

Kinds of Prayer
Series: How Do I Pray?
1 Timothy 2:1
August 19, 2018

Welcome again to worship today.

One evening six-year-old Bobby asked his father for a puppy. “Sorry, Bobby,” his father said, “not now. But if you will pray really hard for two months, perhaps God will send you a baby brother.”

Little Bobby prayed really hard for a month, but nothing happened, so he quit praying. But he was very surprised a month later when a baby boy arrived at their home. As he was looking at the baby beside his mother, his proud daddy pulled back the covers a little to expose another baby. TWINS!

His daddy asked, “Aren’t you glad that you prayed for a baby brother?”

Little Bobby replied, “I sure am, but aren’t you glad that I stopped praying when I did?”

We are in the midst of our series “How Do I Pray?” Think of this series as a time that will help your spiritual life and Christian witness grow tremendously. This will be like you ladies finding makeup that removes every wrinkle and makes you look 21 again.

Last week, we talked about the five P’s of prayer: the Place (or Importance) of Prayer, the Plea (or earnestness) of Prayer, the Prerequisite of Prayer (confession and forgiveness), the Productive Prayer (and that happens when we are earnest, when we are specific, and when we are righteous), and the Power of Prayer (which comes from being prayed up with the Lord).

I want to invite you to turn to page 4 in your bulletin. Today’s message comes from 1 Timothy 2:1, and I’d like you to fill out the table in your bulletin and take notes.

In 1 Timothy 2:1, all four of the main Greek words used for prayer are mentioned. Let’s read the verse together, 1 Timothy 2:1:

*I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.*¹

The Bible reveals many types of prayers and employs a variety of words to describe the practice. And here we are.

First, write down the first type: requests. We are most familiar this kind of prayer. The Greek word is *deh’-ay-sis*,² and is not exclusively a religious word; it can be used of a request made either to a person or to God: “bring me a pillow” or “bring me peace”. But its fundamental idea is a sense of need, so in the meaning column, write down “need.” No one will make a request unless a sense of need has already wakened a desire. Prayer begins with a sense of need. It begins with the conviction that we cannot deal with life ourselves. That sense of human weakness is the basis of all approach to God.

The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6:

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and **petition**, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*³

¹ 1 Timothy 2:1 (NIV)

² δέησις

³ Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

It is natural for us to ask God for the desires of our hearts, and we can be assured that God will answer our prayers for ourselves.

What I'd like you to do next and throughout is to write down specific things in the "My List" column, that way this particular study is practical and will help you develop a greater depth in your prayer life. So, write down a few specific requests for yourself right down.

The second type of prayer listed in 1 Timothy 2:1 is called in the NIV translation "prayers." The Greek word here is *pros-yoo-khay*⁴ and is used 37 times in the New Testament.

The basic difference between the first word *deh'-ay-sis* and *pros-yoo-khay*' is that *deh'-ay-sis* may be addressed either to a person or God, but *pros-yoo-khay*' is never used of anything else but an approach to God. There are certain needs which only God can satisfy. There is a strength which He alone can give; a forgiveness which He alone can grant; a certainty which He alone can bestow.

It may well be that our weakness and troubles haunt us because we so often take our needs to the wrong place. We tell our best friend about the problems in our marriage, but hardly to God.

Ephesians 6:18 says

*And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of **prayers** and requests.*⁵ Again *deh'-ay-sis* and *pros-yoo-khay*' are used together.

Two men were flying one day in a two-seat airplane admiring the beauty of God's creation. Then there was a cough. "Bless you, Owen." "For what, Grant?" "Your cough." "I didn't cough." Then there was a wheeze and a sputter, then silence as their plane engine died.

Both men were Christians, and they both immediately prayed to God for help. There was an instantaneous answer to prayer. As they crossed a ridge, there was an airfield – one the pilot didn't know existed. After gliding the powerless airplane to a landing on the grass strip, the two men noticed they were beside a 20-foot-tall sign that read, "Jesus is Lord – The Bible." When they saw that, we started laughing.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said that this kind of prayer is the "vehemency of holy zeal, the ardor of divine love, arising from a calm, undisturbed soul, moved upon by the Spirit of God."⁶ So write down in the meaning column "Earnest prayer only to God." What need is there in your life or someone else's life right now that would be a *pros-yoo-khay*', an earnest prayer only to God? Write that down.

The third type of prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1 is "intercession." The Greek word is *ent'-yook-sis*⁷. Of the prayer words in this passage, this is the most interesting, with an interesting history. It originally meant simply to meet, or to fall in with a person; it evolved to mean to hold intimate conversation with a person; then it acquired a special meaning and meant to enter into a king's presence and to submit a petition to him. That tells us much about prayer. It tells us that the way to God stands open and that we have the right to bring our petitions to one who is a King. So, as the meaning, write down "requests of the King."

⁴ προσευχή

⁵ Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

⁶ Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament.

⁷ ἔντευξις

These kinds of prayers are usually for others, so write down an intercession or two for someone else, one that needs to go directly to the King.

The final type of prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1 is “thanksgiving.” The Greek word here is *yoo-khar-is-tee’-ah*⁸, which we get our word Eucharist, another word for Holy Communion, for it is with great *yoo-khar-is-tee’-ah* or thanksgiving that we celebrate Holy Communion.

This kind of prayer does not mean asking God for things; it means thanking God for things.

A prayer of thanksgiving is a prayer that recognizes the good things God gives us and offers thanks for them: our lives, our health, our families, and our faith. The apostle Paul told us,

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*⁹

A part of what it means to live faithfully is to live out of a deep sense of gratitude for all that God has done for us. Prayers of thanksgiving help us to do that. They give proper thanks to God and also shape us into thankful people at our core.

For too many of us, prayer is like making a Christmas list – asking for stuff, when prayer should be an exercise in thanksgiving. The Psalms are full of these kinds of prayers. So, write down in the meaning column “being thankful.” The write down some things you are thankful for.

My friends, one of the consistent themes in the New Testament’s teaching about prayer is that we can be assured that God will hear and respond to our prayers. The apostle John points to this when he says,

*This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*¹⁰

This is a wonderful message! It tells us that God knows our needs, and that God absolutely expects us to bring our needs to Him through prayer.

When thinking of prayer, I like the acronym “P.U.S.H.” that stands for “Pray Until Something Happens.” That might be peace, it might be an answer, it might be a revelation. But whatever you are praying for, “P.U.S.H.”, “Pray Until Something Happens.”

A woman called a pastor to come to the house to see her father. The pastor went to the house not knowing whether the man was Christian or not, but he realized once he talked to the man that he was indeed a Christian. He also noticed a chair sitting close by. An empty chair. The pastor asked, “What’s the chair for?” The man said, “Well, I’ll tell you, but I won’t tell my daughter, she’ll think I’m crazy. I’ve always had trouble praying. I knew a man in my early years who said to me, ‘All you need to do is put an empty chair in front of you and prayer is nothing more than talking to God. Why don’t you imagine God sitting in that chair and you just talk to him.’” And so he said, “I put an empty chair there and started talking to the chair as if God was there and it got so good that I just do it now hours sometime at a time and just talk to God and God talks to me and my soul is blessed by His divine grace.” And he said, “If I tell my daughter, she’ll think I’m losing my mind.”

⁸ εὐχαριστία

⁹ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NRSV)

¹⁰ 1 John 5:14 (NIV)

Some months later, the man died. When the pastor came to visit the family, he asked the daughter, "How did he die? What happened to him?"

She said, "Well, the sickness just finally got him. But I found him in the strangest way. When I came in, he was dead, but there's a chair sitting beside the bed and I noticed that he had pushed himself out of the bed and put his head in the chair and died there with his head in the chair."

Won't you put yourself and your needs in the lap of Jesus today?