

Enjoying Fellowship With God

by Alan Redpath

The key to enjoying fellowship with God is to delight in the Lord and make our joy in him, so that our desires are the desires of God for our life.

Duration: 30:12

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 11:24, John 14:14, John 15:7, Philippians 4:6-7, James 4:2, 1 John 5:14-15

Topics: "Fellowship With God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and highlights four basic principles of prayer. The first principle is the requisite of prayer, emphasizing that we need to ask God for what we need. The second principle is the extent of our prayer, stating that we can ask God for anything. The third principle is the condition of our prayer, which is praying in the name of Jesus. Lastly, the speaker discusses the promise of prayer, stating that God will answer our prayers. The sermon also provides practical suggestions for developing a disciplined prayer life, including acts of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

Transcript

Now just a prayer together, let us pray. Our Father, we thank Thee so much that we meet in the presence of our wonderful Lord Jesus, who is able to save to the very uttermost all who come unto Thee by him. We thank Thee for the joy of salvation.

We would acknowledge to Thee our consciousness of our own unworthiness and sin, and yet we thank Thee, Lord, for the grace that abounds where sin did once abound. How often we've said to Thee, Lord, teach us to pray, and as we come to Thee tonight, we pray that Thou wilt help us, so that we may walk with Thee and enjoy day by day the privilege of fellowship with the living God. We ask it for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Would you please turn with me in your New Testament to the 14th chapter of John's Gospel, and to the 14th verse, John chapter 14 and verse 14, where the Lord Jesus says, If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. On Sunday night, for many weeks now, we have been taking a series of practical messages under the general title, Learning to Live.

We've sought to understand a little bit about the meanings of such word, meaning of such words as repentance and faith and forgiveness and sin and the Holy Spirit and various other words in the Word of God, and these have been an attempt to meet the practical problems of daily life. We have thought a little

bit about studying our Bible, and about the problem of witnessing for Christ, and the reality of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And our subject this evening, as we come almost to the conclusion of this series of talks, is Enjoying Fellowship with God.

When you read your Bible, God speaks to you. When you pray, you speak to God, and both of these experiences are absolutely vital in the Christian's life, that God should speak to you from his Word, and that you should speak with him in prayer. I want to talk to you, if I may tonight, for a little while about enjoying your prayer life, enjoying your fellowship with the Lord.

When you read the Word of God, and God speaks to you in it, this is what distinguishes the Bible from every other book. For as you wait upon God in his Word, you begin to discover the authority of the book is just because God breathes into it and through it into your life. But now when you pray, and when you turn to him in prayer, and when you talk with God, what about it then? I don't think there was ever a time when prayer is more urgent than it is today.

Paul said in writing to the church at Ephesus, the days are evil, but that's more true now than it was then. And in these days, when everybody's so scientific, there's a hesitancy, a thought of doubt, a lurking doubt about the value of prayer. To many people it seems a waste of time to kneel in silence when there's so much to be done.

And our question is, does anything happen at the other end when I pray? Does it make any difference? It's so hard to believe that it can. I think that the reason for that doubt is our ignorance of the principles of prayer. You know, no machinery can work until you understand it.

I remember the first time at camp, oh it must be about seven years ago now, when they put into our hands a new motor mower at our church camp up at Loon Lake. It was very powerful, a big one. I'm ashamed to tell you that I had not at that point, until that point in my life, ever handled a power mower.

Somebody explained to me how the thing worked. And all they said I had to do was to put it in gear and then just control it. Well I put it in gear, but I found that it controlled me.

And it wasn't very long before I, plus the mower, were somewhere lost in the woods alongside camp, and I was vainly trying to stop the thing. I was supposed to be driving it, but instead of that it was driving me. I think we need to understand the principle of prayer.

And here are four basic principles of the prayer lights in this verse. Let me give them to you as you look at this verse with me. First, the requisite of prayer, if ye ask.

Second, the extent of our prayer, anything. Third, the condition of our prayer, in my name. And fourth, the promise of prayer, I will do it.

Now these are four basic principles of our prayer life, and we're going to look at them quite simply and quickly together this evening. First of all, this requisite of prayer, if ye ask. James says, you may recall, in the fourth chapter of his epistle, in the second verse, ye have not, because ye ask not.

And that our Father God doesn't give to us until we ask him for them. Now you know that's true in a family. Parents give their children, I think, three kinds of gifts.

They give them, first of all, what I would call general gifts. That's a home, and food, and clothes, and school. And every child gets these gifts without asking.

And then the child will get some special gifts. If the child's a girl, it'll be a pram or a doll, to teach the girl first steps in mother love. If the child's a boy, and I don't know so much about them, but if the child's a boy, he'll probably be given a book about aeroplanes or something, or a stamp album to encourage his geography.

Special gifts. But then the parents will give their children what I call extras. And these are the kind of gifts that the child doesn't get unless he asks.

I remember being in a lovely Christian home not so long ago, and as we were talking together, there'd been a boy, and there was a boy in the house, he was a boy of about 16, 17, and he went out to play a game somewhere, and the parents were chatting with me together, and they said to me, you know, we've saved up three thousand dollars, and we've put it aside in the bank to give to John, if God leads him to go into the ministry. But they said, you know, we're not telling him, and we're keeping it for him until one day he comes and asks, because God has laid on his heart the desire to go into the ministry. One word from that boy, and it would all be his.

Before we went to bed that night, we prayed together, the three of us, father, mother, and myself, and asked that if it could be the will of God for that boy, he would, he would make it now. And the next morning at breakfast, I looked at him across the table, it was all I could do to keep my mouth shut. If only he knew what I knew, three thousand dollars waiting for him.

But of course, I didn't say anything. But I had a letter from them a little time afterwards, I think about six months afterwards, and they wrote to me, and they said, you know, John asked, and he made his desire known to become a missionary. And he was absolutely staggered when we told him that we had three thousand dollars set aside for him.

If ye ask, I wonder what God has got locked up in the treasure house of heaven for us, and something that will never be ours until we come to him with a conscious sense of need, and then ask him. And you know, when you and I learn to live near to the Lord, and to share the desire of his heart, then we come to want, and ask what he wants for us. Do you remember that wonderful prophecy of Ezekiel? And in the thirty-sixth chapter, telling of God's promise to bring the Jew back to the land, it ends this way, for this I will be inquired of by them to do it.

Here then, is what we've called the requisite of prayer, if ye ask. And I believe that for all of us tonight, God has some extra, some special thing, something that he has for us in the bank of heaven, that he waits to give when I come to him as his child, with a sense of my need, and I ask him. Ye have not, because ye ask not.

But what's the extent of my asking? Well, this verse says anything. Now nothing could be so inclusive as that. It seems there's no limit to the kind of thing I can ask, and there's no limit to the size of thing I can ask, and there's no limit to the difficulty, if ye ask anything.

I want you to get the tremendous inclusiveness of that word tonight, to apply it to your life. Anything, any kind of thing, so God says. Now you know some people ask God for mercy, but they don't ask him for money.

And yet Philippians 4:19 says, my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Do you know that George Muller got no less than 10 million dollars in his lifetime for his orphanage, because he asked God about it. It all came in answer to prayer.

So God says, if you ask anything, any size of thing, yes, no limit to the size, great things as well as little thing. I know lots of people who'll ask God for guidance concerning their life work, but they never ask God for guidance about where they should spend their vacation. And God expects us to ask him about big things as well as little things, because Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 6 says, acknowledge him in all thy ways and he will direct thy path.

Therefore God expects us to ask him about everything, big things and little things, and difficult things, impossible things as well as possible things. What an unbelieving mess, a believable message Gabriel brought to Mary one day. And she said to him, how shall this be? And his answer was with God, nothing shall be impossible.

I love the little phrase of John Ruskin who once said this, there is nothing so small that we do not honor God by asking him about it. And there's nothing so small that we do not insult him when we take it into our own hearts and never ask him. And so the extent of our asking, I wonder, I wonder if we really ask God in that inclusive way about big things and little things, about impossible things as well as possible things, about every kind of thing.

If ye ask anything, that's a promise. Ah, but then we come to the condition of prayer. If ye ask anything, look at this next little phrase, in my name.

What's that mean? It means according to his will. You remember that tremendous promise in 1 John chapter 5 and verse 14? This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, we have it. There's the one and only condition of prayer, the will of God.

If I could simply ask God for anything by itself, I might get something from him that would hurt me, it would damage me, it would cause me harm, and no parent would do that to his child. A child will often ask something foolishly or selfishly, and a wise father and mother will withhold the giving. There's nothing worse than a spoiled child.

Therefore there's this condition of prayer. If ye ask anything according to my will, the will of God. And you know the Lord is so lavish in his giving when we ask him for something in his will.

There's a lovely story told about a minister who one day stepped out of the door of a seminary campus, and as he did so, there was a tramp walking along the road, and came up to him and asked him if he would give him a good square meal. He was very hungry. And so that minister took his name card out of his pocket, and he wrote on the back of it, give this man a good square meal.

And he told the tramp to take it to the front door of the seminary, and asked for the cook, and the cook would give him a good square meal. And so he went to the door and approached it, and just as he did, an old gentleman opened the door with a smiling face and grey hair, shining face. Actually he was the father of the minister.

And he said to this tramp, what do you want? And the man showed him the card, and the dear old gentleman read it and then tore it up, and the tramp said to him, please don't do that, that's my only hope of a meal. Oh, said the dear old man, you just come inside with me. And he took him to the dining room,

and he sat down, and they both sat down, and then he rang a bell.

And he called for the cook, and he said bring us two good square meals. And so they sat down together, and both of them had a good feed. And so that man not only enjoyed some food, but he enjoyed some fellowship.

And you know that's exactly what it's like with God. That's exactly what the Lord does, the Father does, to someone who comes to him with everything, in the will of God. Coming to him in the name of the Lord Jesus.

We don't only get food, but we have fellowship with heaven. But then of course this presents a problem in our prayer life, because somebody says to me, that's all very well, but how do I know when I ask God for something, that I am asking him for that which is his will for me. I'm reminded of a verse in Romans chapter 8, and I would just like to read it to you.

It's in verse 26. Likewise the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, also helpeth our infirmities. Listen, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, or as one translation has it, with sighs too deep for words.

And he that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. How can I know what I'm asking is God's will for me? Well you see beloved, real prayer begins in the heart of God with a desire that he implants in your heart by his Spirit. And that desire goes back to heaven in prayer, and it comes back to us in blessing and in life.

Now, delight thyself also in the Lord, Psalm 37, 4. Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee some desire, no, every desire of thine heart, not just a few things. Delight thyself in the Lord, make thy boast in him, rejoice in him, let the Lord fill your life, and let his will be to you the one thing that matters. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, make your joy in the Lord, and he shall give you every desire.

How can that be? Well you see, when you delight in the Lord, you only want that which is his will for you. And when your joy is in the Lord Jesus, the desires that come into your heart are the desire of God for your life. Now this is what prayer, makes prayer so simple.

Of course failure here makes prayer so impossible. The whole essence of answered prayer is our relationship to God in Jesus Christ. May I say to all of you listening tonight, the first thing is to be unsure that you're on praying ground.

The only prayer that some people can pray is the prayer of the publican who cried, oh God be merciful to me a sinner. I'm not on praying ground till I enter the family by my new birth, by my commitment of my life to Jesus Christ, by my receiving him as my Lord. But then I then am on praying ground.

And if at that point I delight myself in the Lord and my one desire is to do his will, then every desire of my heart is satisfied. Oh but you see, so many of his children are in a bit of a controversy with heaven about that. Not all together agreed that they really want God's will.

Not all together one in their desire only for the will of God. They think perhaps it would be inconvenient, or perhaps it would mean giving up too much. And in so many Christian hearts there's a battle on this issue.

And the amazing thing is that when you don't give in to the Lord, then you don't find any satisfaction in the desire of your heart whatsoever. But it's when you delight in him, and when you rejoice in him, and when there's no controversy with heaven, and when your life is delighting in the reality of Jesus Christ, then he satisfies every desire. Could you believe that tonight? Oh friend I hope you will.

I hope you will. And I am absolutely sure that's the key to answered prayer, the will of God, the complete delighting of your heart in the Savior. But I want you to notice tonight as we conclude our message, this promise of prayer.

Here's the requisite of prayer, I must, I must, I must ask. And here's the extent of prayer, anything, there's no limit. But here's the condition of prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus, that which is his will for me, and here's the promise, I will do it.

Do you notice in your Bible that little word *it* is in italics? That means of course it's been supplied by the translators to make sense. I like to forget that little word, omit it altogether, and read it like this, because this is really what it means. If you ask anything in my name, I will get to work.

I think that's a tremendous promise. God gets to work when I pray. He always gives what we ask, or something better.

We don't always think so at the time, but as we get to know him, we begin to leave the choice to him and trust him for his wisdom. But isn't it a tremendous thing that God begins to go to work when his people really pray? It's refreshing to me at this point to think of wintertime, and to imagine myself in Chicago in its glory in the winter, and the temperature is down to zero somewhere, and the ground is hard, and it's frosty, very cold. It's caked hard with frost.

It's urgently in need of moisture. And one day, hanging over that hard ground, there comes a cloud. And the temperature begins to go up a little bit, and the cloud gets very heavy.

And presently, before long, a current of air pierces that cloud, and something happens, and snow begins to fall, and the ground begins to feel moisture. You see, above that, above that hard ground, in that cloud, there's something that that ground needs for moisture. And the current of air pierces the cloud, and it begins to drop, and the moisture falls.

And I love to think tonight, beloved, that over the barrenness of some life here in this church, there hangs a cloud, the cloud of the blessing of God, that which my cold, barren heart so urgently needs. And then my believing prayer is like that current of air that pierces the cloud, and the blessing begins to come, and the hardness begins to melt away. God says, if ye ask, I will get to work.

Therefore I say to you, whatever else you do in life, pray. However else you may fill up your time with whatever other things you may become busy, pray. For it's when I really pray, in the name of the Lord Jesus, that the blessing begins to fall.

Oh, how much of God's treasure store has just passed by my life because I haven't prayed. May I, in conclusion, make a very practical suggestion. Supposing you say to me, how do I begin? Well, supposing you have five minutes for prayer.

If you start with five minutes, the habit will increase. But just let's suppose you have five minutes for prayer. Listen, in that five minutes, make four acts with your mind.

Here they are. First, an act of adoration. That is, don't ask for anything, just worship.

Speak to the Lord Jesus about himself. Tell him you love him. You remember the words of that lovely hymn which I often use in prayer, my God, how wonderful thou art, thy majesty how bright, how beautiful thy mercy seat in depths of burning light.

May I venture to say this to you, be very careful about being too familiar in prayer. Now, you may think I'm old-fashioned, probably you do, but this idea of God being a kind of individual upstairs somewhere, and this kind of colloquialism in prayer, this easy conversational chatting with God, this familiarity of terminology doesn't impress me one little bit as being spiritual. God is infinitely holy, and when I approach him I'm on holy ground, and I need to learn that as I enter into his presence, I must adore him, I must worship him, I must take my place like the cherubim and seraphim as they covered their faces in the presence of God.

Beware of being too familiar, won't you? And when you call him by his name, call him by his rightful name, he's not only Jesus, he is the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore make your first minute an act of adoration, and your second minute an act of confession. Do you ever go through the day with the Lord, looking back upon it, just, just for a moment? Stand in his presence like a soldier would stand before his commanding officer, and ask him, Lord, have you any complaints today? Where have I gone wrong? What have I said to grieve you? What have I failed to do? An act of confession.

Go through the day, keep short accounts with God, never let a day go by, but you do this, and just revise in your mind and review the day with God. An act of confession. And then let your third act be an act of thanksgiving.

Thank him for his mercy, for friends, for home, for loved ones, for work, for salvation, most of all, yes, for life in Jesus Christ. An act of thanksgiving. And then let your fourth act be an act of supplication, supplication, adoration, confession, thanksgiving.

Now you can ask him for something. I think it's lovely to have a little book in which you enter the names of your friends for whom you pray, perhaps 31 pages in it, and enter each name on the date of that person's birthday, and therefore you pray for that person 12 times a year. I wish I had more time to do this, and that is to write to the people to whom, for whom I pray, and tell them that I've been remembering them in prayer.

What a ministry that can be, especially to the missionary. Beloved, would you try those four acts? You notice they're an acrostic on the word acts. Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication.

Four simple acts of your mind that you could cover in five minutes. Once you've begun, as I said, with five minutes, oh you'll soon want far more than that, but just begin, just begin. Some young person here who's never made a really disciplined practice of prayer, and I think we'd be quite amazed if we were honest to discover how many just don't do it.

A simple practice of a daily talk with the Lord. Will you put that to the test? But again, as I conclude my message, how I pray that every one of us can look up into his face tonight and call him Father. You can only do that from the moment in your life when you know Jesus Christ as your Savior, and I trust you've entered into the family relationship.

If you haven't, you can do so right now, and prayer can take on a new meaning to you. There's all the difference between saying your prayer and praying, and I trust that for some Christian here who's got no fellowship with God in prayer simply because you've never delighted in the will of God, for some of you who've battled your way through and just fought things out and resisted the will of the Lord, the good will of God, that tonight you may submit your life to him, that you will find the joy of every desire of your heart being met because you're delighting in the Savior. Put it all to the test, and God bless you.

Let's bow together for prayer. Lord Jesus, we thank thee that thou art so real to those of us who know thee, and we pray that day by day we may learn to talk with thee and to walk with thee in the light of thy word, and that prayer may become a living experience to us, a precious thing, something that we cannot afford to miss, because in the time of fellowship we meet with thee, and thou dost meet with us. O dear Savior, if there are some here who are not even on praying ground, Lord, wilt thou speak and bless and save even tonight, and bring them into the family of the redeemed?

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