

# Theology of Prayer

Q. *What is prayer?*

A. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

(*Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. & A. 98*)

## Communion with the Triune God

*'A Christian is someone who knows God through Jesus Christ, and to know God is to converse with him.'* (Tim Chester)

1. What is Salvation?
  - a. A good relationship with the Triune God. (*John 17:3*)
    - i. Loving communion.
  - b. Sharing in the Son's good relationship with His Father. (*John 17:23,26*)
2. Prayer is the Christian Life in Expression: Communion with the God of the Gospel
  - a. Prayer is designed for communion: 'Our Father'
    - i. Prayer is about relationship.
      1. God doesn't *need* us to tell Him anything (He knows all things).
      2. BUT God *wants* us to tell Him things; He wants us to communicate with Him.
  - b. And Communion with God leads to communion with God's people: 'Our Father'

## To the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit

*'The whole threefold life of the three-personal Being is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers.'* (C.S. Lewis)

It's because He is the Triune God that we can come to Him in prayer.

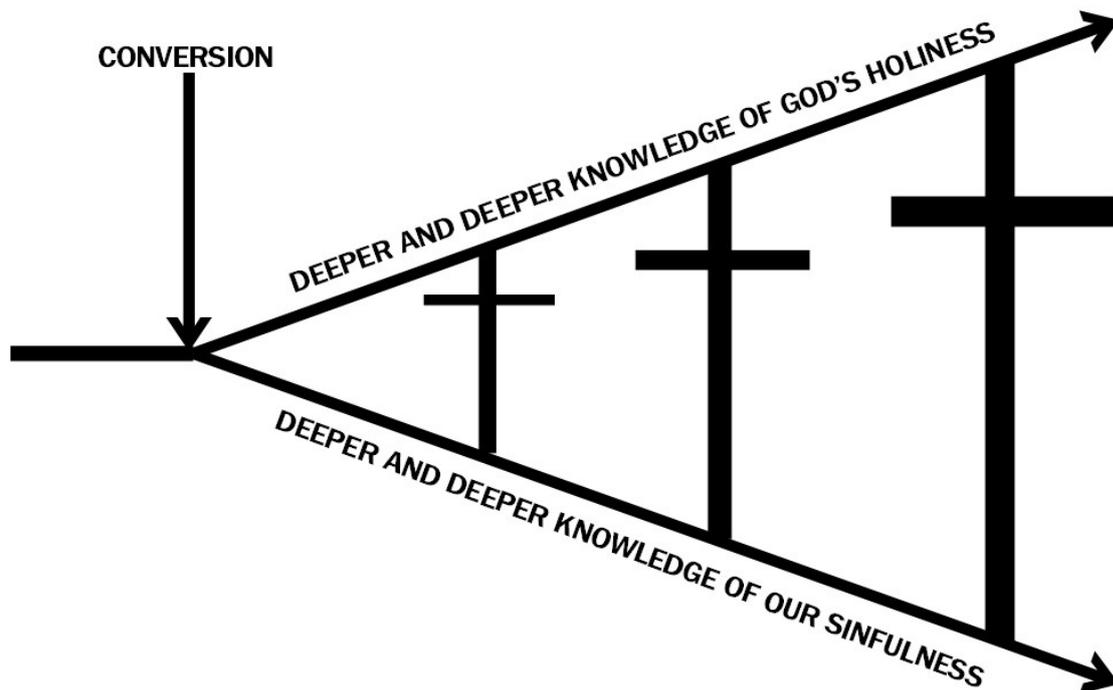
1. The Father Invites Us & Hears Us (so we come to Him in faith)
  - a. Faith that He is powerful: He can answer.
  - b. Faith that He is good: He wants to answer.
  - c. Faith that He is gracious: He will answer, even though we don't deserve it.
2. The Son Brings Us
  - a. Our Mediator (*1 Tim. 2:5*)
    - i. He gives us access to the Throne of Grace
    - ii. Through Him we come with His authority, not our own (*In Jesus' Name*)

- b. Our Intercessor (*Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25*)
  - i. He purifies & perfects our prayers
- 3. The Spirit Enables Us
  - a. The Spirit enables us to call God 'Father.' (*Rom. 8:16*)
  - b. The Spirit intercedes in the right way for us. (*Rom. 8:26-27*)
  - c. The Spirit intercedes fervently for us. (*Rom. 8:26-27*)

## Prayer is Grounded in the Gospel

*'To pray to the Father in the name of the Son in reliance upon the Spirit is to rehearse the very structure of the gospel.'* (Graham Cole)

1. What is the Gospel?
  - a. Jesus who lived, died and rose for you (*1 Cor. 15:1-5*)
  - b. Martin Luther – *At its briefest, the gospel is a discourse about Christ, that he is the Son of God and became man for us, that he died and was raised, and that he has been established as Lord over all things.*
  - c. Derek Thomas – *The gospel is not 'God loves us,' but 'God loves us at the cost of his Son.'*
2. The Gospel Structure of Prayer
  - a. We draw near to the Holy Father
    - i. How can we sinners approach a Holy God with our requests?
    - ii. Eph. 2:18: *'For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.'*
    - iii. James 4:8: *'Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.'*
  - b. We draw near by Christ's great sacrifice
    - i. We approach God in prayer by the blood of Jesus (*Heb. 10:19-22*)
    - ii. Through His Sacrifice we can approach God with confidence (*Heb. 4:14-16*)
  - c. We rely on the Holy Spirit's drawing
    - i. The Spirit's role is to glorify Christ.
    - ii. He draws us to the Father through Christ our Mediator in salvation & in prayer.
    - iii. The Spirit is the giver of faith.
3. Gospel gives rise to Faith
  - a. Prayer is 'the chief exercise of faith'
4. Gospel Grounded, Communion with God Prayer leads to more than just asking:
  - a. Gospel → Confession
  - b. Gospel → Thanksgiving and Worship
  - c. Gospel → Asking for Others (Intercession)
  - d. Gospel → Asking for Ourselves (Petition)
  - e. Gospel → Meditation (Praying through the Scriptures)



## Some Recommended Resources

- *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Qs. 98-107  
A great summary of what it means to pray and how to do it, using the Lord's Prayer.
- Matthew Henry, *A Way to Pray* (also known as *A Method for Prayer*)  
How to use the Scriptures to pray, taught by example.
- Michael Reeves, *Enjoy Your Prayer Life*  
A very short, easy-to-read book, but full of great teaching and encouragement.
- Martin Luther, *What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels*  
This will take you five minutes to read. They will be five minutes you'll never regret.  
<http://www.uniontheology.org/resources/bible/new-testament/how-to-read-the-gospels>
- Tim Chester, *The Message of Prayer* (The Bible Speaks Today)  
Good biblical exposition on prayer.