

Prayer Is a Gift from God

Prayer is a gift God gives to all people as a way to speak with Him. Although we see the signs of God around us, we cannot see or hear God. God's Son Jesus teaches us how to pray by giving us what we call "The Lord's Prayer." Jesus also teaches us when and where to pray. He says, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6). Here Jesus says to pray in secret rather than in a public place, begging for attention. Where can we pray? Many believing families pray together at home at bedtime. Others pray by themselves before school or work. Sunday school and youth camp students pray before their lessons. We pray at services.

God wants us to pray to Him. The Bible says that our prayers are held in golden vessels before God in heaven; so important our prayers are to Him! We can feel free to speak with God because He is our best friend, Father, and protector. Sometimes it may seem as if God hasn't heard our prayers because we do not immediately see His reply. As a child, I remember praying to God as I tried to sleep. I would include the difficulties from my day—the stress from school, how I didn't dare confess my faith in an upcoming writing assignment, or how lonely I felt with so many recent changes in my life. I would also thank God for His many blessings: to be able to go to school, to be able to read, and for my dear siblings whom I could always call "friend." I remember praying for my parents and each of my siblings starting with the oldest. I wanted God to bless and protect each of them, including myself. It seemed that every morning I realized I hadn't finished my prayer because sleep had come instead. The following evening, I would again pray for my parents and siblings, this time starting with the youngest, so I could include them, too. God has heard those prayers just as He hears all the others. His answers are shown to us in His time. Looking back, I remember the peaceful sleep God gave me during those nights of prayer, the respect my teachers had of my faith, and how richly my parents, siblings, and I have been blessed.

As a youth we may struggle with changes in life. It is good to remember our old friends, new friends, and even those who are disrespectful towards us. Jesus says, "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Luke 6:28). What do we ask God to do for those people? We can ask God to bless and help them. We can also ask that God would help us to not feel angry or bitter toward them. A fruit of faith is love; we want to have that prayer so love wouldn't be broken.

Each of us has different experiences in life. We all have different psalms to sing. God has created us all and wants to hear our psalms or prayers. He wants us to speak with Him, to draw closer to Him. In doing so we can feel the comfort of God's open arms. We can pray as often as we need, in times of happiness, and in times of struggle.

The Lord bless us and keep us! The Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us! The Lord lift up His countenance upon us, and give us peace! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

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QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT:

- When have you prayed, and what have you prayed for?
- Is it easier to pray when life is going well or when you are facing difficulties? Share experiences.