

PRAYER

Community Group Series

"You have said,
'Seek my face.
'My heart says
to you, 'Your
face, Lord, do I
seek.'"

PSALM 27:8

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*“They lifted their voices to
God”
Acts 4:24*

God has called Church-on-Main to be a house of prayer, and our corporate prayer meetings have often been considered to be the 'sweet spot' of the life of the church. We are trusting that this series will help to grow our individual prayer times as well as our times together as we call on the Lord as a community to seek him and his purposes for us. The series will look at different aspects of prayer in the Sunday meetings and in community groups that meet during the week. These topics can be seen below:

SESSION 1

[Different types of prayer]

Eph 6:18 "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests" (NIV) (emphasis added)

1 Tim 2:1 "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people" (ESV) (emphasis added)

What seems apparent from the verses above is that there are different types of prayer. Below are some of these different kinds of prayer you may want to explore.

Personal prayer

Matt 6:6 – Jesus taught us to find time to pray on our own.

Luke 5:16 & Mark 1:35 – Jesus Himself would often pray on His own.

Intimate, personal prayer is at the very heart of experiencing a real relationship with God.

Corporate prayer

Matt 6:9 – "Our Father" suggests that this is a prayer we pray in the company of others.

Acts 1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 4:24; 12:12 are just some of the verses in Acts where we find the community gathering for prayer.

In the book of Acts we see the great emphasis the early church had on corporate prayer.

Prayers of adoration

Luke 11:2 – When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray he started with a prayer of adoration. Our songs of worship are actually prayers of adoration being sung to God.

Prayer of confession / repentance

This is not only a prayer prayed at the time salvation!

Luke 11:4 – Jesus taught his disciples to pray constant prayers of confession

Rev 2:5; 2:16 – Here we see churches being instructed to repent

1 John 2:1 – We can have confidence of being forgiven as we know that Jesus stands before God on our behalf.

Prayers of repentance bring relief and restore peace.

The amount of times you pray like this can be an indication of your level of humility.

Prayers of thanks giving

Phil 4:4 – This is a command. We are to rejoice in every circumstance despite our feelings.

Rom 5:6-11 – We always have a reason to give thanks!

Phil 1:3 – Praying with thanks will bring joy into our prayers

Often it is when we are “counting our blessings” before God that we are stirred to pray more deeply.

Prayer of supplication / requests

Phil 4:6 – Rather than being anxious we should bring our requests to God and find rest. Luke 11:3 – Jesus taught us to ask for our “daily bread”

It is to God’s glory that we make requests of Him. In it we are acknowledging that apart from Him we will not be blessed.

God will meet our needs, not our greeds

Rom 8:32 – We must have assurance that God will provide for us.

Prayers of intercession

Exodus 32:11-14 – Moses intercedes for the people of God

1 Sam 7:5; 12:23 – Samuel thought it sin to not pray for the people.

Acts 7:60 – Stephen (like Jesus) prays for those killing him.

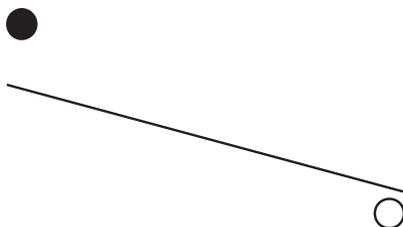
Acts 12:5; 12 – The church intercedes for Peter.

Eph 3:14-15 – Paul prays for the church.

1 Tim 2:1-2 - The church prays for all people.

Rom 8:34 & Heb 7:25 – Jesus the intercessor.

This is one of the most humble yet most privileged callings of the Christian.



SESSION 2

Hindrance

Hindrances

Hindrances Below are some scripture references. Look them up and slot them into the categories below. It would be great if you could find other texts that also speak to these categories.

- a) Hindrances from prayer*
- b) Hindrances to prayer*
- c) Hindrances in prayer*
- d) Other (describe)*

Proverbs 28:9

Isaiah 59:2

John 9:31

James 4:3

James 2:6

1 Peter 3:7

Psalms 99:6-9

Daniel 10:12-14

Jeremiah 29:13

John 15:7

Hosea 5:15

Leviticus 26:40

SESSION 3

How God answers prayer

Quiz:

Son comes to his dad and asks, "Dad, please can I have R40 to go and watch *The Avengers*?"

What are all the possible answers Dad could give?

1. No, I don't want you to watch that movie.
2. I'm not answering that until you clean your room like I asked you to.
3. No, you're not old enough yet for that movie. Wait until you're 16.
4. Sure son, here's R40.
5. Sure son, here's R100 so you can pay for someone else and/or buy snacks.
6. No, let's rather hire the DVD and invite a bunch of people around. We can make popcorn, get chips and Coke, and enjoy it altogether.

Jesus said:

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you" (Matt. 7:7).

Yet many times we pray for things and they don't come to pass. We pray for people to be healed, for family members or friends to be saved, or for financial breakthrough – but they don't seemingly get answered. Did God even hear?

Can we believe Jesus' promise, "For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened" (Matt 7:8)?

We can take courage that Christians through the ages have had great victory in God answering their prayers. These testimonies are good.

But we must delve into the Bible to discover the truth of these statements of Jesus.

"Or which of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matt 7:9–11).

God hears prayer.

How God answers is sometimes hard to understand, and hard to discover. We see in the Bible that God has 4 ways in which he answers our questions.

I. YES

1. God often grants the petitions we ask of Him – Ps 118:5; 138:3 2. Especially when we put Him first in our lives – Mt 6:33

3. We must ask according to His will – 1 Jn 5:14–15

Story:

“Christian cartoonist Ron Wheeler dreamed of creating evangelistic tracts, but he needed a new computer. He found out what he needed and started to pray. Two weeks later, a friend called Ron out of the blue and offered him a new computer—the exact model Ron had been praying about. Shortly after setting up the computer, Ron received a phone call from American Tract Society asking him to design a whole series of evangelistic cartoon tracts.”

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (Jas 5:16).

II. YES, BUT NOT YET

1. God may grant our request, but in time and according to His purpose – Ecc 3:1; 11 2. So we may think God is saying “No”, or just not answering our prayers, when He is really saying “Yes, but wait” – Lk 18:7

When it appears that God is saying wait, or he’s not answering our prayers:

1. We need to have patience – Heb 6:10–12

2. We need to keep asking, seeking, knocking – Lk 11:8–10

3. We need to remember God’s promise – Rom 8:24–28

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Story:

“Church-on-Main received a prophetic word nearly 10 years ago that we would have offerings of venues. We have asked God to fulfill that word many, many times.

It hasn’t come to pass for nearly a decade. We still have not had the offerings of venues promised, but God has supplied our needs in every season nonetheless.

He has miraculously provided the Wynberg venue to purchase. Had we bought too early we may have set a cap on the number of people we could reach. Yet through this process, God has stretched our faith and our capacity to be the base church that he has called us to be.”

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov 3:5)

III. YES, BUT NOT LIKE WE EXPECTED HIM TO

1. Sometimes God answers in a way differently than we may anticipate

2. Remember, His thoughts and methods are much different than ours – *Isa 55:8; 9 3*. For example, asking God for strength and perseverance...

a. He may give us trials to bear – *Phil 1:29–30*

b. Which in turn develops the virtues we prayed for! – *Rom 5:3–4* God sometimes gives us more than we ask for! *Isa 38:1–6*. Hezekiah gets what he asks for and much more. Story:

"Australian David Smallbone felt God leading him to promote Christian concerts in his homeland where only 5 percent of the people believed in Christ. When too few fans filled seats during one major tour, however, David took a \$250,000 bath in red ink.

Creditors repossessed his home, and the father of six looked for work elsewhere. A top artist offered him a job in Nashville, so the Smallbones sold their furniture and other possessions and purchased tickets to the United States. A few weeks after they arrived, however, David was informed that his position was "no longer available." He literally could not get out of bed for several days. When he and his wife explained to their children what happened, they all got on their knees and asked God to help them.

Interesting things began to happen. God provided bags of groceries, a minivan, and odd jobs. Then the biggest surprise of all—a recording contract for David's oldest daughter, Rebecca, age 15. She recorded her first album using an old family name, St. James.

Flash forward to today. David promotes his own daughter's sold-out concerts. Rebecca St. James has become one of the hottest Christian artists in America."

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11).

IV. SOMETIMES GOD SAYS NO

2 Sam 12:16–23 – David prays for his dying child.

2 Cor 12:7–10 – Paul prays for the 'thorn in his side' to be removed.

1. There may be times when God denies our requests because we ask for the wrong things – Jam 4:3

2. There may also be times when he is teaching us and knows that the things we ask for are not going to be the best – Heb 12:5–11

When God seems to say "No", we may not fully understand, but we can still fully trust, and praise Him! – Hab 3:17–19

Story:

"We all know someone close to us who have died. In many, if not all, of these situations we have cried out to God to save their lives, and to give them more years on the Earth.

These have been mothers with small children, some of our parents, some of our friends.

We can all take heart knowing that God is good, that he does hear, and that through all these things we can trust that he is working for the eternal good of his children."

"The Lord has heard my supplication; The Lord will receive my prayer." – Ps 6:9

V. UNANSWERED PRAYER

Hab 1:2 – "How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?"

Ps 22:2 – "O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent."

Unanswered prayer can be one of the most unnerving and difficult things to understand. Some questions to ask when this seems to be the case:

1. Have you really prayed? – 1 Thes 5:17–18 & Eph 6:18 2. Have you prayed according to His will? – 1 Jn 5:14–15 3.

Understand God's timing – Dan 9:2

4. Is your heart right before God? – 1 Jn 3:21–22

5. Maybe he just wants you to persevere in prayer so that you can also be transformed in the process? – James 5:11

6. Prayer is warfare. Warfare takes time and energy. – Dan 10:12–13 Story:

"I know a godly Christian family that had a wayward son. For many years they prayed for that boy, but there was no answer. Long after the parents had gone to glory, God wonderfully touched that son and restored him to Himself. The prayers were answered, but in God's time. God is never late and never early in answering prayer."

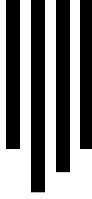
– John Walvoord

"He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us."

– Eph 3:20

SESSION 4

Praying in tongues



TONGUES

that is understood by other people

Acts 2:11 – The people here understood what was being said.

1 Cor 14:27 – Here it is assumed that someone may be able to interpret what is being said.

1 Cor 14:5 – When a tongue is interpreted it edifies the whole church as they can understand what is spoken. This type of tongue is directed at men.

TONGUES

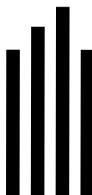
that is spoken to God

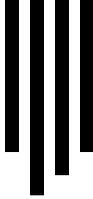
1 Cor 14:2 – Here clearly the person is speaking to God and people do not understand what is being said. 1 Cor 14:4 – It is a helpful thing in your personal walk to pray in tongues – it edifies the individual.

1 Cor 13:1 – Tongues of angels here might be referring to this type of tongues.

1 Cor 14:18 – Paul prayed in this kind of a way.

This type of tongue is directed at God.





Can everyone pray in TONGUES?

1 Cor 12:30 – It would appear from this verse that not everyone will pray in tongues.

1 Cor 14:5 – Here Paul says he wished that everyone would pray in tongues.

1 Cor 14:18 – Paul is grateful that he prays in tongues more than others.

Acts 2:17 – It appears that a measure of the prophetic is giving to all, so then why not tongues?

Maybe 1 Cor 12:30 is referring to the type of tongues that is directed at men?

CONCLUSION

Praying in tongues is certainly not a requirement for Godliness.

From 1 Cor 12:30 it would seem that a fair position to take that is that not everyone will pray in tongues.

It would also seem fair to suggest that maybe 1 Cor 12:30 is referring the type of tongues understood by men.

When it comes to this area we do not want to create relational boundaries where people see things slightly differently.

1 Cor 14:29 - We do not want to forbid praying in tongues, either theologically or practically.

