Why do we pray?

by

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If you ask a Christian if prayer is important, they will answer and say yes. If I were to ask you if you pray as much as you know you should your answer will more than likely be no. The interesting thing is that we are all that way. Isn't it interesting that we all know that we should pray, but we do not pray enough? Why is that? Why don't we pray as much as we should? Perhaps a more important question to ask is: Why do we pray?

Prayer is something that all Christians have heard about. We hear sermons on the right and wrong ways to pray that sometimes generates more questions than answers. Sometimes we even hear sermons on how we should pray. We know that prayer is important and that the Bible has much to say about it, but we do not always know why we should pray. Prayer is indeed a large and weighty subject about which many sermons and books have been written. In my mind this usually brings up the question of: Why do we pray?

The people who work for me usually do a better job if they know why they are doing what I have requested them to do. I have found that most people are this way. You may find that you also fit into this category. Perhaps we should treat prayer in the same manner. If we knew why we are supposed to pray, maybe we would pray more often.

I was able to come up with a list of 50 reasons of why we should pray. After looking at my list, I noticed a pattern. Each reason fell into one of four categories or aspects. To answer the question of why do we pray, I am simply going to cover the four main aspects, that I boiled the 50 reasons down to, about why we pray. There are of course, more than four reasons why we should pray, but I think these four are the most important ones. Many of the other reasons that I do not cover here (but that you may come up with on your own) will probably fall into one of these four categories.

Jesus talked about prayer quite often and even taught us how to pray. We know prayer must be important to God or it would never have been such a weighty issue in the Bible. Perhaps it has a lot to do with communication. As I read through the Bible I notice that a very interesting thing happens when people communicate with God. I noticed who did the majority of the talking. This should not have caught me by surprise, but it did. Can you guess who did the majority of the talking? If you said God, you are right! (Did you guess correctly?) When people communicated with God, God talked the most. People did very little talking to God, they mostly listened and then obeyed. Then I looked at my own prayer life. Guess who was doing most of the talking!
That's right, I was, Ouch! Take a look at your own prayer life and see who is doing most of the talking. Is it you, or is it God? Something is seriously out of balance here.

Before we get into why we should pray, we need to understand what prayer is. The word pray is the Greek word “προσενχομαι - proseuchomai” which literally means “to give thanks, to make requests.” Although the word pray is not same as the word worship, the two do go hand-in-hand. When we pray, we need to modestly come before God, adore him, bow down and pay homage to him in worship. This is part of how we involve God in our lives. We worship what we love the most, whether it is God, money, a person, or things. Philippians 4:6 says in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. In other words, when we pray we need to come to God in an attitude of worship. With that in mind, let's cover the four aspects of our question: Why do we pray?

**Prayer does not inform God, it involves God.**

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.
(Matt. 6:8)

Matthew 6:8 demonstrates an interesting point about God's omnipotence: that God is already informed about and knows ahead of time what we need. That is kind of staggering isn't it? God knows everything there is to know about us. Have you ever wondered why we should pray if God already knows what we need? It makes you wonder: “What's the point?” If God already knows about my needs then what is the purpose of prayer?

These are actually valid questions and many of us have asked them. This verse should not be used as an excuse not to pray. On the contrary, God wants us to admit our needs to Him and to show Him the concerns of our hearts. Why would He want us to do this? It is because He wants to be involved in our day-to-day affairs. What this verse is saying is that God knows us. He also knows what we need, better than we even know ourselves. Therefore, it is logical to seek Him to meet our needs. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says: “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” This simply reiterates that God is actively interested in us and our needs.

He took him outside and said, “Look at the heavens and count the stars - if indeed you can count them.” Then He said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”
Genesis 15:5

In Genesis chapter 15 the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision. In the vision, Abram told God that he was without a child. God knew that Abram needed a child, but it allowed the two of them to talk. God wanted to be involved in Abram's life. Abram believed the promises of God
and was considered righteous. Abram involved God in his life and his life was changed forever. Abram was changed because of his interaction with God.

When God met Moses at the burning bush, it became a time of communication. God gave Moses his calling and Moses gave his excuses as to why he was inadequate. Every time Moses gave an excuse, God gave an answer. God already knew everything about Moses, but Moses needed to get involved with God. Moses needed to communicate with God and become accustomed to talking with Him. As a result, Moses became a changed man. God then used him to change his world. God wants to get involved in everything we do. Prayer is how we involve him. As a result, we can change our world.

God wants us to involve Him in our day-to-day lives. By spending time daily in prayer and worship, we invite God into our lives. God wants to hear from us, and get involved with us. But he will not intrude, instead, he waits for our invitation. Prayer is an opportunity that everyone should take to invite God to become involved their lives.

**Prayer does not change God, it changes us.**

Abram was a changed man after he spent time talking with God. Abram was 75 years old when God first promised him a son. He was 99 years old when God repeated the promise. He was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Abram believed everything God told him and it was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). God even changed Abram's name to Abraham because Abram had changed. Abram means "noble father"; Abraham means “the father of many nations.” Just think of what prayer can do in your life.

Gideon had an army of more than 30,000 people to fight the army from Midian which had 135,000 men. That is about a 1:4 ratio. One Israelite for every four Midianites. Those are not good odds on the battlefield. God told Gideon he had too many people and reduced his army to 300 men. Only 300 men! The ratio is now 1:400. There is now one Israelite for every four hundred Midianites. Would you fight an army of 135,000 with only 300 men? Gideon spent time in prayer and as a result, believed God's promise of victory. The Lord delivered the incredible victory to Gideon just as he had promised him. Gideon was a changed man. Prayer does that to us, it changes us, if we listen to God and believe Him.

The bible says in Malachi 3:6, God does not change. God is a perfect God and does not need to change. We humans are imperfect beings in constant need of change. Remember Moses at the burning bush? He was trying to change God's mind, but it was not God who changed. Moses came to see a burning bush, and when he left, Moses was on fire (for God). When we come before God in prayer we should be ready to let him show us the areas in our lives that need to be changed. As we learn what it means to truly pray, and start to pray this way, it will be impossible
for us to not change. Just think what the church would be like today if Christians prayed for God to change them according to His will.

**Prayer does not get our will done in Heaven, it gets God's will done on earth.**

At Gethsemane, Jesus prayed “not my will, but yours be done.” How often it is when we want our own will to be done in our lives, but not God's will. It is unfortunate that the so called “faith movement” pushes this philosophy. They try to teach people how to manipulate God into getting their will done on earth. This is not how it should be. We should be seeking God's will and not our own. The hard part is learning to trust God's will for us. Jeremiah 29:11-14 says “For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord,… We need to start putting our trust in the Lord's will for our lives.

In Matthew 6:10 Jesus taught his disciples to pray “…thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” I think it is important that we tell God what it is we think we need. It is also important to let God know our wants and our will. But, (heavy emphasis on the word but) we need to listen to God and find out what He thinks and what He knows we need. We must remember that God's will is more important and much better for us than our own. We can tell God our wants and needs, but we need to tell him, “not my will be done, but let your will be done.” As the saying goes “let go and let God.” Find out what God's will is and pray for it to happen. If we would pray for God's will to be done in our lives, I think we would have a lot fewer problems.

It comes down to will power. Whose will do we want to be accomplished? We really only have two choices: our will, or God's will. Many times we think we know better, or know more than God, and desire for our will to be done. Sadly enough, this is most often the case. But God is sovereign, and that means that He is God and we are not. His will is important and His will is in our best interests. The best thing that we can do is to get our will in line with God's will. We do that through prayerful listening.

**Prayer is not because God needs us, but because we need God.**

Isaiah 40:17 says “All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are regarded by Him as less than nothing and meaningless.” God made us to serve him, not for God to serve us. God is complete in himself, if there were no other creatures in the universe, God would still be complete because he needs no one else. God created the human race not because He needs us, but rather for His pleasure. He created us to worship Him. Galatians 6:3 says “For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.” We should not fool ourselves into thinking
God needs us.

We however desperately need God. God is not made complete in us, but we are made complete in him. Colossians 2:10 says “and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.” Prayer is the key to being made complete in Christ Jesus. In the book of ACTS, whenever the church came together in unity and prayed, God moved miraculously. We need God to move miraculously in our lives, and this can only happen through prayer. This is why we pray, not to inform God, not to change him to our way of thinking, not to get our will done, not because he needs us, but because we need him, love him, and long to worship him.