

Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17

How to Pray

Many believers struggle with the very important spiritual discipline of prayer. There are many reasons for this but in my experience, I have found the primary reason to be intimidation, which leads to a lack of practice. Intimidation, resulting from the incorrect belief that prayer is to be done in a particular style of speech, utilizing the right combination of words, coupled with correct tone and pace. **Prayer is not an art form.** It is simply genuine honest communication with God using one's own words and style of speech. Prayer is vital to the life of every disciple. It is our primary means of communication with God/Christ. Though prayer is simply genuine honest communication with God using one's own words and style of speech, there are some things we need to understand and to put into practice when we pray. Drawing from this prayer of David, I want to share three of those things. Disclaimer, this sermon is not meant to be exhaustive on the matter.

**First, prayer is always contextual.** And it is the context that will determine how and what we pray. **V2** "Preserve my life, for I *am* holy; You are my God; Save Your servant who trusts in You!" David is running for his life and so he cries out. He literally begs God to save him from his enemies. He does not mince words. He gets right to it. Listen, when it is time to pray, especially in dire situations, there is no time for a show. Just spit out, get on it with it. Just talk to God using your own words and speak from the heart. Church, no pretense! God already knows.

**Matt 6:5-8** <sup>5</sup> “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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> “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. <sup>8</sup> Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

**Second, the particulars of the situation should justify the content of the prayer.** **V2** “Preserve my life, for I *am* holy; You are my God; Save Your servant who trusts in You!” David is just in his request for deliverance because he has not brought this situation upon himself due to disobedience to God. He has been faithful and devoted to God. Thus, he has cause to call on God for deliverance. It is vital that we understand this about prayer if we want to be effective in our prayer life. The particulars of the situation should justify the content of the prayer (expound).

**2 Chron 7:14** <sup>14</sup> “Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.”

**Gal 6:7** “Don’t be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant.”

**James 5:16** <sup>16</sup> Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

**Finally, prayer should appeal to the character of God.** V5, 8-10

<sup>5</sup>For You, Lord, *are* good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. <sup>8</sup>Among the gods *there is* none like You, O Lord; Nor *are there any works* like Your works. <sup>9</sup>All nations whom You have made Shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name.<sup>10</sup>For You *are* great, and do wondrous things; You alone *are* God.”

David understands who he is praying to. And in acknowledging who God is in his prayer, David appeals to the character of God. And appealing to the character of God is important because God always acts in accordance with his character. Could it be that our prayers are ineffective or go unheard because we do not fully understand who we are praying to? And our lack of correct understanding of God/Christ causes us to fashion dead prayers.

**Numbers 14:13-23** <sup>13</sup>“But Moses objected. “What will the Egyptians think when they hear about it?” he asked the Lord. “They know full well the power you displayed in rescuing your people from Egypt. <sup>14</sup>Now if you destroy them, the Egyptians will send a report to the inhabitants of this land, who have already heard that you live among your people. They know, Lord, that you have appeared to your people face to face and that your pillar of cloud hovers over them. They know that you go before them in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. <sup>15</sup>Now if you slaughter all these people with a single blow, the nations that have heard of your fame will say, <sup>16</sup>‘The Lord was not able to bring them into the land he swore to give them, so he killed them in the wilderness.’ <sup>17</sup>“Please, Lord, prove that your power is as great as you have claimed. For you said, <sup>18</sup>‘The Lord is slow to anger and filled with

unfailing love, forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. But he does not excuse the guilty. He lays the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations.’<sup>19</sup> In keeping with your magnificent, unfailing love, please pardon the sins of this people, just as you have forgiven them ever since they left Egypt.”<sup>20</sup> Then the Lord said, “I will pardon them as you have requested.<sup>21</sup> But as surely as I live, and as surely as the earth is filled with the Lord’s glory,<sup>22</sup> not one of these people will ever enter that land. They have all seen my glorious presence and the miraculous signs I performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness, but again and again they have tested me by refusing to listen to my voice.<sup>23</sup> They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will ever see it.”

How to pray? Let the context determine the content and appeal to the character of God/Christ. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.