

DEVOTIONAL AID FOR 31 MAY 2021 – 6 JUNE 2021



**UPPER
HUNTER**
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear church family,

Prayer is like breathing. It is so natural to Christians, anyone can do it. Indeed, a Christian who does not pray is like a person who does not breathe. Either that person is dead or will die unless he starts breathing again soon. Prayer is essential to Christians. Yet, Christians also find it difficult to pray at times. We are sometimes lost for words, or more frequently, we lack motivation to pray and go about our lives without prayer. But, like someone who forgot to breathe, we are not doing ourselves any good when we do that.

But why should we pray? Christians believe God is all-powerful and sovereign. He is not merely more powerful than we are. He is absolutely in control of all things and he knows absolutely all things. So we can sometimes wonder why we should pray. What is the point of praying to God if he already knows all my needs and he will do what he wants to do anyway? It is a legitimate question, but when we ask this, we might be forgetting the heart of God. God is personal and he wants to involve us, having a real relationship with us. We also need to remember that God does not need prayer, but we do. We need to pray, that is, to talk to God because we are in a loving relationship with God. God loves us and we love God. Talking to God is natural and is meant to nurture our relationship with him. But the sovereign God also commands us to pray, for he loves to involve us and use our prayers as means to achieve his purposes.

The rest of the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 45 to 52) teaches us about prayer, based on the Lord's Prayer. This week's questions teach us why and how of prayer in a general way, leading us to the Lord's Prayer, which will be the basis of the rest of the Catechism. I hope these questions and answers help us to pray, both in what we pray for as well as by motivating us to pray.

Yours in Christ,

Timothy Lee

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THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM¹

Lord's Day 44

Q116) Why do Christians need to pray?

A) Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness God requires of us. And also because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit only to those who continually and with heartfelt longing ask God for these gifts and thank him for them.

Q117) How does God want us to pray so that he will listen to us?

A) First, we must pray from the heart to no other than the one true God, who has revealed himself to us in his Word, asking for everything he has commanded us to ask for. Second, we must fully recognise our need and misery, hiding nothing, and humble ourselves in his majestic presence. Third, we must rest on this unshakable foundation: even though we do not deserve it, God will surely listen to our prayer because of Christ our Lord. This is what he promised us in his Word.

Q118) What has God commanded us to ask of him?

A) Everything we need, spiritually and physically, as embraced in the prayer Christ our Lord himself taught us.

¹ The text of the Catechism is usually from <https://threeforms.org/heidelberg-catechism/>, but time to time, for the sake of clarity, I have also adopted the translation used in *The Good News We Almost Forgot* by Kevin DeYoung.

Q119) What is this prayer?

A) Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

MATTHEW 7:7-8

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

These words from Jesus should encourage us to pray. We ought to ask God trusting that He will hear our prayers and answer us. Even if (or rather quite often) God does not answer our prayers exactly the way we ask, or in the timeframe we ask for, but we know God is a loving God who is infinitely wise and powerful. We know this because of what He has done for us in Christ. He gave His Son Jesus to forgive our sins and to have us as His children. So be confident in asking God for things. He is willing and able to give us good gifts more than we know.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for being so ready to hear my prayers. I am sorry that I often lack faith to trust your promises and slow to pray to you. Please help me to bring all things to you as a child does to his loving father. In Jesus's name I pray, amen.

JOHN 16:23

In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

Jesus was talking to his disciples here in John 16:23. He was saying that although the disciples will for a while miss Jesus when he's arrested and crucified. Yet, they will see him again since he will be resurrected and know God's amazing victory over sin. And what Jesus says here is that after he's accomplished this work of redemption, the disciples be able to ask God directly in Jesus's name, and it will be given to them. Jesus is guaranteeing that it will happen this way. What an encouragement for us now! Although we can no longer see Jesus with our eyes and ask him to do things for us like the disciples did back then, we have a direct access to God because of Jesus. We can talk to God relying on Jesus and He will hear us!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, what privilege it is to talk to you directly! What grace to be heard by you, all because of what Jesus has done for us! Thank you for hearing us and answering me. Please grant me a deep conviction about your love and grace, so I may not hesitate to talk to you for all things. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.