

Date : 4 May 2025
Theme : Prayer
Topic : God hears and answers prayers.
Key passage : Luke 11:1-11
Key verse : James 5:13 (ERV) Are you having troubles? You should pray.

Introduction

Prayer is man's spontaneous response in crisis. Sailors in a violent storm facing life-threatening dangers automatically seek God's help. Jonah's story relates such a situation.

Prayer is practiced in church, in cell groups, over our meals, and perhaps a short good night prayer. Beyond these token praying, Christians don't pray much. "No time" is often the excuse. There are 3 most common problems for Christians with regard to prayer. First, we don't pray much. Second, we pray but we give up too soon; we don't experience prevailing prayer - that is, praying faithfully until we see God's answer. Thirdly, we don't always pray according to God's will. As a result, we don't often see answered prayers.

1. What is prayer?

In Luke 11, Jesus' disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. At this time, the disciples had already the experience of preaching, healing and driving out demons. They prayed on Sabbath days when they went to the synagogues. Yet they came to Jesus to ask him to teach them to pray. They had seen Jesus going out before dawn to pray and recognized that Jesus had power. Prayer is asking, seeking and knocking at God's doors. It is asking for needs and guidance which every child has need of. Prayer is worship adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication.

a. Who do we pray to? "Father"

Luke 11:2 "He (Jesus) said to them, "when you pray, say: "Father".

- Jesus has not instructed us to pray to "God" or "Lord" but "Father". This is a relationship word. Our relationship with God is a Father-children relationship. This is the closest relationship we can have with God. A father would love His children, care for them, protect them, and give them good things.

b. What do we pray to the Father about? (A.C.T.S)

- **Adoration – We worship the Father.**

Luke 11:2 "... hallowed be your name, your kingdom come."

To hallow is to give reverence to Him as holy. It is not to treat Him as someone common, but to recognise His awesome worthiness.

- **Confession – We confess our sins and ask God for forgiveness.**

Luke 11:4 "... Forgive us our sins."

This is because sin separates us from fellowship with Him.

- **Thanksgiving – We thank God for what He has given us.**

In Luke 9:16, Jesus Himself always gave thanks. Gratitude needs to be expressed.

- **Supplication – We present our needs and ask God to help us.**
 Luke 11:3 “Give us each day our daily bread”.
 Supplication is not just for ourselves. It is for those whose lives are affected by us.

2. Why are we having problems with prayer and what is the solution?

a. Problem 1: We don't pray much.

- **We don't have the habit of seeking God and sharing what is going on in our lives.**
 - In the back of our minds, we are so used to thinking that God only helps those who help themselves. This is not what our Father thinks.
 - King Saul never inquired of God as to what He wanted. King David on the other hand always inquired from the Lord. If you are sharing your life with the Lord, there will be a lot to talk about. The Lord is interested in every detail of your life - talk to Him often.
- **How long should we be praying?**
 - Before Jesus' arrest, He was deeply distressed and troubled and went to pray alone. It was late in the midnight and all the disciples were exhausted. Yet twice Jesus asked Peter, James and John to keep watch for one hour and pray. Matthew 26:32-38.
 - Is praying an hour too long? It is not how long we should pray, because if there are no needs, then there is nothing to pray about.
 - **Change:** Are there needs that we ought to pray? Are there things that we can handle our own, or that we need God's help to work with us?

b. Problem 2: We are not praying enough.

- **We doubt God will answer our prayers.**
 - We think that it is very mysterious how and when God answers prayers. Maybe we think that God only answers prayers arbitrarily. This is because of our ignorance in His Word and promises.
 - In Luke 11:9-10 Jesus promised, “So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.
 - **Change:** When we pray, we must remember His promises.
- **We fail to pray according to His will.**
 - 1 John 5:14 “... if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”
 - His will has been clearly revealed in His word.

- **When we don't pray, we will do all the work.**
 - But when we pray God will work with us and help us.
 - We don't need to pray if we can handle things ourselves.
 - Psalm 69:32 (NLT) – “The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God's help be encouraged.”
 - Nehemiah was a man of prayer and there was a total of 14 prayers recorded in the Book of Nehemiah. The Lord helped the Israelites in the work of rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem at the time of the exile. The work was tremendous, and the enemies kept coming to frustrate the work. Against all odds, the Israelites rebuilt the wall in fifty-two days, a feat that caused all the enemies to be afraid. The reason was recorded in Nehemiah 6:16 - “they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God”.
- **We do not think that God is interested to answer our prayers.**
 - The Lord is sovereign. Psalm 115:3 “Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him”. But He promised to honour His word.
 - In Luke 11:11-13, Jesus gave another illustration to assure us of God's promise - that even earthly fathers, who are evil, would give good gifts to their children, so the Heavenly Father, who is Holy, would give much more to His children.
 - We must remember the reason why God is interested to answer our prayers is because He is our Heavenly Father.

c. Problem 3: We give up too soon.

- We lack persistence. In Luke 11:8, Jesus gave a scenario of a sleepy and reluctant friend already in bed. Yet he will get up and give as much at midnight because he was pressed persistently.
- When would we need persistence? We need to be persistent when we are really in need. James 5:13 (ERV) says “Are you having troubles? You should pray”.
- Yet there are times of our greatest need when we fail to seek the Lord's help because we relied too much on others such as the medical advancement. So we stopped relying on the Lord and don't even pray.
- King Asa was afflicted with a severe disease in his feet and did not seek help from the Lord, but only from his doctors. He died within 2 years. (2 Chronicles 16:12-13)

3. Application and discuss.

Consider the following needs which would require you to pray daily or weekly.

- a. **Personal needs.** (When will I pray? _____)
 - Health, studies, finance, career, relationship, temptation, spiritual growth, lost sheep.
- b. **Spouse** (When will I pray and bless my spouse? _____)
- c. **Family** (When will I pray with my family? _____)
 - One another's needs. Salvation of loved ones. Church building.
- d. **Church** (Will I pray with my leaders one Sunday a month at 8am? _____)
 - Church building: fund, cost control, approvals, contractor selection, timeline keeping. Tampines outreach.
 - BC to fulfil God's calling and vision.
 - Ps. Philip, Ps. Kin, Net Leader, speakers, wisdom and strength.
 - Net goals: Baptism, Alpha, raise leaders.
 - Young adults, Collegiate, Youth, Children: Grow in faith and maturity.
 - BB / GB / RR / CK / WR / PG / BCSS Ministry effectiveness and more labourers.
 - Worship / Media / Sound ministry upskills and more labourers.
 - Other churches: BCSH, BCHK, BC Phnom Penh, Ita in Cambodia, BCT, BCF, EC.