

Five "P"s of Prayer 09-05-21

In Luke 11:1-4 Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. He then gave them the model of prayer, which gives us a great deal to see on how prayer works, and what it should contain. We might say that there are five "P"s of prayer that we can learn to make our prayers successful.

1) Persistent Prayer

In Luke 18:1-8 Jesus gave a parable to teach the apostles that they should at all times pray, and that they should not lose heart (Gal. 6:9) when it takes time. We often think of God as instantly hearing and responding to our prayers. It is true that He hears each of our prayers, but we are told here that persistence is required. In Luke 11:5-8 Jesus described that need of persistence. It is not that God needs persistence, but instead we need to be persistent in prayer.

2: Purposeful Prayer

Prayers need to have a proper purpose. Purposeful prayer is not an afterthought prayer, a filler prayers, or a "911" emergency prayer. These types of prayer may have their place, but they are not successful as prayer with predetermined purpose. Jesus taught and practiced purpose. He set aside time to pray (Mark 1:35) and taught us that we needed have purpose in our prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). Specifically, our prayers are to ask for those things that God has purposed for us to receive. This is what it means to be praying for the will of God.

3: Patient Prayer

Successful prayer is patient and trusting. Consider the meaning in Philippians 4:6, where we are told to turn our anxieties over to God in prayer. Patient prayers understand waiting is a necessary part of the process. God works in His time, and when we pray, we need to see that our prayers are answered in faith, not by sight. That means that we pray as though we have already received what we seek (when we ask for the will of God). When prayers lack patience, we have the bad habit of assuming that if a good thing happens, then it is God's will, or when a bad thing happens it is because our prayers were ineffective. Such mindsets are contrary to having faith in prayer.

4: Providential Prayer

Providence refers to the working of God through the process that He designed, such as nature, the church, etc. We are told that our prayers are not a surprise to God; He knows our needs (Mark 11:24). We must pray believing that He provides and acts in our lives. Jesus said that our needs would be taken care of if we seek first the kingdom (Matthew 6:31-33). We need to believe that God is alive, active and powerful, and will act in accordance in His will by providence.

5: Penitential Prayer

Penitence refers to the regret and sorrow for sin. Prayer requires that we have a heart that approaches God with a sorrow for our failings. Successful prayer is done in humility (Luke 18:10-14). It is the contrite heart that God hears and responds to. This is the acceptable sacrifice to God. But this also means that we forgive those who sin against us. God only hears the merciful and forgiving (Mark 11:25). Prayer needs a submissive heart that is seeing our place before God and accepting whatever the will of God is.

Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray. This He did both by giving them the model of prayer, but also by demonstrating successful prayer. When it comes to prayer, we must be persistent and not lose heart. We must have purpose and know what is needed versus what is wanted. We need to be patient

and learn to wait on the Lord. We must understand providence, and believe by faith that God has already answered our request. Finally, we need to demonstrate penitence with a humble and contrite heart.