

What Should Our Attitude Be When We Pray?

This blog post discusses prayer. How should we pray? What should our attitude and petitions toward God be? How do we approach Him?

It is clear that God is often the one who draws us to go to Him, and He does His precious work in us, teaching us how to get closer to Him and showing us how much we need Him. But what kind of attitude do we also need to have, or what type of feeling always needs to be present in us when we pray and get in front of Jesus?

For which reason do we go to Jesus?

We can get an example here from the story of the centurion's servant who was healed by Jesus.

⁵ Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, ⁶ saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented."

⁷ And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."

⁸ The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does *it*."

¹⁰ When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! ¹¹ And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that same hour. (Matthew 8:5-13)

We see that the centurion asked Him to heal his servant. There is a prayer expressing a petition. We also know that the position of a centurion at that time was a position of authority and power. We know how often the persons with power are usually not disposed to humble easily, but here we see a different reaction in this man. He was humble. Firstly, he recognized that he was not worthy of Jesus to come to his home. Here, we see him acknowledging not only how small and unworthy he was but also acknowledging the greatness of Jesus. A great man, in people’s eyes like him, said that He wasn’t worthy of Jesus going and visiting his servant in person. He trusted in the authority of His word. That means that he wasn’t looking at Him as a simple miracle maker or someone performing wonders and prodigies, even if He also did that.

Many people in the crowd were looking at Him as someone just performing miracles, as a great man of influence that everyone wanted to be with and follow. We can see, in fact, that not all of the people following Him endured till the end. It happened because they didn’t really understand the real purpose of His coming and His teachings. Everything was going fine until He was healing and multiplying the fish and the bread, but when things became harder and He demanded something more from them, they retreated. They stopped following Him. It happens in this way with the people who just follow Him for the fame or for what they see. He said that a servant is not greater than his master, and whoever follows Him must be like Him and go through the same trials (Matthew 10:24, 25). Few of them acknowledged His true greatness. People, in general, are always looking for someone who can somehow draw their attention.

Many people were truly amazed by Jesus when He multiplied the bread, but few of them really understood the purpose of His coming.

“Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled.””
(John 6:26)

We also see the following words of the centurion to Jesus: “**But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.**” There is something different here than just a person looking for a healer or a man of miracles. Most people, when hearing of someone performing miracles, want to be with Him; they want to be in the place where He is. If they have something to solve, they would like Him to be there so that He can touch them or do something so that they can find a solution. This is because they believe more in the miracle itself, more in that exact moment that will give them a solution. They would do anything just to obtain that. If it is a question of money, they would even pay.

The authority of Jesus

Still, here we see this centurion attributing to Jesus the authority of God. Only God was the one who could heal and do something with such authority. Even from a distance, just with a word. Remember that God created everything just by the word He said (**Genesis 1:1-26**). So, we see here the centurion attributing such a power and authority to Jesus. In this way he didn’t look at Him just as a simple miracle man, but as something more.

“... **But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed.**”

We often want to go to Jesus as a man who performs miracles only. We go to Him for something we wish to happen. Something that in itself might not be wrong, but we only remain at that point, asking Him to do something for us without caring for the rest. Here in this story, we see that even though the centurion wanted something He wished to happen from Jesus, he didn’t simply ask Him for that but also acknowledged something more. When someone only asks for a miracle or something he wishes to happen, he remains disappointed when he doesn’t receive His answer. However, it is a different attitude that we need to show in front of the King of the Kings. He is not just a famous man who performs miracles. Many people are looking for such people today. People who can give them what they wish, most of the time, to satisfy their desires only. But Jesus offers you salvation along with what you’re asking Him for, and the most important is obviously salvation.

We can quickly see another example as well. The one of Esther. We know that she was a Jewish girl who became a queen by marrying the King of Assyria. The Book of Ester is a beautiful story that represents the trials through which the nation of Israel had to go through and the courage of Ester, but this book has another great meaning as well. Even though this particular book doesn't speak much about God, it is full of spiritual messages for our lives. It is a comparison. The king in the story is often metaphorically seen as God, and Ester represents us - the believers and the church. We know that Christ is the bridegroom, and the believer or the church is His bride. The story tells us that no one could approach the King without being summoned by him ([Esther 4:11](#)). The breaking of this law could have been punished with death. Nevertheless, when Ester heard that her nation (Israel) was threatened with death and advised by her uncle, she decided to present herself in front of the king and to make a petition so that her nation could be delivered. Imagine the fear and the respect she had to go to the king with! Chapter 4 of Esther tells us what she went through and the way she prepared herself to approach the king. Obviously, the Bible says that we need to be confident when we go in front of God and that we mustn't hesitate to ask Him for something, but in the same way, we need to have due respect when we approach the King, the same as the one Ester was having. We have to know that we are approaching the King of Kings.

So, we see the centurion approaching Jesus as God Himself, the One that can heal with a word only, even from a distance, because obviously, He is omnipresent. Jesus is one with God. Hundred percent human and one hundred percent God. He is the God-man, as some people describe Him. Not the man-God, but the God-man. His first nature is always God, even though He is one hundred percent human as well. There have been many persons who wanted to become God or who thought that they were a god. In the past, we saw leaders, kings, and rulers that called themselves gods, and people worshiped them as gods. People like the Pharaoh from Egypt, for example, and other kings considered themselves such or related to divinity. Nevertheless, all of them wanted to represent their own glory and themselves, and all of them passed away. In contrast, Jesus always represented God first (because He was God) and continues to live.

As the story continues, we see that the centurion expressed that he was a man with authority. He said that in the same way He commands a soldier to do

something, he is also ready to submit and acknowledge Jesus' authority. Sometimes, our prayer toward God might also not be answered because we ask according to our own will and we don't submit to Him in our prayer.

“Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” (James 4:2, 3)

It doesn't mean that we mustn't ask Him for anything about our own needs, but it means that it needs to be accompanied with fear and respect, knowing that He is above all. We mustn't be like those people who are just interested in their own requests and needs, and if it happens, then fine, and if it doesn't, they just get upset, but in both cases, they don't show any other interest toward Jesus. The same as it happened with the ten lepers healed by Jesus (Luke 17:11-19). All of them were cleansed, but only one had understood what was essential, came back to worship Jesus, and truly received salvation and healing.

People who are just interested in their own things and purpose are like those who pay someone to perform something for them or solve their situation. Why? Because they are focused only on the miracle itself and the particular situation they are in. They don't care who will help them and in which way. They just want it done. **It is not this way when it comes to a miracle performed by God. Here it is very important Who is doing it. It is not only important but is the most essential; it is of the most significant importance. And it is also important in which way is done. Jesus is the purpose of all and knowing Him is eternal life. This is the benefit (if we can say it this way) of knowing Him with our hearts and serving Him. Everything else we can receive here on this earth; all other miracles and benefits are nothing compared to the knowledge of Him and the eternal life we can receive by that.** What happens is that most of the people are focused on what happens here on this earth. Their eyes need to be opened so that they can see the real value of what God can give them and see His person. This is also a very important miracle that needs to happen in our lives.

There were many persons asking for a miracle in the Bible. One of them was King Herod when he asked Jesus to do a miracle for him, but He didn't because there wasn't any purpose (Luke 23:8, 9). **Because Jesus performs miracles not to draw attention, but with a specific purpose, for God's glory.** There have always been people who claim to perform miracles and prodigies with the purpose of drawing

attention only. The scripture tells us that more of them will come in the last times. All of this happens to mislead people.

“For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:24)

The sign of the prophet Jonah

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

³⁹ But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here. (Matthew 12:38-41)

In this passage, we see the scribes and Pharisees asking for a sign from Jesus. We have to know that He doesn't perform a sign just because someone wants to see it. It can happen in certain situations where He will let someone see a sign, but it always happens with a purpose. It can even happen sometimes to people who don't expect it. But here, Jesus called those persons a perverse generation. And they were in this way because they actually wanted to test Him because they were not sincere in their request. Better than anyone else, He knows how sincere our desires are. He also told them that no other sign would be shown to them but the sign of the prophet Jonah, who was three days in the womb of the fish. We know this is a comparison with the Son of God dying on the cross. Because He was also in the tomb for three days, after which He rose from the dead. Jesus told them that because that was the most important thing that they had to understand and accept first. It's much more important than any sign that might be there. That was the sacrifice that was going to give them salvation.

In the cross of Jesus, we find what is essential and the most important. There, we find humility, God's love, and God's righteousness and justice poured on the Son. The cross was and is the center of all. This is the reason why we exist. This is the beginning and the end. That's why Jesus told them that no other sign would be shown to them but the sign of Jonah. They couldn't receive a miracle because they were not sincere in their request, but the universal opportunity of the cross was still shown to them. It is shown to everyone. That's the purpose of God. He wants everyone to hear the good news.

In Jonah's story, we see another similarity with the cross of Jesus. After being in the womb of the fish, Jonah went to Nineveh proclaiming repentance. Jesus died so that we can have the opportunity to repent. After repenting and accepting Him in our lives, we will probably be able to see signs and wonders. We will obviously see and receive according to what God wants to give us and according to His will, but what I mean is that our attitude of asking and praying will be different. It will be humble, and we will be able to acknowledge the greatness of Jesus.

However, this is the attitude we need when we pray and ask Jesus for something. The Spirit of God is the one that can convince and help someone to have that kind of attitude. This is how the centurion went in front of Jesus. This is the attitude that we find in the cross. This is the attitude that the cross can bring to our lives because humility and the way to acknowledge His greatness started right there. If someone today can humble himself and acknowledge His greatness, it is because of that.

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