The Spiritual Benefits of Prayer & Fasting Pt 1 *Matt 6:5-22*

Jesus says, "When you pray" not "If you pray"…;

Because He expects us to pray… Matthew Henry said *"If prayerless, then graceless..."* Prayerlessness is not fundamentally a discipline problem. At root it’s a faith problem… Unlike the Pharisees.

Prayer is the native language of faith. John Calvin called prayer the chief exercise of faith… That’s why when faith is awake and surging in us, prayer doesn’t feel like a burden or an obligation. It feels natural. It’s how faith most instinctively speaks.

Throughout the Bible, faith and prayer are unbreakable links. One of the clearest examples is Jesus' statement in *John 15:7* "If you *abide* in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you"

Abiding in Jesus is faith; fully believing His words… Asking whatever you desire is prayer. (Abiding… means, continuing without change; enduring, remaining, and steadfast)

The Bible tells us to trust in God at all times… *Ps 62:8* "Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us"

To pray at all times in the Spirit… *Eph 6:18* "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints"

Believe in God… *John 14:1* "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me"

Ask of God… *Luke 11:9* "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"

Prayer is the chief exercise of faith…

Jesus emphasizes… that Prayer is secret fellowship with God, although public prayer is certainly authorized in the Bible. However, nobody should pray in public who does not pray in private! for that would be hypocrisy…

Jesus points out four common errors concerning prayer…:

1. praying... to be heard by others… v. 5-6
2. praying... mere words, empty repetition… v. 7-8 and
3. praying... with sin in the heart… v. 14-15.

God does not forgive us because we forgive others… but on the basis of the blood of Jesus He forgives us… *1 John 1:9* "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"

4. praying... with a unforgiving spirit... will hinder a prayer life and show that a person has no understanding of the grace of God.
The "Lord's Prayer" is not given to be performed with thoughtlessly. Rather, it is a model and a guide for us to use to learn to pray. It is a "family prayer"… note the repeated "our" and "us..."

It puts God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will before the earthly needs of people. It cautions us against selfish praying...

When We Pray We Should Pray...

1. have faith in God… v 9
2. worship God… v.9
3. expectation from God… v. 10
4. submission to God… v. 10
5. petition for ourselves… v. 11
6. confession of sins…v. 12
7. dependence on God's grace… v. 12
8. compassion for others… 6:12
9. dependence on God's power… v.13
10. acknowledgment of God's dominion and power … v. 3

Prayer prepares us! Prayer prepares us! for the proper use of the answer... If we know our need, and if we speak it to God...

 trusting Him... for His provision, then we will make better use of the answer than if God forced it on us without our asking.

It is right to pray for daily physical needs, for forgiveness, and for guidance, protection, and from evil.

"Lead us not into temptation" does not mean that God tempts His children... James 1:13-17 AMP says "Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted from God; for God is incapable of being tempted by [what is] evil and He Himself tempts no one. But every person is tempted when he is drawn away, enticed and baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions). Then the evil desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully matured, brings forth death. Do not be misled, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect (free, large, full) gift is from above; it comes down from the Father of all [that gives] light, in [the shining of] Whom there can be no variation [rising or setting] or shadow cast by His turning [as in an eclipse]"

In this petition... 1. we are asking God to guide us so that we will not get out of His will and not be involved in a situation of temptation...

1 John 5:18 Mess "We know that none of the God-begotten makes a practice of sin — fatal sin. The God-begotten are also the God-protected. The Evil One can't lay a hand on them"

2. Do Not put yourself in situation of tempting God so that He must miraculously rescue us... Matt 4:5-7 Deut 6:16-19 "You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted Him in Massah. "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the Lord swore to your fathers, to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken"
Let’s Talk About Fasting... As with giving and praying, true fasting **must be done in secret**... Fasting is between the believer and God. Jesus said in Matt 6:16-17 "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward"

**Let's Read Isa 58:6-11**

"When you strive to be a spiritual person, you fight the constant battle of "**ritual reality**...” It is much easier to go through the external activities of religion than it is to love God from your heart and let that love touch the lives of others. It is a matter not of either/or but of both/and; worshiping God from the heart and serving others in love.

James stated, **“Faith without works is dead”**

The Christian faith was popular in Judah...and people enjoyed learning the Word and even participating in the fasts...

**But when the services were over**... the worshipers went back to exploiting people and pleasing themselves.

**What a difference it makes**... when we repent and return to the Lord. **We have**... light instead of darkness, healing instead of disease, righteousness instead of defilement, glory instead of disgrace; and life becomes a watered garden, not a dirty, filthy swamp" **With The Word Bible Commentary**

**The principle of fasting**... is that the importance of the request causes an individual to be so concerned about his or her spiritual condition... that physical necessities fade into the background.

**In this sense the act of fasting** is designed as a process leading to a stronger spirit-man, purification, sanctification, revelation, and humbling oneself before God...

**Fasting is not an end in itself**... but rather it is the disciplined training in preparation for an **important event** like; worship, break-through, deliverance, healing and transformation...

1. Is this not the fast that I have chosen...
2. To lose the bonds of wickedness...
3. To undo the heavy burdens...
4. To let the oppressed go free...
5. Break every yoke...

**Let's Read Ps 69:10-20NIV**

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