



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Prayer

Fellowship
in the
Kingdom

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

Our family

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NAC Catechism

13.1 Prayer

In many religions, prayers are an expression of devotion to a higher being. Praying is generally considered an expression of devoutness.

Christians understand prayer as an opportunity given by God for human beings to enter into contact with Him. In prayer, the believer experiences: God is present, God hears, and God answers. Thus the believing human being bows before God's majesty and love in humbleness. Prayer is closely related to the Holy Spirit (Romans 8: 26). In the Old and New Testaments, prayer is a verbal expression of belief in the God who has revealed Himself as the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.

God addressed mankind first. For this reason, prayer is always mankind's response to God's word. The figurative image of prayer as the "breathing of the soul" clearly expresses the necessity of prayer for faith. Faith without prayer is not a living faith. Prayer brings to expression love and reverence for God. Petitions are brought to God in the knowledge that the Almighty will lead all things to the benefit and eternal salvation of the supplicant.

We pray In Jesus Name... Ask yourself, "would Jesus be praying for this?" And, "how would He pray for it?" 1 Timothy 2:5 *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*

When we pray, we are aided by the Holy Spirit... Romans 8:26 *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*

And when we end a prayer, we say "Amen..." "Amen", which stems from Hebrew, translates as: "So be it!"

2 Corinthians 1:20 *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

Discussion Questions:

- How do you express to God in your prayer that He is indeed your Father? How do your prayers reflect this Father-son, Father-daughter relationship?

- How would using the "in Jesus' name" filter, transform our prayers? How does this change the way we approach God?

Let's look at the Roman 8:26 – 27 verses but in the NLT version:

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

Think about that: even when we don't know what to say, or say something wrong, the Spirit prays for us more deeply than we could pray for ourselves, in God's will. This is the gift of the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

NAC Catechism

12.1.7.2.1

Our Father in heaven...

The form of address "Our Father" identifies this prayer as a communal prayer in which those praying profess to be children of God. In this fellowship, Jesus Christ is the "firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8: 29). Whenever He prayed, He addressed God as Father (Luke 22: 42; 23: 46; John 11: 41; 17: 1).

The relationship between Jesus and His heavenly Father is unique. Since Christ taught human beings to pray to God as the "Father in heaven" He incorporated them into His relationship with the Father. When human beings address God as their "Father", this alludes to the reality that God has created them, that He is their Lord, and that He provides for them. God is the source and sustainer of that which He has created. In love and trust, and without fear, human beings can address Him as "Father".

The words "in heaven" emphasise that God is exalted above all earthly existence. He—God, the Father—is greater and higher than everything, and yet, in His omnipresence, He is close to us human beings (Psalm 139; Acts 17: 27)

- Describe a time when you felt weak in prayer, or were so anxious that you could not pray. How did you feel the comfort of God in that moment, even when you couldn't find the words?

- Describe what the word "Amen" at the end of a prayer means to you.

- What are some "habits" we get in when praying? What are some of your personal repetitious catchphrases and what can you do to make your prayers more meaningful?

- How have your prayers moved from a monologue to a dialogue? Do you feel God speaking to you, and how do you respond to Him when you pray? Share an example if you're comfortable doing so.

- What helps you remain focused while you are praying? **Examples:** A person who speaks more than one language, prays in their least familiar tongue, so they concentrate on every word. Another person writes their prayers down before speaking them.

Bible References

The attributes of the garment

GRACE
Matthew 18: 21-25
Luke 19: 8-9

HUMILITY
1 Peter 5:5
Luke 14:11
Luke 19: 9-14

LOVE FOR GOD
Matthew 22: 37-38

LOVE FOR OUR NEIGHBOR
Matthew 22:39

The garment we need to put on is a garment of:

- grace, humility, love for God, and love for our neighbor.

Remaining in true fellowship with God means taking the next step and striving to become more and more like Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

- You will recall from the parable that many people invited initially chose not to accept the invitation to the feast. God calls us today to be a part of His Kingdom. What do you think keeps people from accepting God's invitation, despite His desire for everyone to accept it?

- What does the garment described by our Chief Apostle (the garment of grace, of humility, of love for God, and of love for our neighbor) look like in real life? How would one put on the "garment" mentioned?

- What does the verse "*Many are called but few are chosen*" (Matthew 22:14) mean to you? Who does the choosing?

If we are truly wearing the garment (grace, humility, love for God, and for our neighbor), then judgment goes away and we see our true responsibility, which is to love.

Going Deeper

Joy in fellowship

This parable, from the beginning, is about family, about community. To the father in the story, the return of the son completed the family again, it didn't undermine it like the older brother thought. Often our view of community, of family, differs from that of our Father.

In Jesus' compassion, we see that He welcomed all to His table. If we look at the surrounding verses they tell us that the Pharisees were upset because Jesus was eating with sinners and that creates an interesting backdrop to the story. Jesus welcomed those sinners (similar to the lost brother), but also those who figured themselves set apart, or better, (the older brother). And even with all these different personalities gathered, the table, the community, is a place of joy.

The parable is left open ended – will the older brother join the celebration? Will we be open to forming inclusive community in our church, in our neighborhood? Even if we feel it's at a cost to ourselves? Or do we build a community that excludes?

Luke 15 records Jesus telling three consecutive parables about things or people who were lost. They are: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. The parable of the lost son is a little different than the other two. Though there are three main characters, and each character's conduct teaches important spiritual lessons, today we'll focus on just one character - the older son - and touch on just a few aspects of his conduct.

Please read the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32, and as you do, focus your attention on the older son's conduct.

The older brother...

- Has a sense of entitlement
- Thinks he should receive greater recognition for his loyalty to his father
- Is worried about "fairness"
- Lacks love and graciousness towards his brother

Romans 3:23 ...*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Discussion Questions:

- Discuss why the older son must also repent in this parable even though he stays at home with his father and obediently carries out his daily tasks.

- The older son believed his conduct required his father to respond to him in a certain way. Describe a way in which people try to control God through their obedience.

- What does your "good conduct" entitle you to?
