

Empire Church of the Brethren

Sunday Service Sermons

27 July 2025

Praying and Listening.

Text: "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." *Matt. 6:6*.

How old were you when you discovered that part of praying is listening?

I think I was in seminary before I became aware of the listening part.

Most of the time people pray for what they need.

One has to move beyond that and have an understanding of who God is to realize that God wants to communicate with his people.

Think about God for a moment.

He created and he loves but what he loves just wants him to do what they want, not what he wants.

It is a great revelation to realize that the Lord God Almighty wants to help us become what he created us to be.

He is not a slot machine that you hope gives you what you need or want.

He is the great creator who has created a good life for each person and is involved in helping them achieve that life.

Our text is in contrast to those who put on a show to convince others of their righteousness.

And Jesus said that they have their reward.

God does not honor those prayers.

We are talking about the disciplined life of a Christian.

How to be God's people that he is able to be our God.

We know that when a person wants to be good at something they have disciplined themselves to practice.

We are amazed at how graceful Fred Astaire was in the dance.

It is said that his usual schedule was to practice 10 to 12 hours a day.

Ginger Rogers had bloody feet by the time they shot one scene because of all the practicing she and Fred did before the shoot.

He made it look easy because he had done it so many times.

Discipline is a key for many successes.

To be God's person we must choose to follow certain spiritual exercises and disciplines.

The prayer life of Jesus was not a mere routine or habit that he followed.

His prayer life was a dynamic experience with the Father God that so enriched him that one of his disciples said to him. "Lord, teach us to pray".

The art of effective praying needs to be learned, and Jesus is the authoritative Teacher to whom we should listen and whom we should imitate.

We need to recognize that prayer was meant to be a dialogue in which communication takes place in both directions rather than being a monologue.

Following several sermons that emphasized this concept of prayer, a creative young person composed a song that he entitled "Listen When You Pray."

The chorus goes like this:

Listen, O listen when you pray, to hear what God might have to say. Listen, O listen when you pray to hear what God might have to say. Raymond Glover.

It is interesting to note how many times in the Old Testament the people of God are indicted for the sin of refusing to listen to God's voice.

It is also interesting to note how many times in the New Testament our Lord says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear".

This phrase is repeated seven times in *Revelation 2 and 3*.

Jesus assumed that his disciples would pray.

Humans pray because they must.

The Greek word for man, *anthropos*, means "an upward-looking creature."

Humans were made with a hunger for God.

Jesus assumed that we would hunger for fellowship with our heavenly Father.

This hunger leads us to engage in both private and public prayer.

Jesus assumed that we would hunger for fellowship with the family of God in dialogue with the Father God.

Probably Jesus assumed that we would pray because of an overwhelming sense of helplessness and need.

The great need of humans in their struggle with evil causes us to want to pray.

There is evil within us.

There is evil about us.

The evil one walks about seeking whom he may devour.

It has been said that Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon their knees.

James said, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you."

When we pray we need to remember: "Listen, O listen when you pray to hear what God might have to say."

Some misconceptions regarding prayer may lead to disappointment and skepticism.

We should not think of prayer as some kind of supernatural "grab bag" into which one reaches at "God's State Fair" in order to obtain some prize.

Prayer is not a substitute for hard thinking and hard work by which we solve many of our problems.

Prayer is not an arrangement of beautiful religious words used to gain God's attention.

Prayer is a personal experience of dialogue with God.

It is God who invites us and moves us to come into his presence.

We come into his presence with mingled emotions of fear and joy and expectancy.

As communication takes place in prayer through words and acts, we experience new clarity of vision, new understanding of reality, new strength for action, and new courage for living.

Prayer is communication between the Father God and his children.

We are to enter the closet, the private place, and shut the door.

It is significant that we are instructed to shut the door.

We are to shut the door so that God can get our attention.

We have a problem with being distracted and preoccupied and not listening when we pray.

The psalmist says, "Be still, and know that I am God".

Habakkuk declares, "The Lord is in this holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him."

We are to shut the door so that we can hear God's voice.

The heavenly Father does not shout or scream when he speaks to us.

The writer of Hebrews encourages us to listen: "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'"

We are to shut the door so that we can speak freely to the Father God.

We need to take time to adore him, to praise him, and to thank him when we pray.

With the door closed we can take time to confess our sin and to promise God that we will forgive those who have sinned against us.

With the door closed we can voice our petitions for others in prayer.

All of the pronouns in the Lord's Prayer are plural.

The God to whom we pray is "Our Father."

When we pray for bread, we are to pray that the Father will "give us our daily bread."

Take time to listen when you pray.

Especially listen to the Scriptures for reading them can be the listening side of prayer.

Listen to the prayers of others when they pray in public.

Listen to the needs of those around you when you pray.

Listen to the voice of God's indwelling Spirit within you when you pray.

Speak to my heart, Lord Jesus,

Speak that my soul may hear;

Speak to my heart, Lord Jesus,

Calm every doubt and fear.

Speak to my heart, Lord Jesus.

Purge me from every sin.;

Speak to my heart, Lord Jesus,

Help me, the lost to win.

B.B, McKinney