

August 5. PRAISE: The First Step in Effective Prayer. Praying consistently will change your life. In fact, many of the blessings God wants you to enjoy will never be realized unless you pray. All Christians know they are supposed to pray, and all Christians want to pray. But many of God's people, if they are completely frank and transparent about the issue, would have to admit their prayer life is somewhere between mediocre and non-existent. During these first few days of our focus on prayer, let's look at four simple points which are in the acronym: P-R-A-Y. If you can spell the word pray, hopefully you will be able to remember how to make your prayer life more effective, and you will be inspired to pray more consistently. Psalm 100 helps us understand the first letter, "P", in the word P-R-A-Y, which stands for praise. Psalm 100:1-4 states it well: "***Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name***". Verse 2 tells us, Come before His presence with singing. And in verse 4 notice the words "enter into." In other words, praise is how you are to enter God's presence. It is the best way to begin your prayer. When you want to come to God, you start with thanksgiving. You start with singing. You start with praise. Or, as The Message says, "***Enter with the password: 'Thank you!'***" Today, and every day, make praise the starting point of every conversation with God.

August 6. REPENT: The Second Step in Effective Prayer. On Monday, we began to look at what makes for effective prayer by using the acronym P-R-A-Y. The first step is *praise*. Today, let's focus on the second letter of our acronym, "R", which stands for *repent*. By repentance in prayer, I mean taking the time before God to search your heart and repent of anything that has come between you and Him. **Psalm 19:12-13** expresses it well, ***Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.*** Verse 12 begins with the question, "Who can understand his errors?" The psalmist is telling us, "You will not always know when you do something wrong. You will not always know when you get into an area that is not right." What David is pointing to are the secret faults and presumptuous sins which can still have dominion over you—even though you may not be aware that what you did was wrong. For example, sometimes we can allow attitudes to get into our hearts that we don't realize are inconsistent with God's character. Or sometimes we can do and say things that are detrimental, not only to us, but to others, and not really understand the damage we have done. How do you deal with these sins? You come before God and say, "God, put the spotlight on anything in my life that has raised a barrier between You and me, and I will repent of it." So when you pray, ask God to reveal any sin in your life you may be overlooking. God will honor your heart of repentance.

August 7. ASK: The Third Step in Effective Prayer. This week, we have discovered that *praise* and *repentance* are the first two steps to effective prayer. Today we look at the very important third step of *asking*. Yesterday, taught us that repentance is searching your own heart and asking God to put the spotlight on it, and then repenting of anything that He shows you. When your heart is clean, you can have confidence before God when you ask. As **1 John 3:21-22** says, “*Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*”. In **Matthew 7:7-11**, Jesus tells us, “*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*” Pretty clear, isn’t it? God loves you and wants the very best for you. Be careful not to water down the words of Jesus, or somehow try and explain them away or complicate them. He meant just what He said. But there are some conditions. And next time we will look at those conditions for receiving what you ask God for.

August 8. The Conditions for Answered Prayer. Remember, that “A” stands for *ask*, and it is highly likely that many Christians don’t believe that God wants them to ask. God wants you to ask. He really does. But there are some conditions He gives in order to answer your requests. In John chapters 14-16 we find a number of these conditions. We need to remember that these are Jesus’ last hours with the disciples; and He wants them to understand how prayer really works. Over and over He emphasizes the need to ask, but His answers will be based on three conditions. First, in **John 14:13**, Jesus says your request must glorify God, “*And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.*” Second, in **John 15:7**, He says your request must be consistent and in harmony with His Word, “*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*” And finally, in **John 16:23-24**, Jesus sets the condition that your request bring you joy, “*And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*” Over and over, Jesus commands you to ask. But when you ask, make sure your request will glorify God, that it is consistent with His Word, and that it will bring you joy.

August 9. YIELD: The Fourth Step in Effective Prayer. **Psalm 37:4** provides us the “Y” in the acronym P-R-A-Y, the four elements to effective prayer we have been discussing this week. **Psalm 37:4** says, *Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Now the Hebrew word for *delight* in this verse literally means to become soft or pliable. This means that “delighting” in the Lord is assuming a yielded posture before God. So the “Y” in P-R-A-Y stands for *yield*. The question is: How do you practice yielding to God when you pray? Yielding is when you stop talking, and you wait, listen, and seek to hear from God. A suggestion might be simply praying this: “God, is there anything You want to say to me? Do You have any instructions for me? Is there anything You want me to change?” Then silently wait for Him to speak to me. As you assume this posture of being yielded and waiting quietly before Him, you will be surprised at some of the things that may come to your attention: “You need to spend more time with your daughter,” “Take your spouse out on a date,” “Bake your neighbor a pie and build a bridge over which the gospel can travel,” “Spend more time praising Me,” “Show your gratitude and appreciation for those who have been helping you in your life.” You will indeed hear from God if you ask Him to speak into your heart, and wait silently before Him. That is the last element of effective prayer: *praise, repent, ask, yield*. Your prayers can indeed be effective if you commit to these four principles. That is how to P-R-A-Y.