

Study 2



CORE VALUE 3

We value **prayer**, as we recognise **God's rule** over all things, and we seek to pray **according to His will**.

Prayer, so we're told, is a powerful force. Sometimes, we're told, that the “power” of prayer is simply waiting to be unleashed. All we need is enough faith, and enough people praying, and we can change the world. But does the effect of our prayer depend on **us**?

The essence of prayer is the opposite. Prayer is a humble dependence on God -- a recognition that it is ultimately He who is in control, and not us. Prayer is not a “technique” to be mastered, or a tap to be turned, or a power to be unleashed. Nor does God somehow depend on our prayers or the size of our faith to make things happen. He does, however, *permit us* to approach Him in prayer. More than that, he warmly invites us to do so.

According to 1 John 5:14, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.”

What is the essence of an “effective prayer”?

How can we know how to do this?

How can you make your prayers more effective?

Read Luke 22:39-46. The scene is the Garden of Gethsemane, on the night Jesus is betrayed.

- a) What does Jesus tell his disciples to pray for?
- b) What do they do?
- c) How is the prayer of Jesus...
 - i. A model of the sort of prayer 1 John 5 speaks about?
 - ii. A model of trust in God.

Some practical points for prayer

In Matthew 5, Jesus gives some very practical pointers for prayer. Apparently, prayer is something that can easily give way to hypocrisy especially if you're "playing to an audience."

- a) According to Matthew 5:5, what motivates some people's prayers?
- b) In the light of what Jesus says in verse 6, is there any place at all for public or "corporate" prayer? What safeguards would we need?
- c) According to verse 7, some people make another big mistake when they pray. What is it?
- d) If our Father already knows what we need, what our is prayer expressing?

Prayer at mpc

Public and group prayer in our church is important but as we pray together, it's important to be guided by the scriptures. A helpful way of making sure our prayers are "in accordance with God's will" is to base our prayers around the teaching of God's word.

Pray specifically about things you are learning, or key points that are highlighted in parts of the bible that you're reading.

Pray the sort of things for others that (for example) Paul prays for his friends.

Seek to model your values and concerns around God's values and concerns.

Don't bother praying for the Ferrari.

And if you pray publicly in our church meetings, don't do it for show. Don't be tempted to use bigger words, or a more pious tone, than you usually would. Don't go on for too long. Both in your public and private prayers, be content to be short and simple and clear, as you show your trust in God by bringing your concerns to Him.

Here's a "core value" prayer from a nother church. Maybe we could pray our own "core values".

Dear Lord, our Creator and our Redeemer:

for reflection

Conscious of your goodness toward us, in creation and in Christ, fashion us into a people that lives to praise your Name. In public services and smaller gatherings, through heartfelt and regular prayer, by the intelligent and applied study of your Word, and with inspiring music, make us a church which rejoices in you and exalts your Name always.

Merciful God, teach us to love one another in practical ways. Against the selfishness of our hearts and culture, may we value each other's company, wisdom and friendship. Mindful of Christ's offering of himself for us, teach us to care deeply for those in need in the St Andrew's community and beyond, so that there might be none among us that suffers unassisted from sorrow, sickness, loneliness, or lack of funds or food.

Enable us, mighty Lord, boldly, relevantly and prayerfully to promote the gospel of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant us a great number of people within our congregation who are gifted, trained and utilised in the task of evangelism. Enable all us at St Andrew's to stand tall and firm upon the unchanging truth of your Word, and graciously to answer for our faith whenever opportunity allows.

Sovereign Lord, increase the number of those that worship with us. May our meetings overflow with new and old believers, and may our buildings and ministry teams expand to welcome them, so that 'your name might be hallowed' in our midst.

Gracious God, thankful for your many blessings, make us an extraordinarily generous people. Help us always to expand and meet our church's budget. Make us ever-willing to give *regularly* to the ongoing costs of the church, and *occasionally* to events and opportunities of worth.

Lord of the world, may our church be *international* in its concern. Help us always to pray for, always to support and always to be mindful of your people throughout Australia and around the world. In particular, enable us each year to increase our contributions to overseas mission and aid.

Our great God, fashion into a 'city on a hill' and a 'light on its stand'. May we be known for our teaching, church services, friendships and loving care, and grant us opportunities to share the good things of St Andrew's with congregations throughout our region: may we offer resources to others, help with the training of others, and send out our people to serve the wider church.

Above all, may we present to others an example of lives lived: in the power of your Holy Spirit, after the pattern of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in honour of You, our Creator and our Redeemer. Amen.