

## Paradise Lost and Restored: What is Prayer? (Part 2)

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA March 1, 2015

### I. Introduction

There's definite etiquette when addressing the Queen of England. Is there certain etiquette when talking with God? Can we be ourselves or do we have to be very formal? Can we approach Him as we would a friend? Can we ask Him for stuff? And how can we know for sure that He hears us?

### II. What's the Etiquette When Talking with God?

God is approachable; after all, He's Your Loving Father who wants the best for you. You can talk with Him as you would with a friend. And the courtesies you'd extend to a friend, you should extend to God. Here are some things to keep in mind as you talk with God.

**Don't use God to impress others**, if you had a friend who happened to be a VIP, would you have a conversation with them just to impress someone else? There you are talking with them, but you're not even paying attention to what they're saying. Why would you disrespect your friend like this? Because you're trying to impress someone else, to show them just how connected you are with this VIP. If you wouldn't and shouldn't do this to a friend, don't do it to God, Matthew 6:5-6. Don't pray to impress others around you. Don't do it to show how spiritual you are or what a close relationship you have with God. If you do this, it actually shows just how shallow your relationship with God really is.

**Pay attention to what you're saying; don't phone it in**, have you ever paid attention to what you say when you pray? Does it sound the same every time; do you use the exact same words or maybe just vary them a little? Praying is a conversation with God; be present in that conversation. Don't just repeat the same thing over and over with slight variations, Matthew 6:7. Does this mean that we can't ask for the same thing over and over? No, God wants us to be persistent, Luke 18:1-8. He loves it when we wrestle with Him to get everything we were meant to receive from Him, Genesis 32:24-28.

**God knows what you need before you ask, but it's not just about getting things from Him**, it's true that God already knows what we need before we ask, Matthew 6:8. And if prayer was just about getting what we need, then we wouldn't have to pray. But our relationship with God is not about getting stuff. It's about that, *the relationship*. We talk with God to get to know Him and allow Him to get to know us. That is, we talk with Him to grant Him access to our lives so that He can reveal to us who He is, who we are, what we were meant to be, and how to reach that destiny, Psalm 139. Just like loving parents protect and guide their children, God longs to have this kind of relationship with us. He's not our Santa Claus, He's our Savior, He's our Father.

**Since you're talking with God, address your prayers to Him in the name of His Son,** prayer is a conversation with God, so address yourself to Him in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, Matthew 6:9; John 15:16. Can we address our prayers to Jesus? If all the fullness of God dwells in Jesus (Colossians 2:9), why can't we address our prayers to Jesus? Additionally, who did Steven address his prayer to in Acts 7:59? Jesus. If this is problematic for you, remember that God is not a stoic, emotionless being. He's your Loving Father and you are His beloved child. Therefore, if you ever needed His help, He would never reject you simply because you prayed the wrong way, i.e., because you asked His Son instead of Him. In fact, wasn't it God who sent the Son to save you? So He would never mind if you prayed to Jesus, precisely because He is your Savior in whom "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

**When you pray, do you believe that God hears you?** When you're talking with a trusted friend, do you ever question, do you ever doubt that they're listening to you? If we wouldn't do this to a friend, why do we do it to God? Is this your experience with prayer, you constantly wonder if God is even listening? God tells us that we must believe that He hears us. When we doubt Him, that's when prayer doesn't work, Matthew 21:20-22; James 1:5-8. Why not? Because when we don't believe He hears us, we actually end up having a conversation by ourselves, i.e., we never show up. He's way over there and we're over here. Thus, we cut ourselves off from His voice and therefore from His salvation.

So how can we get to a place where we believe instead of doubt? Well, how does a friend become a trustworthy and reliable friend? You have to spend time with them and experience their trustworthiness. If you spend time with God, He will talk with you and you with Him. And in the process He will show you what to do. And as you follow Him, your faith in Him will grow and grow. You will be confident every time you pray because you will know His will and experience His salvation, John 15:7; James 4:3; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15.

**Did you know that God loves to talk with you all the time?** Children don't always want to talk with their parents. And the older they get, the less they seem to talk with them. But God wants our relationship with Him to be very different. He's not there to reprimand us. He's there to listen and help. That's why He's always ready to talk with us, 1 Thessalonians 5:17. How much time do you spend talking with God on an average day? How well does life go for children who have little contact with their parents?

**We should have an attitude of gratitude when we talk with God,** do you ever pay attention to how you feel when you talk with God? Do you find that you're mostly frustrated, worried, or angry? Or perhaps you don't feel a thing. How would you treat a friend who's always been there for you and wanted the best for you? Let's say you're angry about something and you wanted to talk with him about it. Would you vent your anger and frustration at him or would you be grateful that he's there to listen and help? From the beginning of history God's done nothing but be there for us. We should always be thankful when we talk with Him, even if we're upset about something, Philippians 4:6.

### III. Conclusion

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*