



## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: LESSON 260

The Confession continues that our prayers are to be “with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love and perseverance; and, if vocal, in a known tongue” (Chapter 21, Section 3). These words point to our attitude or disposition in prayer, or simply said, the way we are to pray to God.

**With understanding** – To pray with understanding means we are to use our minds when we pray, which means we are to pray informed or directed by the revealed Word of God. The mind is crucial in our Christian life, and likewise in our worship of God, with prayer being an important part of that. God has saved us and has given us a new mind and commands us to use it in our Christian life, and to have it constantly renewed by His Word so we will know Him and live according to His will (Psalm 47:7; 145:18; Mark 12:30; John 4:23-24; Romans 12:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). We are not to pray for things and in ways which are contrary to that which God has revealed in His Word. Also, prayer is not a substitute for the serious study of the Word; rather, the correct understanding of the Word is to direct our prayers.

**With reverence** – To pray with reverence means to realize who God is, as He has revealed Himself in His Word. We are to be cognizant of His infinite and absolute majesty, splendor, and glory; and to remember that He is the great Creator and Sovereign of all (Exodus 24:17; Psalm 33:8; 145:5; Ecclesiastes 5:1-2; Hebrews 12:28-29). Though God is our Savior, though we have a most intimate relationship with Him in Christ, and though He loves us as our Father and has adopted us as His children, He is not our equal nor is He our casual friend. Sadly, nowadays the love of God or familiarity with Him has been taken to such an extreme that proper awe, reverence, and honor of God is mostly absent in worship, being replaced with attitudes of casualness, flippancy, and comfort.

**With humility** – To pray with humility is directly related to praying in reverence, because when we properly understand who we are speaking to we also get a better understanding of who we are. We are to always remember that as sinners, apart from Christ, we have no right to approach God, and that God owes us nothing. All of His blessings and goodness which He pours out on us, especially the spiritual blessings which we have received, are on account of His abundant grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:3-12). Thus, when we come to God we are to come with humility and self-effacement, and as the Larger Catechism states with a “deep sense of our own unworthiness” (Genesis 18:27; 32:9-10; Luke 17:10).

Another aspect of humility in prayer is for us to humbly submit to God’s sovereignty and will with respect to our requests, realizing that God loves to answer the prayers of His people, and He does so in His perfect time and according to His perfect will (Micah 7:7; Matthew 26:39; 1 John 5:14-15). A further characteristic of humility in prayer is to approach God with sincerity, especially with respect to the reality of our sinfulness. A humble and sincere prayer is one that approaches God with sorrow for sin, where we are quick to confess and repent of our sins, requesting His forgiveness and cleansing (Psalm 32:1-5; 51:17; Proverbs 28:13; Daniel 9:4-19; Matthew 6:12; Luke 18:13-14; 1 John 1:8-9).

**With fervency, faith, and love** – To pray with fervency means to pray with enthusiasm and passion, to lift up heartfelt and real prayers to God (Psalm 19:14; 51:17; 86:12; John 4:23-24; James 5:16). This is the opposite of being indifferent or dispassionate, or going through the motions of prayer in a mechanical form, or simply reciting a prayer without the involvement of the mind and the heart. Praying with faith means to pray trusting in the Lord and in His Word, that He is faithful and will do what He has promised (Psalm 86:11; Isaiah 26:3; Matthew 7:7-11; Mark 11:24; Hebrews 11:1; James 1:5-8). To pray with love refers to our motive in prayer, that we are to offer our prayers to God in love, adoration, and thanksgiving. This should be the heart and starting point of our prayers, where we approach God with love and adoration for who He is, and with praise and thanksgiving for His marvelous works (Psalm 96; 103; 116:1-2; 136; 145; Romans 15:30; Ephesians 1:3; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Timothy 2:1; 2 Peter 1:2-4).