

Ephesians 6:18-20 – Prayer

These verses give us “Paul's guide to prayer”. We all know that we should pray. I think, we all do pray. But how can we pray better and according to the Bible? Prayer should be like daily bread, part of our regular lives. We should always be growing.

1. When to pray – at all times

Christians have a terrible enemy, the devil (v11). We are involved in a spiritual warfare. Our enemies are mighty spiritual authorities (v12). This spiritual battle is always going on; it never stops until we rest in heaven. We are not yet in heaven, so we must fight; our weapon is to pray. When we stop praying, Satan is happy – he wants us to stay away from God and Christ. Satan is always scheming, so we should be always praying. This does not mean that our prayers must be long, or clever. God is our Father and knows our needs. What it means is that prayer should be part of our lives in every situation; we should never be far from it.

2. What to pray – all kinds of prayers and requests

Paul said to pray “with all prayer and supplication”. “Supplication” is asking; making a request. It is one type of prayer. There is also worship, confession of sin, giving thanks, expressing our sorrow or confusion, etc. e.g. The Lord's Prayer. “All prayer” means we should pray in every situation. In the Psalms David prayed in worship, in trouble, in sadness, in calmness. Jesus prayed early in the morning, when blessing food, when working, and even dying on the cross (Mark 1:35, 6:41, John 11:41-42, Luke 23:34). Especially we should pray for the progress of God's kingdom; that is Paul's concern through Ephesians 6:10-20. How are you praying?

3. Who to pray for – the saints, especially the ambassadors

Paul says to pray for all “the saints”. Who are the saints? Roman Catholicism calls people saints if they are dead and lived extraordinary lives and did miracles. But Paul calls all believers “saints” (e.g. Ephesus 1:1). Saint means “holy one”. God chose his people, and set them aside for himself. Christ loves and died for all believers. Are they all special to you? Do you pray for all of the ones in your life; or just those you like? Especially Paul desired prayer for himself, as a gospel preacher. The success of the gospel depends on preaching. Preachers and leaders need more prayer, not less!

4. How to pray – continuing with watchfulness

Paul tells us to “keep alert”, or “watch”. The thief never tells you when he is coming. Weeds grow in the shamba quickly. Spiritual dangers come without us realising, unless we are watching. This watching must continue; the askari who works for one night and then sleeps for six is no good! Genuine Christian believers backslide slowly, step by step. We must watch out for all the saints, carefully. When you say “I'll pray for you”, make sure you do! It is only by finishing the race – not just starting it – that we will get the crown. Are you alert?

5. How to pray – by the Spirit

“By the Spirit” does not mean “loudly”! This idea is not Biblical. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of Christ. We must seek what he desires – the things of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. It means we must pray with faith, relying upon the promises of God. The Holy Spirit will give us strength. We often feel that it is too hard to pray; we are too tired or busy. But we must trust that prayer is God's will, and that he will strengthen us to do it. Do not grieve the Spirit, but rely on him.