

Why Prayer?

Imperative #2: Understanding Prayer at Christ Center Community Church

"... My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations ..."

Mark 11:17, cited by Jesus from Isaiah 56:7

Our church is committed to obeying Christ's prayer imperative. We will stand in the gap in intercession for our city, nation and world. We will plead for revival in the church. We believe God will answer our pleading by visiting His people with His grace, mercy, glory and power. Here is what we understand about effective prayer.

Meaning: What Is Prayer?

Prayer is dialog with God. It is two-way communication. Prayer is the conversation of a child of God with his heavenly Father (Matt. 6:19). As such, prayer involves more than just asking God for favors.

- Prayer involves listening as well as talking; waiting on His agenda as well as stating our own agenda.
- Prayer involves seeking God's face as well as His hand; embracing His holiness in repentant humility.
- Prayer involves asking for wisdom as well as for favors; welcoming conviction as the path to freedom.
- Prayer involves "pleading" the character, promises, and will of God (Scripture) as the basis for requests.
- Prayer involves "standing in the gap" for a lost world, being a hedge of protection for saints. Ezek. 22:30

Mandate: What Elements Did Jesus Teach Are Essential to Prayer?

1. **Abiding Relationship:** Jesus promises to answer prayer within the context of two conditions. *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."* **John 15:7-8** Abiding in Christ is an on-going relationship in which there is conversation. Our asking is conditioned on Christ's will revealed in Scripture. We ask *"in His name,"* that is, that which is His will, which expresses His heart. *"Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you."* **John 16:23**
2. **Kingdom Priority:** It is a radical idea in our day, to realize that prayer isn't about us. It is about Christ – His kingdom and righteousness. All personal needs, which are already known to God, are secondary. *"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."* **Matthew 6:31-33**
3. **Expectant Faith:** Prayer is faith in action. We come to our Father with a justified expectation that He will hear and answer in His time and way. James says, *"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting . . ."* **James 1:5-6** Jesus promises answers to those who persist in faith. He said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."* **Matthew 7:7-8** So keep on asking!
4. **Incessant Pleading:** Prayer is a way of life, as vital to our spiritual life as breathing. "So I say to you: Ask (lit. keep on asking) and it will be given to you . . ." **Luke 11:9** After urging believers to put on the whole armor of God, Paul puts the Christian soldier to work: *"With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints."* **Ephesians 6:18**
5. **Praying in the Spirit:** Jude asks all believers to pray "in the Holy Spirit." **Jude 20** Paul describes what it is to pray in cooperation with the Spirit when our burden is too deep for words. **Rom 8:26-27** While some are given a prayer language. Others have wordless groanings. But all believers can and must pray in the Spirit.

Model: How Did Jesus Instruct Us to Pray?

Prayer was not just a part of Jesus' life; but prayer was His life! **Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; Matt. 14:23; Luke 9:28; 11:1; 21:37; Heb. 5:7** He taught His disciples to pray. *"Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.'*" **Matthew 6:9-13** Notice that the kingdom has priority, personal needs are secondary, and worship begins and ends our conversation with the Father.

Ministry: How Can We Intercede Effectively? From Joy Dawson, "Principles of Effective Intercession."

1. **Praise:** Praise God for who He is, and for the privilege of engaging in the same wonderful ministry as the Lord Jesus. Praise God for the privilege of cooperating with Him in the affairs of men through prayer. **Hebrews 7:25**
2. **Confession:** Make sure your heart is clean before God, by having given the Holy Spirit time to convict, should there be any un-confessed sin. **Psalm 66:18, also Psalm 139: 23-24**
3. **Dependence:** Acknowledge you can't really pray without the direction and energy of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to utterly control you by His Spirit, receive by faith that He does, and thank Him. **Romans 8:26; Ephesians 5:18**
4. **Authority:** Deal aggressively with the enemy. Come against him in the all-powerful Name of the Lord Jesus Christ and with the "sword of the Spirit" – the Word of God. **James 4:7**
5. **Yield:** Die to your own imagination, desires, and burdens for what you feel you should pray. **Proverbs 3: 5-6; 28:26; Isaiah 55:8**
6. **Faith:** Praise God now in faith for the remarkable prayer meeting you're going to have. He's an amazing God and will do something consistent with His character.
7. **Listen:** Wait before God now in silent expectancy, listening for His direction. **Psalm 62:5; 81:11-13; Micah 7:7**
8. **Pray:** In obedience and faith, utter what God brings to your mind. **John 10:27** Keep asking God for direction, expecting Him to give it to you. He will. **Psalm 32:8** Make sure you don't move to the next subject until you've given God time to discharge all He wants to say regarding this burden; especially when praying in a group.
9. **Confirm:** If possible, have your Bible with you should God want to give you direction or confirmation from it. **Psalm 119:105**
10. **Thanks:** When God ceases to bring things to your mind to pray for, finish by praising and thanking Him for what He has done, reminding yourself of **Romans 11:36**, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever! Amen."

CAUTION: God knows the weakness of the human heart toward pride. If we speak of what God has revealed and done in intercession, it may lead to committing this sin. God shares His secrets with those who are able to keep them. There may come a time when He definitely prompts us to share, but unless this happens, we should remain silent. **Luke 9:36**

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but Prayer was His life!"***

Dr. Thomas Samuel