

The Priority of Prayer

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, ESV]

We have many means of communication today. We have evolved from face- to- face communication, church meetings, radio, and telegraph, to telephone, TV, cell phone, computer, texts, Zoom, etc. to various forms of social media such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram, and so on. Each one attracts and caters to different audiences and different purposes, with and without regulations, some more desirable than others. Who is your primary target audience and what's your purpose?

There is another means of communication. Notably, it is the most important, necessary, and privileged means one could ever have. The target audience is far greater than the President of the United States. Prayer is God's ordained way for us to communicate with Him. The blessing is that anyone can have direct access without ever going through the Secret Service or the FBI. We have an audience of One; God, the creator of heaven and earth. *Prayer is the way finite people communicate with an infinite God*, (Sam Rainer, *Seven Basics of Belonging*, 2021, pg. 57). This month, we are focusing on prayer, a fifth basic of belonging in the church, (Rainer, pgs.55-63).

Are you using your open line of communication with God? We don't need a special top priority reason to approach Him or to get through to Him. He is always available. He is always listening. In fact, He says; "Come boldly to the throne of Grace..." [Hebrews 4:16]. We have access and a direct line to God by virtue of our salvation through Jesus Christ.

According to Sam Rainer, prayer, an important expectation of church membership, is critical to our spiritual health. It is the way we demonstrate our faith in God's Word and trust in His will (pg. 55). Moreover, prayer expresses our trust in our all-powerful and all-knowing God who loves us unconditionally. Prayer is a strategy for life; not a last resort (Rainer, pg. 59). Our lives and circumstances can turn out much better when we prioritize prayer. When we prioritize prayer, we are making God's will our priority.

Most important is the priority of God's will as we pray. In order to know God's will, we must study His Word. "When we place our faith in God through prayer, He provides His will to us (Rainer, (pg.58). When there are challenges before us and we do not know what to do, we can pray to ask God for His good and perfect will for our lives. We can be a better church when we pray to seek God's will rather than our own self-seeking aspirations or personal laundry lists that seem to be a good idea. Nevertheless, God says in Matthew 6:33; *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.* When we pray God's will, He hears us and he will answer us. Some answers are "Yes, wait, or I have something better". Sometimes, God develops us inwardly so that we can effectively receive the blessing. Some hindrances to answered prayer may be of own making, such as: unforgiveness, disobedience, sin, failure to repent of known sins, or asking wrongly to spend it on our passions (in other words; motivated by personal gratification and selfish desire; James 4:3). Some requests, simply, may be out of the will of God.

"And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. [1John 5:14-15]

Prayer is a spiritual discipline or practice which allows us to grow spiritually and deepen our relationship with God. “*Of all the Spiritual disciplines, prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father*”. God uses prayer to transform us. (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 1998, pg. 33)

Being in an environment of the Word and prayer impacts our lives. We know that the Word is God (John 1:1) and the Word is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Praying God’s Word impacts families, the church, the nation, and the world. It is a good idea to pray for each of these areas daily. God works all things according to the counsel of His will [Ephesians 1:11, ESV].

Prayer:

Father God, we magnify your name. We praise You, our awesome God. We thank You for Your love, tender mercies, and grace You consistently pour out upon us. We thank and praise You for being called Your people. God, we pray for our Nation and President. Your Word says: *If my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked way, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land.* God, our land and the world need your healing touch. Father, forgive us for where we have fallen short and knowingly or unknowingly disobeyed your Word. Let the posture of our hearts seek You with humility and repentance with thanksgiving for who You are. You said that *supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* (1Timothy 2:1-2) Father, we are asking that You will grant them wisdom to make godly decisions for our good.

Father, thank You for Tabernacle. Jesus You are the light of the world. We pray for our church that we will be a lighthouse so that the light of Jesus will reach far and wide spreading the Word of God, His love, and peace. We pray that hearts of the lost will be opened to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We pray that we will live with heavenly priorities in mind. Help us to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. Help us to set our minds on things above and not on earthly things (Colossians 3:2) as we see so much happening around us that is unlike You. We want to be more like You, Jesus. We pray that the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) will be reflected in our hearts, our lives, and in all of our relationships.

Amen