

July 16, 2017
How Should We Pray?

Have you ever thought or heard, “I don’t know how to pray.” Maybe you’ve even said this on occasion. Well let’s turn to our Brother Martin Luther for a little help. We read in the explanation to the Small Catechism concerning the Lord’s Prayer this question, “How Should We Pray?” For those of you wanting to look it up that is question 198. This is a valid question and brings up some very important issues when it comes to prayer. Let’s tackle them one at a time.

The catechism answers this question in a threefold way. First we learn we are to pray in Jesus name. The next thing we learn is that we are to pray with confidence for Jesus’ sake that our prayers will be answered. And finally we are to pray according to God’s will. The first answer is something that is done very well around me anyway, and so I am not going to spend much time on it. Number two in the answers is however a different story. It’s not that I think anyone who prays with me lacks confidence in the Lord, but it is as if they think that their prayers are unworthy. Let me say this, if this is you and you think your prayers are unworthy or trivial or too minor but you will mention them on the off chance that the Lord will have a spare minute to sigh in disgust over such a small thing before fixing it. STOP!!! This is not a question of whether or not your requests are worthy, but rather whether or not you think God is trustworthy to keep his promises. He is and he did in Christ. So the whole reason you pray in Christ’s name is because first, Jesus told you to pray in his name, and second because in Christ God has opened heaven and salvation for, and so if he cares about your eternal



wellbeing enough to give up his Son, why wouldn’t he want to listen to your requests, needs and joys? We are never worthy in and of ourselves nor are our requests, but in Christ we have become children and heirs to God’s promise. That makes us worthy and our prayers worthy. In short, what is meant here is not that you believe that your prayers will be answered exactly as you would have them, but that you believe that Christ is your redeemer. If that is your belief and your trust, you can ask anything. Go read James 1: 6-7. There we learn to ask God things in faith, and our faith is in no other person or thing than Christ, not even in the hope that our prayers receive a yes.

This leads us into the third answer that the catechism gives to our question. We are to pray according to God’s will. This isn’t as difficult as it sounds. No you may not know the will of God as to whether you should drink that Dr. Pepper or sweet tea (the answer is Dr. Pepper by the way), nor is that really the point here, but you do know the will of God enough to make your requests known to Him. You know the will of God well enough, because that is one of the things Jesus left us with through his teaching and life. Love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself. Anything else is just the icing on the cake. If your prayer involves the work of the Church, or the mission Jesus has given you in life, then you know how to pray appropriately. Otherwise, pray for wisdom and guidance and blessing then make a decision trusting Jesus and the Holy Spirit to help.

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