

## ***Worship That Matters!***

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### **INTRODUCTION**

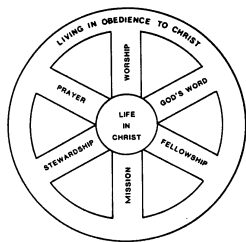
In Honolulu, Hawaii there are a lot of one-way streets. I remember that the first few times I drove in Honolulu I became quite frustrated. It seemed to me that they made it quite easy to get into Waikiki, but nearly impossible to get out. There was one street in particular that frustrated me. It frustrated me because once you got on it there was no way to get back to the water, except by going away from the water first. It did become easier the more times I was there, but I still believe they formed the roads intentionally so all the streets made it easy to get there.

What would happen if the only road to or from your house was a 1-way street? Depending on the direction you would never leave your house or never get to your house. In order for it to work for you it has to be multi-directional or, as in the case of the Ingram family, give you a way around so you can catch the 1-way going in the right direction.

Our subject today is *Prayer* and, unfortunately, many Christians, if they pray, treat prayer like a 1-way street. This is especially true for immature believers. But we all have a tendency to call on God only when we really need Him and this breeds selfish 1-way prayer times, where the requests go up and God can't get a word in because we don't stop to listen.

Prayer is the most underutilized source of power in today's society. This is true due to a lack of belief in a "higher power" who cares about us and wants to help us. It's due to something we've already talked about lately and that is the ability for us to be more self-sufficient than ever. We're going to show another video that will shed some light on people's perceptions about prayer.

*(View Highway Video's "Do You Pray")*



We are continuing our discipleship series today with a look at the inner-disciplines of a disciple. The inner-disciplines of worship, prayer and the word, are the vertical disciplines directly related to the relationship with our creator. They have nothing to do with the relationships we have with other people around us. Prayer is one of the spokes of our wheel where all spokes need to be in balance in order for us to live a balanced Christian life.

Some people say we should always pray in the morning. If we did, perhaps our prayers would go like the person who prayed this,

Dear God,  
So far today I've done all right. I haven't gossiped, I haven't lost my temper, I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or over-indulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot of help.

## **WHO CAN PRAY?**

**Unbelievers** – Lets start out by looking at Isaiah 59:1-2. We know that before we accept salvation through Jesus Christ we are separated from God. That separation is because of the sin in our lives. It is because we choose to hold on to our own lives and have an alliance with the world. We see the results of this kind of living every day.

We see it in people who will walk all over their co-workers to get a promotion. We see it in parents who attack coaches and officials at sporting events because their child didn't get the right "call". We see it in students who cheat on their tests and lie to their parents. We see it in the way people look at others who don't fit into a particular mold. We see it in those who gossip about others so they can feel better about themselves. It is all around us. We live in a "me" society.

Isaiah tells us that our sins separate us from God. He hides is face from people like that and He will not hear their prayers. But if God cannot hear their prayers how can they be saved?

Let's look at Romans 10:9-13. The difference here is between belief and non-belief. We know that God looks at the heart of person. Before a person ever utters one word of confession, God has already seen that person's heart. He has already been instrumental in using the Holy Spirit to convict the person of sin. Since we know from the gospel story of the lost sheep that God is always searching for His people to come to Him, we know that He is always ready to listen to those who are seeking Him with a repentant heart and a desire to come in to the fold.

**Believers** – Under what conditions do believers come before God in prayer.

*First of all, believers come to God under the authority of Jesus.* Look with me at John 14:13-14. This teaching is why we add to the end of most of our prayers the words, "in Jesus' name".

I have read of government entities that have asked Christians to pray before their meetings but have asked that they don't use the name of Jesus. As

believers we may have trouble with that simply because of the motivation for the request. In a real sense though, to take Jesus out of our prayers is to lose the power of the prayer. We're told that Jesus is the mediator between God and man. It is only because of Jesus that we can approach God, and that is because without Jesus there is no forgiveness of the sins that separate us from God.

*Secondly, believers come to God with faith.* Let's look at a short story in Matthew 21:18-22 to help us here. There is emphasis in verse 22 on the word "believing". This is a huge issue for Christians.

We have less trouble believing in God. We accept the gospel story as fact with little question. But when it comes to have our prayers answered we often lack faith. We believe that God can answer prayers, but we wonder if he will answer *our* prayers. We are in awe when we hear stories of how he answered the prayers of others, but we wonder if he will answer ours.

*Lastly, believers come to God in submission.* Jesus set the ultimate example for us in this. Look at Matthew 26:39. We have to realize that when we ask sometimes we might ask for things that are inappropriate.

I once heard someone teach that if you "pray in the spirit" you won't ask for things that are inappropriate so all your prayers will be answered with a "yes." Maybe I'm not in the spirit enough or something, but I know that my prayers aren't always answered with a "yes." I am not God and therefore I don't have the big picture. He has a plan for this world and I believe that no matter how wicked the world becomes, He will still bring His plan to fruition. If my prayers conflict with his plan I don't want Him to answer with a "yes".

Therefore, as an act of submission, we should pray either with words or attitude that God's will would be done in situations.

### **CONCLUSION**

The good thing about prayer is that as we mature and grow and get better at it. And while we are learning how, God's word tells us that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. The Holy Spirit knows the yearnings of our hearts and when we don't quite know how or what to ask for, He asks on our behalf.

This morning I want to leave time for us to pray. Perhaps our prayers at this time should be directed towards asking God to teach us how to pray and teach us to accept the answers.