

Our Father in Heaven

1 February 2021



Father, our Father. The King above. The One who chose to have us, make us, call us and draw us. The One who chose a whole universe to frame our existence, to declare to us His might; proclaim to us His greatness. The One who allowed all of history to take place and to be a womb for His people, a birthplace for beauty and glory. The Vision Giver. The Fashioner and the Determiner of everything good; of direction, purpose and the timing of those purposes. The King – Majesty Himself.

The Purpose of Prayer

The Father is the whole point. The very Purpose of prayer. The very fabric of our being. The very Power at the centre. The very Origin of our existence. The very Reason for our devotion. He is Preeminent. There is no one higher, no one older, no one wiser and no one stronger.

The Father... The very Purpose of prayer.

What would you give to speak even just one request in the presence of such Prominence? To be able to have one word with the Judge before the most important (and possibly final) court case of all time begins? What would you give to see your loved ones share eternal bliss rather than eternal torture? Worse still, what do you think the consequence or regret will be of those who got the “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity but didn’t pitch for the appointment?

Our Father is extremely merciful. And our Father has been exceedingly patient. He thankfully doesn’t just give us a “once-in-a lifetime” opportunity. Our Father is all of the above truths. And we would do exceedingly well to consider them.

Why Should We Pray?

Because of the Father

At the heart of the question of why we should pray, the Father is the answer. We live out of the Father as a tree lives out of the soil. We turn to Him continually in order to live.

We See Prayer in the Bible

We are instructed by Scripture to pray (1 Thessalonians 5:17), but, to some extent, the question of why we should pray is similar to asking why anyone should eat. (Deuteronomy 8:3). In this case, what do we tell our children? Why would we want anyone to eat?

In the Father, we have a similar kind of truth. A truth so obvious that speaking about it seems superfluous, unless we are spiritually immature or impaired in some way, which is quite frequently the dilemma. As human beings, we are blind and deaf, with poor memories and without spiritual understanding. For the sake of our memories, let's do some revision:

Jesus Sets the Prayer Example

Concerning prayer, let us remember that Jesus both modelled (Luke 5:16) and taught it (Luke 18:1). Scripture teaches us that even today, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit don't just do things they deem right. Instead, they 'pray' to the Father (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:26-27). Numerous Scriptures seem to imply that even our enemy is still praying to the Father (Job 1:6-12; Zechariah 3:1; Luke 22:31; Revelation 12:10).

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Saints Throughout the Ages Prayed

Most, if not all, revivals did not happen until someone started persistently laying hold of God. It seems like empires shifted and archangels flew when Daniel prayed (Daniel 10). Climate changes occurred, and nations were saved when Elijah prayed (1 Kings 18). The earth stopped turning and even went in reverse when Joshua and Hezekiah prayed (Joshua 10:12-14; 2 Kings 20:1-11). Fire fell from heaven (2 Kings 1:10), the earth opened up (Numbers 16:32), the seas were split (Exodus 14:21-22), rivers dried up (2 Kings 2), storms ceased (Jonah 1:15), armies were defeated (2 Kings 19: 20-37) and animals changed their behaviour in the weirdest ways, all when the saints prayed (Jonah 1:17 & 2:1 & 2:10; Daniel 6).

And these examples are separate from what Jesus Himself did – remember, these were people just like you and me! (James 5:16-18). The saints literally prayed “ground-breaking prayers”. Those prayers were probably, without exception, not the first prayers that these people had prayed. Just as much as an Olympic athlete does not attempt his routine for the first time and do something extraordinary, these saints were trying to figure out relating to an invisible God in the secret place long before those things occurred.

Why Don't My Prayers Get Answered Like That?

Luke Hulley answered a number of these kinds of questions in his article [When Prayers Don't Get Answered](#), an excellent resource to read. The writer of the book of James also answered this question in his letter (James 4:2-3), stating two reasons for not receiving: not praying at all and praying wrong. Of those two, by far the worst for me is not asking. I dread hearing on that day that I could have had so many other blessings and saved so many more lives, made such a difference to many, if I had just asked. That would cause me to shed bitter tears.

It is written about our older brother, Daniel, that when he was persecuted for his devotion to God, he went and prayed, as was his custom (Daniel 6:10). As was his habit! The NKJV translation says, *“as was his custom since early days.”* These are customs we need to build, habits we need to form, so that we may have substance in the day of battle. Not only did he pray, but he honoured the Father and continued giving thanks (not moaning) amidst the trial. How beautiful is that? And that is precisely what the Holy Spirit is building in every one of us if we give and devote ourselves to Him and His ways. I encourage you to create a habit and establish the routine. May it be said of every one of us on that day, *“Prayer and thanksgiving were their custom. They knew how to do it.”*

However, we want to move from the point of relating through our need to a place of loving the Father.

We Pray Because We Need The Father

Just as much as, or even more than, a baby needs his parents, so our existence depends entirely on God. Our whole world presses in on us and helps convince us that we need Him. However, we want to move from the point of relating through our need to a place of loving the Father. If His purposes are largely dependent on us praying, then we will do just that because we love. If His emotions or purposes in any given day or situation are veiled, we seek Him. We seek Him to love Him. Our whole purpose for living is to be a blessing to Him who made us, and we'll give ourselves entirely to that.

Speaking about devotion, we are frequently reminded that a healthy church consists of people who devote themselves (Acts 2:42). And devotion, in essence, communicates the willingness to sacrifice! We need to make sacrifices to achieve a specific goal; to be a particular people. And the most obvious and important question for me when we speak about prayer is when should we pray?

When Should We Pray?

Matthew 6:33 says the following concerning the prescribed order for this, *“seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

This word *‘first’* in Greek is the word *‘proton’*. The word means, “first in time, place and influence”; it means “chief”; “first in honour”.

Someone with a bit of scientific background would tell us that a proton is the absolute core of an atom around which the rest of the atom exists. When determining what time of the day and how long God would want us to pray, it would be good for us to consider this. The Father will be found if we arrange (or, most probably, re-arrange) our lives entirely around the pursuit of Him!

Now the Bible doesn't say that we only pray during our “quiet times”, for it clearly states that we need to grow to a place of praying without stopping (1 Thessalonians 5:17). However, it is clear that there have to be those monument times, a secret time behind a closed door (Matthew 6:6), that happens at least daily.

There is still so much that can be said, but my suggestion would be to start our prayer lives by courageously answering the question “when?”. And let's clear our diaries joyfully to make the principal place in our day available for Him. And when that is settled, and we have started doing that as a habit, let us only then move on to the question of how.