Why Pray?
Many of us are a little uncomfortable when it comes to prayer, and more so when it comes to praying out loud with others. This seems a little peculiar because we probably would not have the same level of reservation if we were talking with a celebrity or a person of importance. We might even desire to be seen by other people as we talk with famous movie stars. We would most likely brag to others and get our picture taken with them to prove we actually had a conversation with them. Yet when it comes to the most important person in the universe we are uncomfortable, or even embarrassed, about talking to Him.

Paul states that Christians are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and again when Paul discusses putting on the full armor of God he says, “With all prayer and petition pray at ALL times in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18). There are many other commands to pray, so it begs the question,

What is Prayer?
Prayer is simply a means of communicating with God, and is usually expressed through four basic forms which we can see in Jesus’ prayers. In Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus not only showed us how to pray, He modeled it, and even had it recorded so that we could understand it.

Matthew 6:9-13 says, “ 9 This, then, is how you should pray:  “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Four Basic Prayers:
1. Prayers of Worship and Praise (vs 9-10)
Start your prayers off with your focus on God and not yourself. Wrap your mind around who you are talking to and contemplate this as you address Him. Reflect on His majesty, His wonder, and the magnitude of what it means to be in His presence. Do this and you will surely find yourself falling into the correct frame of mind, heart, and spirit. Another part of this is to give Him thanks for specific things He has done for you, and has given you. Remember, a thankful heart is a humbled heart.

It is easier to trust that your prayers are heard and will be answered when you realize the amazing power of the One you are talking to, the Creator of the entire universe.

2. Prayers for Your Needs (vs 11-13)
Talking to God about your needs is referred to as prayers of petition. We all depend on God all day and for all things. We should concern ourselves with our needs and not be afraid or ashamed to plead with God for them because our needs must be met before we can be of benefit to others. We cannot give what we do not have, and everything that He has given us we are to use to represent Him here on earth by caring for and loving others.

God promised He will meet our needs, He never promised He will respond to all of our “wants.” Know the scriptures and seek out the promises God has made to us, then pray those promises. In doing so you will always be praying the will of God.

3. Prayers for Others (vs 11-13)
Praying on behalf of others is often referred to as intercessory prayer. We live our lives in the midst of a spiritual battle and it is through praying for others that we can see this most clearly. We must be persistent in these prayers because this is where we
seek God to affect the world and others. It is while we pray on behalf of others that we develop the heart and the compassion of God. It can be said that intercessory prayer is the only type of prayer that can be considered work. Worship is not work; it is wonderful, and moves us. Praying for our own needs is not work because we are personally invested in what we need. But to really intercede is a labor of love.

4. Prayers of Confession (vs 12-13)
Examine how you have wronged God, confess it and ask His forgiveness. As you do this, forgive those who have wronged you as well. Look up Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 6:12, and Luke 22:39-41. These scripture passages show examples of Jesus’ prayer life. He often went off by Himself to pray, “in the hills, at a lonely solitary place.” He chose times and places when He could be alone with the Father. The term in Luke 22:39 “as was His custom” shows that He did so on a regular basis.
Prayer needs to be a consistent and continual aspect of your life (as it is commanded to be). It must become a true priority for all Christians. Remember, it is not for God’s benefit that He commands us to be prayerful, it is for our benefit.

How to Pray:
1. Make the will of God your prayers. Discover His will through the scriptures (1 John 5:14-15).

2. Do not put up with or harbor sin in your life. Make sure you are not allowing yourself to be unforgiving toward anyone (which is sin). Make restitution now. Isaiah 59:2 says, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” Examine your life and make certain that you are not harboring any sin or sinful attitudes.

3. Make sure your motives are pure. Don’t trick yourself into thinking they are; evaluate them honestly (James 4:2b-3).


5. Pray to the Father, in the name and work of Jesus Christ (John 14:13-14).

Final Thoughts...
Prayer is not just a bowing of the head, a folding of the hands and an opportunity to inform God of what we would like Him to do for us. Prayer is a word that describes a relationship with God (John 15:7), and relationships are fostered and deepened through real, two-way communication. Prayer is maintained less by duty than it is a desire for intimacy and communion with God.

Further Resources
FACE2FACE Message Series
A 6 part sermon series given by lead teaching pastor Greg Harris dealing with prayer. You can purchase the 6 CD set, or listen to it free on our website www.olive-branch.org. Just go to Message Resources page then click Ephesians and go to FACE2FACE.

Prayer Journal
You can pick up a prayer journal at the Info Counter in our foyer, or you can download a version off of our website www.olive-branch.org. Go to the Message Resources then prayer journal.

Too Busy Not to Pray by Bill Hybels
This book has become a classic for teaching Christians how to make time for prayer in the hustle and bustle of our modern world. Too Busy Not to Pray calls both young and old to make prayer a priority, and broadens our vision for what our eternal, powerful God does when his people slow down to pray.

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