

Prayer: Relationship, Trust, and Peace

John 15:7 (New American Standard Bible)

If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Philippians 4:6-7 (New American Standard Bible)

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Introduction

How important is prayer in the life of a believer?

If God's Word is food for the soul, then prayer is the breathing of the soul. As no one can survive without breathing, neither can our soul without prayer. Prayer is one of God's greatest gifts to His children. Through prayer, we commune with our Heavenly Father, cast our burdens upon Him, receive His peace, and align ourselves with His will.

I first learned an important lesson about prayer when I was a senior in high school.

At the time, I was hoping to attend my dream college in Korea. However, my academic performance during my final semester was disappointing, and my guidance counselor refused to allow me to apply. I was frustrated and discouraged. My mother tried repeatedly to persuade him, but he would not change his mind.

As New Year's Eve approached, I felt helpless. I had been a Christian for about two years, but I still did not understand much about prayer. I prayed daily, but mostly out of habit. Then one night I decided to bring my problem to God.

Around eleven o'clock on New Year's Eve, I went to the prayer room at my church. Alone before God, I poured out my heart. Looking back, I even gave God an ultimatum. I said, "Lord, I need to know what You want me to do. Tell me tonight whether I should apply to my dream college or not. If You don't answer me tonight, I won't believe anymore."

How foolish that sounds now! Yet God, in His mercy, answered me—not in the way I expected, but in a way I desperately needed. I will finish that story later.

Today, let's learn what the Bible teaches us about prayer from two familiar passages: John 15:7 and Philippians 4:6-7.

I would like us to remember three simple truths:

1. Prayer Requires Relationship.
2. Prayer Requires Trust.
3. Prayer Produces Peace.

I. Prayer Requires Relationship

Jesus says: "If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." Notice that Jesus begins not with asking, but with abiding. Before He talks about requests, He talks about relationship.

Remain in Me

Prayer is not a magic formula. It is not a spiritual vending machine where we insert requests and expect immediate results. Prayer flows out of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

To remain in Christ means to stay connected to Him. It means to live in fellowship with Him. It means that Christ is not merely part of your life—He is the center of your life.

Jesus uses the illustration of a vine and branches earlier in John 15. A branch has life only as long as it remains connected to the vine. The moment it becomes disconnected, it begins to wither.

The same is true spiritually. Our prayer life flourishes when we remain in Christ. When we walk with Him daily, worship Him, obey Him, and trust Him, prayer becomes natural. We speak to Him because we know Him.

My Words Remain in You

Jesus adds a second condition for answered prayers: "And My words remain in you."

Prayer must be anchored in God's Word. My wife loves to use this analogy. If prayer is the act of hanging your clothes, God's Word is the nail on the wall. Many people want God's answers without listening to God's voice. They want direction without Scripture. They want blessings without obedience. But Jesus says His words must remain in us.

Think of a GPS. If you want to reach your destination, you must follow the directions. Ignoring the instructions while expecting to arrive safely makes no sense.

God's Word guides our prayers. For example, if I am anxious, I can simply say, "Lord, give me peace." That is a good prayer. But I can pray with greater confidence when I pray God's promise: "Lord, You promised, 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you.' Please fulfill Your promise in my life." He will keep His promise. God delights in answering prayers that align with His revealed will.

Ask Whatever You Wish

Now we come to the wonderful promise: "Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." This does not mean God becomes a servant who fulfills every desire we have.

Scripture reminds us: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (James 4:3). The promise is given to those who remain in Christ and whose hearts are shaped by His Word.

When our hearts are aligned with His will, our desires increasingly reflect His desires. Then we ask boldly, confidently, and expectantly. Prayer requires relationship.

II. Prayer Requires Trust

Now let's turn to Philippians 4:6. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and pleading with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Paul moves from prayer itself to one of the greatest enemies of prayer: anxiety.

Do Not Be Anxious

The command is simple: Stop worrying. Easier said than done, isn't it? We worry about our health. We worry about our children. We worry about finances. We worry about the future. But worry has never solved a single problem. Instead, it steals our joy, drains our energy, and clouds our faith.

Worry is like weeds in a garden. If left alone, weeds spread everywhere and choke healthy growth. In the same way, anxiety chokes trust and hinders our spiritual growth. Paul says the solution is not to deny our problems. The solution is to bring our problems to God.

In Everything by Prayer

Notice the phrase: "In everything." Nothing is too small. Nothing is too large. God invites us to bring every concern to Him. A loving father wants his children to come to him. Our Heavenly Father is no different.

With Thanksgiving

Paul includes a word many of us overlook: Thanksgiving. Why is thanksgiving important? Because gratitude reminds us of God's faithfulness. When we thank God for what He has already done, we strengthen our confidence in what He will do.

Think about the ten lepers Jesus healed (Luke 18). Only one returned to thank Him. Jesus noticed. God values grateful hearts. Before presenting our requests, let us remember His goodness and thank Him.

Be Specific

Paul also says: "Let your requests be made known to God." Be specific. Many of our prayers are vague. "Lord, help me." Help you with what? "Lord, bless me." Bless you how? Specific prayers help us recognize specific answers.

Blind Bartimaeus did not simply say to Jesus, "Lord, help me." He said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight." Specific prayer often leads to specific answers.

Prayer requires trust. Trust God enough to bring Him every concern. Trust God enough to thank Him before the answer comes. Trust God enough to leave the outcome in His hands.

III. Prayer Produces Peace

Now we come to one of the greatest promises in Scripture. "And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Notice what Paul promises. He does not promise immediate solutions. He promises peace.

God's Peace

This peace is different from worldly peace. The world says peace comes when problems disappear. God says peace comes when He is present. The peace of God surpasses understanding. It often arrives before circumstances change. And that is exactly what happened to me on New Year's Eve.

Remember my story? I spent hours praying and demanding an answer from God. Nothing happened. Finally, frustrated, I went home. I was eating a midnight snack when something remarkable happened. The Holy Spirit impressed upon my heart a simple message: "My child, everything is going to be all right."

At that moment, peace flooded my soul. Not because my situation changed. My counselor had not changed his mind. I had not been accepted into any college. Nothing around me was different. But something inside me was different. For the first time, I genuinely surrendered the outcome to God.

My prayer changed from: "Lord, let me get into my dream college." To "Lord, wherever I go, I will serve You." That peace remained with me for days. And eventually, God opened the door. My counselor allowed me to apply. I took the exam and was accepted. Praise God.

But looking back, the greater miracle was not getting into the college. The greater miracle was receiving God's peace before anything changed.

Peace Guards Us

Paul says God's peace guards our hearts and minds. The word "guard" was a military term. It pictures soldiers standing watch over a city. God's peace stands guard over our hearts. It protects us from fear. It protects us from despair. It protects us from being overwhelmed by life's uncertainties. Prayer produces peace.

Conclusion

Over the years, I learned another valuable lesson about prayer. During my first year in college, I kept a prayer journal. I recorded my requests and later recorded God's answers. After six months, I reviewed the journal. God had answered every prayer. Some answers were "Yes." Some answers were "No." Some answers were "Wait." But every answer reflected His wisdom and love. That experience convinced me that prayer is real.

God hears. God cares. God answers. Not always according to our timetable. Not always according to our desires. But always according to His perfect will.

So let me encourage you: Start your own prayer journal. Bring your worries to God. Anchor your prayers in His Word. Pray with thanksgiving. Be specific. Trust Him with the results. Because prayer is not about getting God to do what we want.

Prayer is about learning to trust Him more deeply. Remain in Christ. Trust His promises. Bring Him your worries. And discover for yourself that God still hears and answers prayer today.

Amen.