

# **The Heart of Prayer**

**Luke 11:1-4; Philippians 4:1-7;  
James 5:13-18 (NRSVue)**



## **How important is prayer in your life?**

Is it your pathway to knowing God?

Does prayer strengthen you in hard times?

Do your prayers mirror Jesus' love to others?

Today, we probe the heart of prayer, and we grow more confident, faithful, and committed to the spiritual practice.

## **Parental Relationship**

When Jesus taught the disciples how to pray, he focused on their relationship with God, their heavenly parent. He said, "When you pray, say: 'Father, may your name be revered as holy. May your kingdom come'" (Lk. 11:2).

Before we ask for bread, forgiveness, or release from trial, we focus on God our Father. He wishes us the best, but he's the Creator. When we approach him, let's respect who he is. Be mindful of his holiness, his rule over life. Let joy satisfy you with the sweet taste of confidence.

The heart of prayer opens you to the comforting brush of God's hand. His whisper draws you to the heavenly Father. In prayer, lean toward your his face, and you begin to understand who you are to others.

## **Petition for Peace**

When the apostle Paul taught people to pray, he focused on making a petition for peace. He wrote, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

Two women in the Philippian congregation were at odds. They leaned toward each other, arms crossing as their disagreement deepened. Paul urged church leaders to help

them find a way back to fellowship. His counsel centered on prayer—prayer *for* the women and prayer *with* them.

The apostle Paul also called the congregation to rejoice in prayer, with happiness for who the Lord Jesus is and what he's done. The church's people should be gentle with one another, including the two women. Why? Because "The Lord is near" (Phil. 4:5). Since Jesus comes again, the Christians of Philippi are to offer prayers of supplication and thanksgiving. The knots in their spirits will untie, and God's peace will rise among them as calm water fills a craggy shoreline.

The heart of prayer slips into our relationships within the church and brings us to petitions for God's peace to reign over each of us. When his peace sinks into our fellowship, prayer stiffens our spines and steadies our hands. It becomes our strength.

## **Powerful Intercession**

When James, the Lord Jesus' brother, wrote of prayer, he said, "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective" (James 5:16b).

James illustrated his point with Elijah. The righteous prophet prayed for God's judgment, and the rain stopped for three and a half years. When he prayed again, the rains returned along with God's blessing. His prayers turned the people's eyes back to the Lord. The drought was a harsh lesson, but Elijah's purpose wasn't punishment. He led God's people back to the divine love they'd forgotten.

James spoke of this to people who were sick, weak, and sinful. He wanted those who suffered to find God's help, healing, strength, and forgiveness. His prescription? Prayer by righteous people.

Your prayers carry more weight than you know. Your holiness, coupled with the prayers of friends and family, brings God's power to people you love.

I remember praying for people with cancer and friends who suffered. A midnight prayer with a couple holding their dying newborn. God's answers weren't always what we wanted, but prayer drew us closer to Christ and each other in trying times.

**The heart of prayer** is your relationship with God and others, with life's stress and trouble. As you pray, focus on God and his rule in your life. If relationships with others go sour, prayer can bring you back into fellowship. In sickness or tragedy, even when your own sins get in the way, prayer brings you answers.

Jesus redeemed you at an enormous cost to himself. Won't you trust him to lead you to his Father's answers?

Pour out your heart in prayer. It's the doorway where God waits—not impatiently, not demanding, but ready to meet you with his peace. Friends wait for you, too. With them, you'll know the God who waits to guide you to the answers you seek.

**Amen**

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