *Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.*

John 5:30 <sup>30</sup> *"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

Matt 26:39 <sup>39</sup> *And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."*

The Holy Spirit directs us to pray in agreement with the will of God...

Rom 8:26-27 <sup>26</sup> *And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; <sup>27</sup> and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

**What we must do in order to conform our hearts and lives to God's will when we pray.**

#### **1. We must HUMBLE ourselves before God.**

Remember we are but flesh... He is God. We must humble ourselves before God, and develop a broken and contrite heart.

Ps 51:17 <sup>17</sup> *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.*

2 Chr 7:14 <sup>14</sup> *and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

If we refuse to humble ourselves before the Lord, we will be presumptuous and demanding in our praying. The first step toward positioning ourselves to really discern and desire God's perfect will is to humble ourselves.

#### **2. REPENT of all known sin.**

Again, we can not possibly be in a position to know the heart and mind of God, when we are unwilling to deal with the sin issues in our lives. Ps 66:18 *If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear.* The

first thing the Holy Spirit is going to do in our lives when we pray is to convict us of the sin and pride issues that are in our lives.

### **3. QUIET ourselves before the Lord and LISTEN.**

When we pray, we are missing the whole point if we do all the talking. We need to speak to God, obviously. However, we need also to be still before Him and listen to what He may be trying to say to us.

Ps 46:10 *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*

### **4. We need to seek God's FACE before we seek His HAND.**

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NASB) <sup>14</sup> *and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

Psalms 105:4 (NASB) <sup>4</sup> *Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face continually.*

How often do we rush into prayer regarding a particular matter without giving any thought whatsoever as to what the will of God may be with regards to this matter. And so we end up praying according to our will rather than according to God's will.

When we begin to pray about a certain matter, we should first ask God how He would have to pray about that situation. Then we need to follow what we sense the Spirit is saying to us, and pray in agreement with His will.

When you pray for someone who is going through a crisis how often do we just mindlessly begin to pray that God would relieve them from the crisis and make the crisis go away. Maybe, just maybe, God is the One who has orchestrated that crisis in that persons' life, and God is trying to use that crisis to do a greater work of grace in that persons' life by bringing them to the end of themselves. Have you noticed how much of our prayer time is devoted to praying ourselves and others off the cross?

In all of this don't misunderstand me. This is not just passive, fatalistic praying. It is passionate, active praying. It is getting up close to the Father so we know His great heart and desires, and the joining Him in prayer in the greater works He has determined to do.

## **IV. EVERY BELIEVER PRAYS IN 3 DIFFERENT ARENAS.**

### **1. The arena of the PRAYER CLOSET.**

I speak here of the personal, private place of prayer. It is the private closet where we get alone with God and spend time daily with Him.

Matthew 6:6 (NASB) <sup>6</sup> *“But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*

The word “inner room” speaks of a private, secluded place where you can escape from the noise of the world and the interference of other people. This is where the believer prepares for the other arenas of prayer. Without this time in his/her private prayer closet the believer has no power or direction in the other arenas of prayer.

### **2. The arena of CORPORATE prayer.**

This is the arena of the assembly of believers, and they come together to pray and prevail before God in a corporate setting...

Acts 1:13–14 (NASB) <sup>13</sup> *And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.* <sup>14</sup> *These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

Acts 2:42 <sup>42</sup> *And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

Acts 4:31 <sup>31</sup> *And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*

I think this is an area where we really need to grow as a corporate body. We don't know how to pray together corporately as we should. When we do have periods of corporate prayer, there is little participation,

and often the praying is powerless and impotent. I am convinced that the God's blessing and power is contingent upon us learning how to pray together in the corporate arena.

### **3. The arena of COOPERATIVE prayer.**

This speaks of us praying cooperatively about specific needs, issues and people. We may not necessarily be assembled together, but we have agreed in our hearts upon the things we will pray about as we pray daily in our prayer closets.

Colossians 4:2–3 (NASB) <sup>2</sup> *Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;* <sup>3</sup> *praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;*

Col 4:12 <sup>12</sup> *Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.*

Rom 15:30 <sup>30</sup> *Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,*

There are many more examples of COOPERATIVE praying in the New Testament. Even though believers and churches were separated by miles of distance, they were united in cooperative prayer efforts... And they stood together in consistent cooperative prayer.

Prayer is a ministry in which EVERYBODY CAN PARTICIPATE! Not only those who are able to come and physically pray with one another, but those who watch online through our livestream ministry. The devil works 24 hours a day... So, we need who will to be praying 24 hours a day.

We need people on the wall to support and defend the work of the Lord through prayer...

Today, God is calling many of us to get serious about praying...