

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

20. PRAYER AND INTERCESSION



“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

“When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again.

Matthew 6:5-7 NTV

Praying is talking to God, it is having a conversation and not a monologue. The generalized concept of prayer is an endless repetition of words, requests, instructions and in many cases commands of what our Eternal Father, the King, should do. Praying is not telling God what He does not know because He is omniscient, that is, He knows everything. Praying is also not trying to convince Him to be good and “finally do something for us,” because the truth is that He left us instructions on what we should do and how to do it. Prayer should be based on seeking to hear God’s voice and His instruction to do (obey) His will, and should not be a monologue in which we do not expect for Him to speak to us.

Jesus talked about some specific things regarding prayer:

- Don't pray so that people see us and think we are very spiritual.
- Pray privately, alone with Him; That way when we need Him to manifest Himself in public, He will.
- Do not think that prayers are effective because of the great eloquence in which they are done, and that the prayer is long or how highly structured sentences may be because that is not the case. Jesus' most effective prayers were:

- "Go out!" and immediately Lazarus, who had been dead for four days, came back to life.
- Said, "Be healed!" and the skin of a leper became like that of a baby.
- Peter prayed saying “Get up and walk!” and that was enough for a paralyzed man to regain strength in his limbs and start running and jumping.

So public prayers are not going to be effective because of the quantity or quality of the words we use, but because of the relationship we have with our Eternal Father, measured in that intimate time.

**As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut.
It is evil to make mindless offerings to God.**

Ecclesiastes 5:1 NLT

Effective prayer is one that is aligned with the will (with the heart) of the Father, but how can we pray according to His heart if we do not know Him? How can we pray if we don't know what He feels, what He wants and what His desire is? Therefore, praying effectively is the result of spending time with the Son, with Jesus, who is the Word. If we do not know the Word it will be impossible to know the Father and then our prayers will be based on what we want, not on what He wants.

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

James 4:3 NTV

Another reason prayers are not heard is because our hearts are misaligned by not recognizing and therefore confessing a sin. Also, because we are offended or hurt with someone and, therefore lacking unforgiveness, which hinders our prayers.

Work at living in peace with everyone, and work at living a holy life, for those who are not holy will not see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14 NLT

A variant of prayer is intercession, which is talking to God about someone else. This is not done to accuse, but to take their place, that is, to put oneself in their shoes to do for others what they cannot or do not know how to do, until they can do it for themselves. Example: forgive, ask for forgiveness, confess, etc.

Interceding is taking the position of Jesus for another person, giving our life (time) for them. The Bible gives us several examples:

- Daniel recognized and asked for forgiveness for the sins of his people (Daniel 9:4-15)
- Abraham crying out to God so that Sodom and Gomorrah would not be destroyed (Genesis 18:23-32)
- Aaron and Hur raised Moses' arms (Exodus 17:11-13)
- Jesus prayed in John 17 interceding for us all

Prayer and intercession, as well as fasting, are a normal part of the life of a child of God. They are part of the culture that any person who intends to establish the Kingdom of heaven on earth must have.

Study Questions:

1. What is the difference between praying and interceding? To what are we children of God called?
2. If we can all pray whenever we want, why is it important to pray for others?
3. What should we do when we have a craving for something we saw on social media, from neighbours, or from friends, and we want God to give it to us?
4. In your time of intimacy with God, how often do you remain silent and wait to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit? Is your intimate time with the Father a conversation or a monologue?