Doctrine of Prayer

1. The Doctrine of Prayer

   a. Read Revelation 8: 1-6
      1. What is happening here? (v1)
      2. What is it that causes silence in heaven? (v3)
      3. What happened after the prayers were brought before God? (v5)

      • Key Point: The prayers of the saints “interrupt heaven” and cause things to happen on earth. We usually think of heaven “interrupting earth” due to what happens in heaven. Here it is the other way around. All of heaven stops because someone is praying. Our prayers matter.

   b. Read Genesis 18: 20-33
      1. What is Abraham doing?
      2. What is the outcome?

      • Key Point: God listens to the prayers of the saints and prayers can change things. This point is hard for the human mind to comprehend; the idea that everything would happen exactly as it does regardless of whether we pray or not. This is at the core of belief in the power of prayer; the prayers of human beings, like us, can affect the outcome of history. Charles Spurgeon said, “My own soul’s conviction is that prayer is the grandest power in the entire universe, that it has a more omnipotent force than electricity, attraction, gravitation, or any other of those other secret forces which men have named, but which they do not understand.”

2. Techniques for Effective Prayer:

   Prayer is a learned behavior. No one is born and expert and no one has ever mastered prayer. The best way to learn how to pray “effectively” is to learn from the Master.

      Jesus’ disciples recognized this. Prayer had been part of their lives since birth so they knew the basics of prayer. As they watched and listened to Jesus pray they saw that there was more to prayer than mere ritual, prayer, Jesus’ prayers made a difference, Jesus’ prayers made things happen, and they wanted that. What do we see when we study the Master in prayer?
1. **Set a time and place:**
   - Chose one time a day to have “focused” time of prayer. Select the time of day when you are at your best. Jesus was always seen praying in the morning, while it was still dark. (Mark 1:35) If you are a morning person this works best for you. If you are not than lunch or evening time might be better. Allow enough time so you are not rushed. Begin with a short period, 5 minutes, and be consistent. Remember, habits take time to establish. If you forget one day, pick it up the next.
   - Choose a setting that is conducive to prayer. Jesus would go to a “solitary” place to pray. Away from the crowd and His followers. He taught this His followers as well. (Mark 6: 31-32) Jesus would go out in nature, a place of beauty. Some people are known to have “prayer closet” where they can hide away from the distractions of the household. Wherever you choose, select a place where you can be free from distractions and not only pray to God but listen to Him as well.
   - Key point here is that the above takes “preparation” and “planning”. Prepare yourself before entering into the time of prayer and arrange your day accordingly.

2. **Keep it Simple**
   - Simple prayer is the most common type of prayer in scripture.
   - Read Luke 11: 2-4
   - Jesus tell His disciples to:
     - Honor God
     - Ask for daily bread
     - Ask for forgiveness
     - Provide guidance
   - Come to God as you are and bring to His throne those things that are on your heart. C.S. Lewis wrote that in prayer we must “lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us”.
   - Remember that nothing is too trivial for God.

3. **Be Fully Present**
   - Ever try to have a conversation with someone who is preoccupied while you are talking to them? This is what it is for God when we are not fully present when we are praying.
   - Being fully present means becoming fully aware of and speaking to God about the things that are happening within your heart at that point in time.
   - During prayer time do you find that your mind constantly wanders to other subjects and topics? It might be that your mind is wandering to those things
you most need to talk to God about. When this happens, listen to those thoughts and discover what it is that you need to talk to God about.
• Talking to God about “real” day to day issues will make your prayer time a much more focused and exciting experience.

3. **Strategies for Praying in the Community:**
Intercessory prayer: Simple prayers may be the most practiced in Scripture but intercessory prayer is the kind that is most commanded in Scripture. We are commanded to pray for:

- All in authority 1 Tim 2:2
- All men 1 Tim 2:1
- All Saints Eph 6:18
- Children Gen 17:18, Mt 15:22
- The church Ps 122:6, Is 62:6-7
- Enemies: Jer 29:7
- Fellow countrymen: Rom 10:1
- Friends Jb 42:8
- Kings 1 Tim 2:2
- Masters Gn 24: 12-14
- Ministers 2 Co 1:11, Php 1:19
- Persecutors Mt 5:44
- Servants Lk 7: 2-3
- The sick Ja 5:14
- Those who envy us Nu 12:13
- Those who forsake us 2 Tim 4:16
- Those who speak against God Nu 11: 1-2; 14: 13, 19

John Ortberg said “*When I intercede for others, the circle of my concern becomes expanded a little beyond myself. More than that, when I intercede for others, God is at work in ways I do not understand. You don’t know how many people have been strengthened because you asked God to encourage them; how many people have been healed because you prayed for their bodies; how may spiritual runaways have come home because you prayed for their souls. We may never know the true effects of prayer this side of death. But we do know this: History belongs to the intercessors*."

a. In light of what we discussed in the first section above regarding the power of our prayers what can we conclude about the affect of our prayers in and on the lives of those we pray for?
c. Jesus taught to be specific and persistent.
   • Read Lk 11: 5-13; 18: 1-8
   • Begin and maintain a daily prayer list.
Section 5 – Lesson One

- Write down answers to prayers as a reminder of how your prayers make a difference.
- Share your prayer requests with others.
  d. (Ideas on praying for and around the community)

4. **Prayer Establishes a Relationship with God:**

We are invited many times in scripture to enter into a relationship with God through prayer. It is through this relationship that God expresses His will through His saints. In this light, prayer should be viewed as ‘talking to God about what we are doing ‘together’. We can do no greater thing on this earth than intercede on behalf of our fellow human beings with the Creator.

**OTHER THOUGHTS:**

- **Constant prayer throughout the day:**
  
  Prayer should be offered without ceasing 1Thess 5:17
  Evening, morning and noon Ps 55:17
  Day and night Ps 88:1

- **Jesus’ Instruction on prayer:** Matt 6: 1-15