

ENJOYING GOD

Why Pray?

Since the late 17th century, the practices of the church have been relegated to knowledge, education, study, academia, and a set of systematic beliefs that we're to adhere to. Over time, these things have become the markers of Christianity. [Christianity isn't just a set of beliefs that we're supposed to adhere to but a lifestyle we're invited to follow.](#)

God isn't just an impersonal distant being that created the cosmos and everything within it, but He's deeply personal, unbelievably relational, and He's created us to enjoy Him forever!

But if you were to ask many modern Christians if they're enjoying God right now, many wouldn't even know where to begin. But this is what we're made for!

"The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

– Westminster Shorter Catechism

[Philippians 4:4](#) | [Psalm 32:11](#) | [Psalm 37:4](#)

What's interesting and difficult about doing a series on prayer is that anyone with a church or spiritual background is not surprised by the concept of prayer. No one is sitting here saying, *"Wait a minute, you mean I can talk with God?"*

- How many of you feel like you're doing amazing when it comes to prayer?
- How many of you would say you're genuinely enjoying slowing down, being still, and simply being with God?
- How many of you feel like your prayer life needs to improve?

Learning to enjoy God is the goal, prayer is simply the means.

Today, we're going to cover 3 primary areas.

1. THE OBSTACLES TO PRAYER
2. THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER
3. THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

THE OBSTACLES TO PRAYER

On some level, every Christian experiences obstacles within prayer.

1. [We don't trust God.](#)

We've all had unanswered prayers. We've all felt disappointment when God didn't come through where we needed him to.

In this totally raw state, when God hasn't answered my prayers, I felt disappointed. If you've experienced anything like this, you know it's difficult to fully trust someone that you feel has let you down.

And if you don't trust someone, why even converse with them? This is a huge barrier to prayer.

But the 2nd obstacle to prayer is....

2. [We don't think God enjoys us.](#)

God is holy. He is perfect. He is all knowing. He's all powerful. He is omnipresent. God is massive! If you stew on that for long enough, it can get a little intimidating.

If we're not clear on God's incredible love and compassion and the incredible lengths He went to come near to us, we can develop an unhealthy view of God and start to think that He doesn't like us or want to be around us.

Who wants to be around someone that doesn't like them? We avoid people we know don't like us. The more you believe that God is disappointed in you, the more you think God is waiting for you to get your life together, the more frustrated and annoyed you think God is with you, the more you'll avoid Him.

The third reason we avoid prayer is because:

3. [We don't think we need Him.](#)

We say we're Christians, but practically speaking, we behave like "functional atheists." We say we need God, but in practice, we leave Him out of nearly every aspect of life unless we're in crisis and no longer have the illusion of control. We think far too highly of ourselves. Or we think we can accomplish the work God has planned for us to do without His involvement.

"A prayerless Christian is like a bus driver trying to push his bus out of a rut by himself because he doesn't know that Clark Kent is on board."

- John Piper

We think far too highly of ourselves and therefore, we don't ask.

For all these reasons, we think: *Why should I pray? If God isn't going to answer my prayers the way I want Him to, or if He's just annoyed with me, or I'm just so awesome on my own and don't need God... why WOULD I pray?*

Or: I prayed the prayers, and God didn't show up the way I needed Him to, so why would I continue to bring my needs to Him?

None of these obstacles are uncommon or abnormal. In fact, I would say they're all incredibly normal, but they all do have something in common. They are all born out of a wrong understanding of who God is and the purpose of prayer.

THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

Every religion teaches some method of communication with God.

In Islam, Mohammad said, "God has obligated five prayers. Whoever excellently performs their ablutions, prays them in their proper times, completes their bows, prostrations and khushu, has a promise from God that He will forgive him. And whoever does not do that has no promise from God."

In other words, in Islam, the purpose of prayer is if you can perform all of the required ritual prayers perfectly, God will then forgive your sin.

In Buddhism, the purpose of prayer is to empty yourself, eliminate dysfunctional states of mind, and awaken the greatness that is lying dormant in you. Prayer is more about self-actualization and becoming the best you that you can be.

Christianity is totally unique from all other religions because it doesn't teach that we must pray a certain way to be forgiven, and it doesn't teach us that we pray so that we can achieve our full potential.

Christianity teaches that because Jesus has accomplished what we could not accomplish for ourselves – because he lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died - our prayers have a radically different purpose from any other religion or spiritual belief system.

Christianity teaches us that prayer is no longer formalized and religious. It isn't about begging a cosmic genie to give you what you want. [Christianity teaches that prayer is simply the way in which you are with the One who loves you more than anything else in the world.](#) Who knows you better than anyone else in the world knows you. Who understands the deepest motives of your heart, good and bad, and loves you more than you can possibly imagine.

Getting what you want is not the purpose of prayer. Fulfilling your religious and moral obligation is not the purpose of prayer. Saving yourself from God's wrath and judgment is not the purpose of prayer.

Because of all that Jesus has done for us, in our place, Christianity teaches us that:

The Purpose of Prayer is to enjoy God and to be enjoyed by God.

Prayer is how we are in relationship with God. You can't enjoy someone you're not in relationship with, and you can't be in relationship with someone you never communicate with.

Prayer is our primary connection point with God. It is our means by which we get to enjoy him.

Would you say that right now, you're actually enjoying God in your life? Do you find pleasure in God? Are you able to bask in the eternal goodness of grace of your savior? Are you truly and deeply satisfied in God?

Psalm 34:1-3, 8, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together! ...Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"

David was a man that knew what it was to enjoy God.

19th century Hymn Writer Frederick Faber wrote,

*"Only to sit and think of God, Oh what a joy it is!
To think the thought, to breathe the Name; Earth has no higher bliss.
Father of Jesus, love's reward! What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before Thy throne to lie, And gaze and gaze on Thee
I love Thee so, I know not how My transports to control;
Thy love is like a burning fire Within my very soul.
O Spirit, beautiful and dread! My heart is fit to break
With love of all Thy tenderness For us poor sinners' sake."*

- Frederick Faber

Does this describe your life with God?

This is the purpose of prayer. Enjoying God is the point. Being with Him is the point.

Prayer draws us near to the God who is the source of all that is love. He is the goodness that encompasses all other good things. He invites into the center of His love and to breathe deeply in the love and goodness of God.

Isaiah 55:1-3, "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?"

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live....”

This is very similar to Jesus’ invitation in Matthew 11. This is a paraphrased version of scripture, but I love the language.

Matthew 11:28-30, “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Do you hear the invitation of God? *Be with me. Enjoy me. Rest in me. Let me bless you with my love and kindness and as you’re with me you’ll learn to live freely, and lightly.*

This is the purpose of prayer.

Now, there are other things we pray for, but ENJOYING GOD is primary. This MUST be primary if we’re going to get the other reasons to pray right. This is central, and every other aspect of prayer is built around it.

How do I enjoy God like that? How do I get to the point where I don’t view prayer as an obligation, or a discipline but a delight? How is any prayer that is longer than like 30 seconds not just totally boring?

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. (ESV) For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” (NKJV)

This is how Jesus taught His disciples to pray.

“Oh, one hour with God infinitely exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this world.”

– David Brainerd

The only reason we can enjoy God, the only the reason we have access to Him, is because of the beauty of His love and His pursuit of you and me through His suffering on the cross.

Notes: