

Introduction

? What is prayer?

Prayer is offering up our desires to God. Prayer is talking to God about what we wish and will. It is a real conversation between two personalities - you and God.

God's desires are the most important desires in the universe. Our goal is to go beyond merely telling God what we want. It is to learn to love what He wants.

You could think of prayer as a communion with God where your desires are shaped into God's desires. Through prayer you come to know God, His will, purposes, ways and nature.

When we are unsaved, and when we are newly saved, not many of our desires are in harmony with God's. Therefore, our prayers are immature in that they reflect desires not shaped by the Word of God.

Read and discuss these examples from Scripture:

 Daniel 9:20-22; Luke 9:29; 22:42; Acts 10:9-10; 22:17, Rev 1:10

Prayer is often part of this transformation process.

To illustrate, when a boat approaches the pier, the occupant might throw out a rope to hook it. As he pulls on the rope, is he pulling the boat to the shore, or the shore to the boat?

In the same way, while prayer has real effects (like the tugging of the boatsman does), we are not 'pulling' God to conform to our wills, we are pulling our wills to conform to His.

Application

? How are we to pray?

 John 14:13-14

1 Prayer, for the Christian, is praying in Jesus' name.

? What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name?

Praying in Jesus' name has two aspects. We pray in Christ's name positionally, and practically.

 Ephesians 1:6

Positionally

Praying in Jesus' name means you are not appearing before God in your own name. That is, you come to God based upon Christ's merits and righteousness, not your own. You appear before God 'in Christ', trusting in His status with the Father, not in your own works, or even in the sincerity of your prayer.

 John 15:4-8, 16, 16:23-24

Practically

To pray in Jesus' name practically is to abide in Christ. We see that abiding in Christ is at the heart of praying in Jesus' name and consequently is the power behind answered prayer.

The process of the Christian life, which we have already studied is at the heart of this. Contemplating, confessing, consecrating and celebrating are essentially all acts of prayer. In other words, prayer is at the heart of the process of the Christian life.