

GRACE BIBLE TRAINING CENTRE (GBTC)
SCHOOL OF MINISTRY
ARUSHA - TANZANIA

SUBJECT: PRAYER & INTERCESSION

LESSON 4: LEVELS OF PRAYER

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Introduction: (Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-13)

God welcomes prayer and He wants us to pray, to talk to Him. This is the only means by which we can commune with God and build up a relationship with Him.

Prayer is also God's appointed means for us to receive what we need from Him.

Not all prayer is alike in its basic nature. The passage we read in Matthew 7:7-11 describes to us 3 levels of prayer. Sometimes we are asking, sometimes we are seeking and some other times our prayers are like knocking at the doors of heaven.

Jesus asks us to Ask, Seek & Knock. In the Greek language, those words of Jesus simply means to keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking at the door. This means that prayer requires persistence (Luke 11:5-8).

Few prayers are answered the first time we pray them. God's delays do not mean that He doesn't care. We are to ask, ask, and keep on asking. We are to seek, seek, and keep on seeking. We are to knock, knock and keep on knocking. If we do, we will receive, find, and the door will be opened to us.

God's Promise (Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13)

How can we be so sure that when we ask, seek, and knock that we will receive, find, and the door opened to us? Jesus says that our hope in prayer rests not with ourselves or in the power of positive thinking, but in the very character of God who is our great Father in heaven. Each level of prayer is tied to a promise by God to answer.

God wants to answer our prayers but our prayers will not necessarily be answered immediately. It would require taking it to the next level or persist in asking.

In Matthew 7:9-11, God gives us an assurance of answered prayers by asking a moral question. Good fathers would not give their children a stone for bread or a snake for fish. If they cannot do that, although evil in nature, how much more God who is loving by nature. We often answer 'No' to our children when they ask us things in ignorance, even when they persist or insist. We deny them not because we hate them but because we love them. We often ask God for things that would not help us even though they appear good to us (Proverbs 21:2; 16:2). God sees through our requests and knows if they will harm us or do us good (Proverbs 16:1-3, 9, 33; 19:21).

God knows much more than we do.

God cares much more than we do.

Level 1 - Asking (Matthew 7:7-8)

“Ask, and it will be given to you For everyone who asks receives”.

Asking is what beggars or children do. Beggars are usually bold when they ask for money and sometimes their boldness can be irritating and you are forced to give to get rid of them. If we are to be in the position of the beggars, we would probably be bold to make demands of those who have more than we do.

Asking is a level 1 type of prayer where prayer involves a petition for the basic needs of life such as food, money, guidance, protection, etc. Philippians 4:6 encourages us to make our requests known to God.

Asking is a position of helplessness or inability where you need someone else to help you solve a problem. Young children are incapable of doing certain things and they would therefore request assistance or provision from their parents or from adults (Hebrews 5:13; 1Corinthians 13:11).

There is nothing wrong with this level of prayer unless we move to the next level. The danger of staying at this level is that if we don't see immediate results in prayer, we become weary and discouraged and our prayer life soon disappears over time.

Level 2 - Seeking (Matthew 7:7-8)

“Seek, and you will find And he who seeks finds”.

Seeking implies a desire for something of greater value, or a search for deeper understanding. It could be a search for solution, answer, or for what you desire until you find it. You become dissatisfied with what you have or know and you then decide to re-arrange your priorities so that you can search for what you desire. It takes time and effort (Luke 15:3-10). It could even involve fasting (Matthew 17:19-21; 2Chronicles 20:3-4; Daniel 10:1-3, 10-13).

Sometimes when we don't understand why things happen or the reasons for the trials we face, we search for a deeper understanding. Paul, for example in 2Corinthians 12:7-10, asked the Lord 3 times to remove a thorn in his flesh and 3 times the Lord said 'No'. He followed the first level, and when that did not work, he went to the second level by seeking the Lord. He then understood the reason for the 'No' answer, which he stated clearly in the first part of verse 7. He became satisfied with God's response as in verses 9 & 10. He gained spiritual insight into the purposes of God for Him.

(Other Bible references: Isaiah 55:6; Jeremiah 29:12-14; 1Chronicles 16:10-11; 28:9; 2Chronicles 7:14)

Level 3 - Knocking (Matthew 7:7-8)

“Knock, and it will be opened to you And to him who knocks it will be opened”.

To knock means, to stand at the door and rap repeatedly with your hands or with an object.

The door is like a hindrance, a closed gate or entrance, a resistance, which prevents access. You are sure of what is on the other side of the door and you are determined to have it without giving up. You keep on praying in the face of difficulty and resistance until the door is opened.

This can be compared to spiritual warfare where you strive or wrestle until the battle is won (e.g. Paul in Romans 15:30-32 and Jacob in Genesis 32:22-29).

This level of prayer can be directed towards God when seeking His favour or for open doors of ministry, a change of heart of a loved one or for the salvation of lost souls. Sometimes it requires reminding God to fulfil His promises as revealed in His word and laying hold on it until it done.

This level of prayer can also be directed against the devil and his demonic forces by taking authority over their activities or pulling down their strongholds of resistance or opposition to God and His people (2Corinthians 10:3-6; Ephesians 6:10-13; Revelations 12:10-11; Luke 10:19).

Fasting is often associated with this level of prayer, although may not be required if a firm relationship has been established with the Lord.

Intercessors or prayer warriors operate at this level of prayer. They know how to pray and what to pray for. A high level of spiritual maturity, wisdom and understanding of the Lord and of His word is required to operate at this level of prayer.

Conclusion

May the Lord help us to grow in all dimensions of prayer to the point where we could sense His presence, hear His voice and experience a strong powerful and mutually beneficial relationship with Him. Amen!