

Session 57: Edification Prayer

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 57)

I want to make a very important point: you should never think that prayer alone is enough. Prayer is important and necessary, but prayer is always meant to be coupled with the word of God if it is going to accomplish its intended purpose. Prayer and the word always go hand-in-hand.



If we think that prayer is just shooting the breeze with God, then we should know that kind of prayer does not accomplish anything. Paul never talks about that kind of prayer and never instructs us to engage in it.

The kind of prayer Paul teaches us is not an end unto itself, but a means to an end: a relational end, an edificational end, etc. If prayer has purpose (and it does), then its purpose will always be found in God's word.

What I am saying here is that our prayers should not be without purpose; therefore, they must be connected to and rooted in God's word – specifically Paul's 13 epistles. Otherwise, prayer is nothing more than idle chatter, superstitious banter, wishful thinking, fleshly desires, and full of the imaginations of men who are devoid of understanding.

I am not saying that you cannot pray that way; you are a son – make your own decision. What I am doing is attempting to lead us into the truth about sonship prayer that will make a difference in us and in those who see us (men and angels). I am pointing us toward the things our apostle teaches us about prayer so that we can have a full, effectual, and productive prayer life.

I am trying to get us to see prayer for what God intends it to be for us. Let us not turn the billiard table of prayer into a fancy eaten table like the Beverly Hillbillies; abusing and corrupting it from its original purpose to conform it to our own ignorance.

The heathens pray this way. Let me give you some examples.

If we view prayer as an end, instead of a means to an end, then we are thinking about prayer the wrong way.



Wudu (ablution) is an Arabic word which means the specific action of washing certain body parts including hands, mouth, arms, nostrils, feet and face. In the Islam, it has great importance. As for offering prayers, five times a day is necessary for all the Muslims.

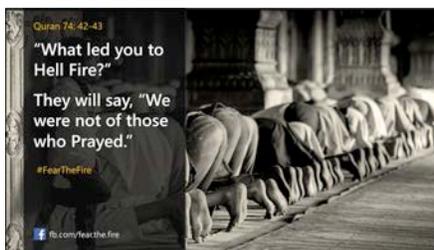


Fajr means dawn in the Arabic language. The time for Fajr Prayer starts from the true dawn until sunrise, a period which lasts about one and a half hours.

It was narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "...and the time of the morning prayer is from the appearance of dawn, as long as the sun has not risen; but when the sun rises, refrain from prayer for it rises between the horns of the devil."

"He who offers the dawn (Fajr) prayer will come under the Protection of Allah. O son of Adam! Beware, lest Allah should call you to account in any respect from (for withdrawing) His Protection." (Muslim)

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that: Mention was made before the Prophet (peace be upon him) of a man who slept throughout the night till morning. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) remarked, "He is a man in whose ears Satan urinated." (Agreed Upon)



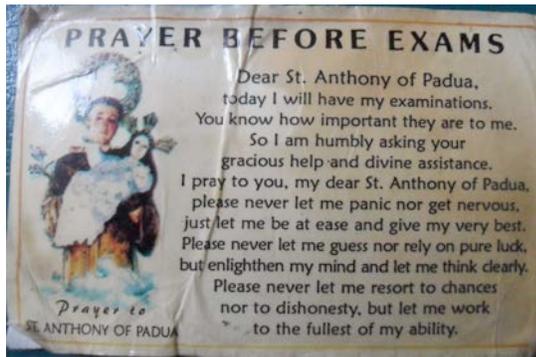
So, if you want to talk about praying because you are commanded to pray, Islam would be the perfect vehicle; you go to hell for not praying and you to heaven because you did pray.

The point here is that these kinds of prayers have prayer as an end, not as a means to an end.

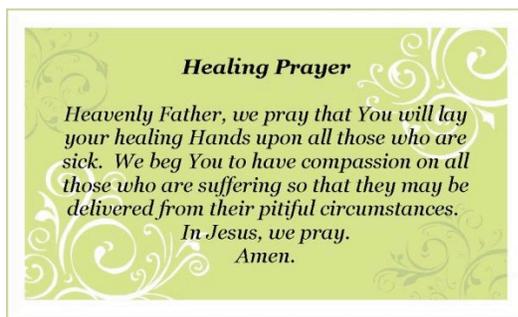
But Christians do the same thing, just in a little different way.



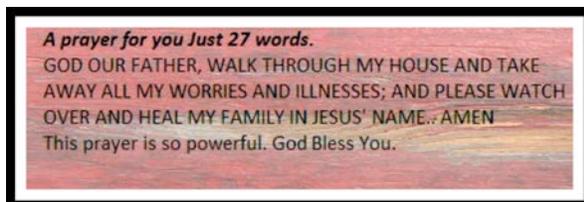
This is where the idea of lighting candles comes into play. If this were the way it worked, we do not have to know what to say and we do not need much time, just light a candle and God will count this as our prayer – Sounds like a “Norman” prayer just with candles instead of actually saying the shortcut.



This is nothing more than thinking that prayer, in and of itself, is enough for us to pass tests at school, not be anxious, or help us remember something. Unfortunately, the saints believe this about everything, not just exams.



The problem here is that this prayer exhibits no understanding of what God is doing today in this dispensation of Gentile grace. It may be well intentioned but as far as its efficacy, it is a complete waste of time, just like the prayer to ‘bless those poor people in Indonesia.’



If this worked, we would never have to go the doctor again, never take another prescription or antibiotic, never need to have a surgery or procedure, and never get another cold or flu bug.

We could throw away our glasses and hearing aids; we would never need dentures for we would have no missing teeth. Arthritis, cataracts – gone; cancer – none; heart disease – vanished; autoimmune diseases – none. Obviously, this is not the case. In view of this, we must invent contrivances to explain why this does not work. And all of those contrivances have something to do with what we did not do. We will cover those contrivances in a later study, but for now know this. We are living under grace and not under the law; therefore, whatever God is doing is not based on our performance as it was under the law. Opps! There goes the contrivance.

With these examples, I have gotten us a bit off track; let me get us back on track. The point originally was that we should never think that prayer itself is enough; that prayer is the end instead of a means to the end. Even when we are talking about legitimate issues, prayer is never isolated from God’s word.

The Purpose of Relationship Praying

For example, we know that one of the purposes of prayer is to build our relationship with our heavenly Father. And just to make sure we are all thinking about this the same way, when I say that one of the purposes of prayer is to develop our relationship with God as our heavenly Father, I mean that we are 1) developing our love for him so that it abounds more and more, 2) we are developing our knowledge of him so that we truly know him and not just know some things about him; we can truly appreciate him for who he is and what he has done, and 3) we are developing an attitude of gratefulness. All of these form the basis for our service to him so that we serve God out of love, appreciation, and gratitude and not because we are simply commanded to serve him.

Through relationship prayer, we learn to serve God not because we fear him, but because we learn to love him in ever increasing ways and in ever increasing depth. This way, our service to him is not an unrelenting burden, but we want to serve him; we live to serve him.

Ephesians 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Through relationship prayer, we do not serve God (as some far removed, unknowable and unapproachable deity) because we are commanded to serve him. Instead, we come to know him and appreciate him for all that he truly is; not because we have taken someone else's word for it, but because we know it for ourselves.

Space for personal reflection and notes

Session 58: Edification Prayer, Continued

(Note: Mike refers to this under the old system as Establishment, Part 10, Session 58)

Paul echoes this same sentiment to the Philippians when he emphasizes that he has counted all things (he previously had in the world's eyes) as loss so that he could, among other things, 'know Christ.'

Philippians 3:10 *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;*

Not only this, but to the Ephesians Paul writes that his prayer for them be:

Ephesians 1:17 *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:*

Through relationship praying, we will serve God out of a heart-felt gratitude for things he has done for us, things which we intelligently understand and appreciate the value of.

Look at this portion of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians that they would know.

Ephesians 1:19 *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

To understand who God is and what he has done is a legitimate way to pray today, but none of those things take place just because we prayed for them to take place. Simply praying for God to give us a great relationship with him is not enough.

The prayer: *Dear God, please give me a close, intimate relationship with you. I want to be close to you and I want you to give me a great, relationship with you.*

That may be sincere, but simply asking God to give you a great relationship is not enough. That prayer may indicate a desire for the relationship, but *we will have to engage* in the building of that relationship if we are going to have it. God is not going to do it for us just because we prayed for it. And even though it is God's will to have a close, intimate relationship with us, he will not magically give it to us just because we asked him for it.

Here is another example. We know that prayer is essential to the edification process. But praying to be edified is not enough, by itself, to edify us.

The prayer: *Dear Lord, please make me godly. I want to think like you and live like you, so please edify me. I know this is your will, so I am only asking for you to perform your will. I am asking you to teach me to think like you and do things your way.*

The truth is: we will never be edified apart from the word written to us and about us as members of the body of Christ.

Looking back at that sample prayer, did you catch that clever little thing about teach me to think like you? I say clever because we know God wants to teach us, so this must be a legitimate prayer, or is it?

Can we just ask God to teach us without any participation on our part? Is that really how God teaches us? Do we just ask him to teach us and then we sit back like he is going to just put it all in our heads magically? The answer is – no. I know that is disappointing for some because they want God to teach them without any effort on their part. That is not going to happen.

The fact is, asking God to teach us is not a proper prayer because his teaching is already in place. What I mean is that there is nothing more for God to do, than he has already done, to make that information available to us. And where is his teaching? It is in his word.

So how will we be taught? We are taught by hearing/reading God's word, understanding it, believing it, and responding properly to it.

The same thing goes for wisdom. Can we just ask God for wisdom as though he will somehow implant his wisdom into our minds? Do we imagine that we will simply pray that prayer and, poof, we suddenly have all this wisdom in our heads of course not.

If God were going to do that, he would have given it to us when he put us into Christ; because, that was the means by which God gave us everything which was not dependent upon anything other than God.

So here is the point again: everything God intended to give us/do for us, without any participation on our part, he has already given to us when he put us "in Christ." Everything else will require his word and our proper response to it.

In his word, God has already given us everything we will need to learn in order to think like him, in order to have his wisdom, etc. The point here is that if we want God to do something (which he actually is doing in this dispensation of Gentile grace), then prayer alone is not enough to obtain our desires. God is not, like a genie in a bottle, granting us wishes. He is a Father who is training us to function in his business and that necessitates knowing some things in his word and responding to them appropriately.

The Measure of Faith

Here is another thing about this because the training and the education are already written in his word, then God is teaching all of us the exact same way. He is not saying one thing to some of us while saying another thing to others of us. The "measure of faith," when it comes to our

education, is the same for every man. Once again, we see that God is not playing favorites, but treating every member of the body of Christ equally. It is not just about treating everyone equally. It is also about what has been given to us in his word as being the absolute best way to educate us. It is the “more excellent way” and it cannot be improved upon. God has given his best to every saint.

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