

Softball Devotional #3: Prayer

Team Name: **Cornerstone**

Church: **Chinese Gospel Church**

More information and previous devotionals: www.cgygfellowship.com/Devos.shtml

Contact: Jonathan Wang <jonathan.wang@utoronto.ca>

What is Prayer?

Prayer, which literally means *to ask earnestly*, is a two-way communication (conversation) with God for the purposes of praise, petition, confession and sweet fellowship with our Lord.

And since it is a two-way conversation, this implies that prayer is not complete until we listen to the voice of God. Praying is not just spewing words, but rather, it is conversing with God. As such, we must learn to listen to how God speaks to us, be that through a personal encounter or through other people. Prayer is one way that we can acknowledge the splendour of His majesty. We praise God because He has allowed us to come boldly before His presence by the power of Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16). We praise Him because of His enduring faithfulness to us (Psalm 145). In prayer, we do not only have an opportunity to praise Him, but also we can petition Him for things. It is prudent that when we do ask God for something, we are doing so with a humble attitude, always seeking the benefit of others for the glory of God not endeavouring to indulge our selfish desires (Matthew 7:7-12).

Additionally, through prayer, we confess our sins to God, agreeing with Him that what we have done is wrong and upon repentance, claiming the victory of Christ's sacrifice to forgive our sins (1 John 1:9). And lastly, through prayer, we experience a sweet closeness to God. Being so captivated by His love for us and His grace to us, as we mature in prayer, we come to taste and see that the Lord is indeed good (Psalm 34:8). This intimacy in prayer with our Creator is unparalleled. And underlining and permeating all of these purposes of prayer is the need to be earnest in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We do not pray half-heartedly but with our whole heart, diligently and persistently seeking the voice of God. And there will be times where it seems like God is silent. Those are the times that we need to pray even more earnestly having faith that He still abides with us as we abide in Him.

How do we pray?

Matthew 6:9-13 – Jesus says, *“This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our*

daily bread. ¹²Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

We pray not to bend God’s will to ours, but to bend our will to His. We pray so that we might know God more deeply and intimately, much like you would talk to your best friend to learn more about him or her. Jesus says in verse 10, “YOUR kingdom come, YOUR will be done...” When we are instructed how to pray, we do not pray for our glorification but for the glorification of God that we may know and discern what He so desires to see in our lives.

Some Practical Guidelines on How to Pray:

- Actions in Prayer**
- A**doration – *(Psalm 96, especially verse 2) We praise God for who He is and for what He has done.*
 - C**onfession – *(1 John 1:9, Matt. 6:12) We confess our sins to God and in repentance, thank Him for still loving us.*
 - T**hanksgiving – *(1 Thess. 5:18) We thank Him for everything, an attitude of gratitude in all things.*
 - S**upplication – *(Matt. 7:7-12) We submit our petitions to God humbly, trusting Him.*

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- Attitudes of Prayer**
- P**ersonal – *(Matt. 6:9a) God is our heavenly Father, personal and intimate in conversation.*
 - R**everent – *(Matt. 6:9b) God is also the Almighty God and so should command appropriate respect.*
 - A**ttentive – *(Matt. 26: 40-41) We must be vigilant at all times when we pray.*
 - Y**earning – *(Ephesians 5:1-2) We need to yearn for the things that God yearns for, to be like Him.*
 - E**levating – *(John 3:30) Our prayers should be Christ-elevating, lifting Him up, not ourselves.*
 - R**eflective – *(Psalm 51:16-17) Genuine prayer includes thoughtfulness and reflection, not mechanistic speech.*

What does this mean to me?

For the Christian, this is a call to constantly be in prayer. You must recognize that we are blessed because we have been allowed to come boldly before the throne of grace to petition our Heavenly Father and to dwell in His presence. And when you pray, pray persistently, frequently—always attempting to exalt Christ through your prayers. And it is my prayer for you that you would grow deeper in your intimacy with God through prayer.

For those of you who do not believe, this is what prayer means for us Christians. It is not some ritualistic, mechanistic ceremony that is reserved for those who have attained a certain level of holiness. Prayer is something that is deeply intimate and personal yet at the same time, reverent and respectful. We pray to seek what God wills to do on this Earth. As mentioned above, prayer is simply conversing with God, much like you talk with your spouse or best friend. In fact, becoming a Christian (choosing to follow Christ) is a prayer to repent of your sins and to ask Christ to guide the rest of your life. And it is my prayer for you that you would come to see the amazing grace and love that has been poured out for you when Christ paid the penalty of your sin with the sacrifice of His life.

Should you have any questions, please feel free at ANY time to email me to discuss these things. It is always a joy to discuss issues relating Christ. Please do not hesitate to ask.

Grace and peace,

Jonathan Wang