

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES – SUMMER 2024

2. Prayer

The second spiritual discipline is praying. Prayer must be an ongoing exercise for the fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. Prayer is the two-way communication between God and man. There are three biblical truths about prayer.

First, prayer is expected. That is, Jesus constantly modeled and commanded a life of persistent prayer: *Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up* (Luke 18:1).

Secondly, prayer is learned. Remember that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. From a practical standpoint, we all have to learn how to pray. We begin as children, reciting simple pre-meal prayers, such as:

God is great. God is good. Let us thank Him for our food.

By His hands we are fed. Give us Lord our daily bread. Amen.

The first time we are asked to pray out loud can create a lot of anxiety, but remembering the parts to Jesus's model prayer (Mt. 6:9-13) or using the acrostic ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication) will help us to organize our thoughts as we pray. There are two important encouragements for us as we pray out loud:

1. What we say or how we say it is not as important as *saying* it.
2. We get good at what we do; we will feel more comfortable the more we pray.

Thirdly, prayer is answered. E.M. Bounds once wrote, "Elijah learned new and higher lessons of prayer while hidden away by God and with God." (cf. 1 Ki. 19:9-18) Because God is faithful, we can trust that He not only hears our prayers but that He answers them as well—in His time and in His way. We must never give up praying to God, whether it is about a person, an issue, or a decision. Ultimately, God will answer our prayers, even if His answer is "No" or "Not yet."

Here are some questions for further reflection:

1. On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate yourself on this Spiritual Discipline?
2. What specific actions will you take to develop this Spiritual Discipline further?
3. Read the passages surrounding the verses referenced above and meditate on the Scriptural truths present in those passages.
4. Choose a verse to memorize this week.