

HOW TO PRAY

Men pray because they feel the need of prayer. Carlyle said: "Prayer is the native and deepest impulse of the soul." Men should learn how and know how to use this divinest and most omnipotent of all God's gifts to men. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 5:16. Prayer is our God-given weapon against Satan. Yet, how many do not know really how to pray. Many believe that prayer is the greatest force in Christian service and the most neglected force in Christian service. Not to pray is to fail, and to pray aright is never to fail. Merely saying one's prayers is not praying. The business of prayer has rules, and by these rules God abides. How would God have us to pray?

1. Pray without hypocrisy.

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." Matthew 6:5. In prayer we must not be anxious to be seen or heard of men. At the dedication of Bunker Hill Monument one of New England's preacher-orators prayed. A Boston newspaper next day said, "It was one of the finest prayers ever delivered to a Boston audience."

Hypocrisy is play acting. Prayer is not acting a part before God. God sees through our pretense. Once Jesus refused to grant a sign on demand. "And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting Him. And He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." Mark 8:11-12. Once Jesus refused to give His credentials to those who opposed Him. But Jesus never refused an earnest request for physical or spiritual help. In prayer, you are dealing with God. You cannot deceive God. Prayer as prayed from hypocritical hearts and lives of sham are as dust clouds that bring no rain -- or empty wells from which no water is drawn.

2. Pray sincerely.

"In truth" means "sincerely," or "with reality." We must sincerely desire the things for which we ask.

3. Pray privately.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6:6. Shut out everything and everybody except God and you. We need to get into the private place with God before we go into the public place for God. We need to hide ourselves with God before we show ourselves for God. Dr. A. C. Dixon said, "Prayer may be public or private, but it must always be secret in the sense that it is a personal transaction between the soul and God."

4. Pray in faith.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6.

To the father of the demoniac boy, Jesus said, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Mark 9:23-24.

5. Pray earnestly.

6. Pray intelligently.

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." Psalm 19:14.

7. Pray definitely.

Jesus teaches us to be definite in our praying. If we want sickness taken away, pray for that definitely. "Whatsoever things you desire, pray for them!" is what Jesus said. "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." We should not generalize in vague petitions.

8. Pray with importunity.

This means to pray with urgency of request, to solicit persistently, to plead with persistent entreaties, to be pressingly solicitous.

9. Pray submissively.

We are willing that God should answer in His own time and in His own way. God may keep us waiting for a time. God loves us and knows what is best for us.

Submissively Jesus prayed in Gethsemane saying, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matthew 26:39. Christ's main thought was God's will. Submissive praying is endeavoring to make our wills cooperative with His eternal good will.

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter,
I am the clay.
Mould me and make me
After Thy will,
While I am waiting,
Yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Search me and try me,
Master, Today!
Whiter than snow, Lord,
Wash me just now,
As in Thy presence
Humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Wounded and weary,
Help me, I pray!
Power -- all power --
Surely is Thine!
Touch me and heal me,
Saviour divine!

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Hold o'er my being
Absolute sway!
Fill with Thy Spirit
Till all shall see
Christ only, always,
Living in me!"

10. Pray forgivingly.

Our love toward God is evidenced by our love toward others. That is why we are enjoined to put away all envies and jealousies when we approach the mercy seat. "And when ye

stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither shall your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark 11:25-26.

11. Pray in the name of Christ.

"If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." John 14:14. Repeatedly Jesus said, "Abide in Me." This means that if we want God to answer our requests, we must live in Him. We must put the wishes, and aims, and purposes of God first. There must be no selfish motive on our part, but faith, adoration, submission, and confidence.

12. Pray in accordance with God's will.

13. Pray expectantly.

The faith of expectancy is not just believing that God can do what we ask, but that He will do what we ask, provided it is for His glory, for the good of others, and for our ultimate welfare.

14. Pray persistently.

For more than sixty years George Mueller prayed for the conversion of two men. One of these men was converted a year before Mueller died, and the other a year after his death.