

Colossians 4:2: Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Intro: Pastor: There is a story about D. L. Moody making a visit to Scotland in the 1800's and opening one of his talks at a local grade school with the rhetorical question, "What is prayer?" To his amazement, hundreds of children's hands went up. So he decided to call on a lad near the front, who promptly stood up and said, "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." This is the answer to question #98 in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. To this Moody responded by saying, "Be thankful, son, that you were born in Scotland."

- **WSC 98: What is prayer?** Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

- **WCF 21.3:** Prayer, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men; and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of His Spirit, according to His will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance

1. Prayer Is An Offering Up Of Our Desires Unto God

Psalm 62:8: Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

2. Prayer Should Be Done According To God's Will

1 John 5:14-15: And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. **(Pray the Bible!)**

Matthew 26:39: And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

3. Prayer Is Prayed In The Name Of Jesus Christ

John 16:23: Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father **in my name**, he will give it to you.

1 Peter 2:5: you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Barry York: Prayer is coming to the Father by faith in the merits of Christ. An American citizen cannot hold office in the United Kingdom or assume he deserves special privileges from the queen. Likewise, no sinner can stand on his own merits before the King of heaven. Yet by faith in Christ's work, we become citizens of the kingdom of heaven through His righteousness. Thus, we gain "confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19). This righteous standing before God is what it means to pray "in the name of Christ," as the catechism states. Consequently, every time we pray, we should remember our standing by confessing our sins and thanking God for how He mercifully receives us through Jesus.

WLC 180: What is it to pray in the name of Christ? To pray in the name of Christ is, in obedience to his command, and in confidence on his promises, to ask mercy for his sake; not by bare mentioning of his name, but by drawing our encouragement to pray, and our boldness, strength, and hope of acceptance in prayer, from Christ and his mediation.

4. Prayer Is Done With The Help Of The Holy Spirit

- **Jude 1:20:** But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit

- **Ephesians 6:18:** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

- **Ephesians 6:17:** take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God

- **Romans 8:26:** Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Tom Schreiner: the groanings are genuinely those of believers that originate from the Holy Spirit. These groanings are not audible. They are the inexpressible longings that arise in every believer's heart to do and know the will of God. That the groanings arise in the hearts of believers is suggested by verse 27, which says that "God searches the hearts." This is most naturally understood to refer to the hearts of believers. God searches the hearts of believers and finds unutterable longings to conform their lives to the will of God. The Holy Spirit takes these groanings and presents them before God in an articulate form. Even though believers cannot specify their requests to God adequately since they do not know his will sufficiently, the Holy Spirit translates these groanings and conforms them to God's will.

5. Prayer Is Done With Confession Of Our Sins

Matthew 6:12: and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- **Psalm 32:5:** I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

- **Daniel 9:4-6:** I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵ we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. ⁶ We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. **GOSPEL!**

6. Prayer Is Done With Thankful Acknowledgment Of God's Mercies

Philippians 4:6-7: do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

7. Prayer Is Worship

Matthew 15:8-9: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

John Piper: The inner essence of worship is to know God truly and then respond from the heart to that knowledge by valuing God, treasuring God, prizing God, enjoying God, being satisfied with God above all earthly things. And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in demonstrable acts of praise from the lips [and prayer!] and demonstrable acts of love in serving others for the sake of Christ.

8. God Requires Prayer From All People

Psalm 65:1-2: Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed. ² O you who hears prayer, to you shall all flesh come.

Acts 17:30: The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent

9. Prayer Should Be Done With Understanding, Reverence, Humility, Fervency, Faith, Love, And Perseverance

a. Understanding: 1 Corinthians 14:15: What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind [understanding] also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind [understanding] also.

b. Reverence: Hebrews 12:28-29: Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

Platt: Lamenting his and others' mind wondering in prayer: "Do you realize who you're talking to?"

c. Humility: Genesis 18:27: Abraham answered and said, “Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes.”

- **Isaiah 57:15:** For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

- **1 Peter 5:5:** Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

d. Fervency: Hebrews 5:7: In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with **loud cries and tears**, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

David Chapman: Readers would first recall Jesus’ agonizing prayer in Gethsemane, but the broad time reference, “in the days of his flesh,” suggests that Jesus’ earthly prayers were constantly heartfelt, earnest, and accompanied by tears.

Matthew 15:8-9: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹ in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

e. Faith: James 1:5-8: If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Mark 11:24: Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, & it will be yours.

f. Love: 1 Corinthians 13:1-8: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends.

John Piper: Love is an overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others.

g. Perseverance: Colossians 4:2: Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

- **Luke 18:1:** And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:17:** pray without ceasing

John Piper: 1) There is a spirit of dependence that should permeate all we do.

2) Pray repeatedly and often.

3) Don’t stop praying! Don’t ever give up! Ever!

10. Prayer Glorifies God And Should Be Done For His Glory

Pastor: Now think about this for a moment. God's will is that we, his creatures, ask him for things. And it is not just his will, it is his delight. He loves to be asked for things. Proverbs 15:8 says, "The prayer of the upright is His delight." He is so eager to hear prayers and respond to them that he says in Isaiah 65:24, "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear." In fact, he takes special steps to see to it that he is constantly badgered.

I say that reverently and, I think, truly on the basis of Isaiah 62:6–7, "On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; all day & all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; and give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth." So God loves being asked for things so much that he appoints people to "give him no rest" but to "remind the Lord" and "never [to] keep silent." Meditating on this is very encouraging to our faith and hope. This means that God, the Creator of the Universe, who holds our life in his hands and rules the world, is the kind of God who loves to be asked for things.

I find it also tremendously strengthening to my faith to meditate further on why this is. Why does God not only will that we ask him for things, but delight in it and love it like incense (Revelation 5:8) and take steps to see that it happens? What's behind this delight in our asking him for things? You might say, "Well, it's because God is love. It's his very nature to be a Giver." That is absolutely right. As Paul said in Romans 11:35–36, "Who has given a gift to him that he should be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever."

God is always the Giver (see Acts 17:25). That is what he loves to be. And the last phrase of Romans 11:36 says why, "To him be glory forever." It is more glorious to be a Giver than a getter. Getters look needy. Givers look self-sufficient. So God ordains prayer because he wants us to see him as gloriously self-sufficient and ourselves as totally needy. So he says in Psalm 50:15, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." God answers our call for help so that we get the rescue and he gets the honor. "I will rescue you and you will honor me." Similarly in John 14:13 Jesus says, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Ask for things in my name! Why? So that the Father may be glorified. So he may look as glorious as he really is.

John 17:1: When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you"

Christ Jesus Is The Man Of Prayer
All Night He'd Spend This Love Affair
No Desire From God He'd Spare
He Prayed With Fervency So Rare
And With The Spirit Reverent Care
He Prayed God's Will Be Done For There
Is Where All Grace And Joys Flare
He Died And All Our Sins Would Bare
Then Rose To Conquer Death's Dread Scare
Now In His Name God Answers Prayer
So Humbly Seek And Love And Dare
To Ask And Pray Without Despair
For God Will Hear And Without Err
He'll Answer And Your Burdens Share
With Him No Lover Can Compare
So Always Run To Him In Prayer!